

his cause by issuing a foolish proclamation: (1) claiming to be the legitimate son of Charles II. and the rightful king of England; (2) denouncing James II. as a tyrant and a usurper, who had burned London, strangled Sir Edmondsbury Godfrey, and poisoned the late King; (3) and promising a free Parliament, toleration for all Protestants, upright judges, a restitution of forfeited charters, and a repeal of the Corporation Act. The peasants, cloth-weavers and colliers of the Western counties flocked to his standard, but the county-gentry gave him no support. He entered Taunton at the head of 5,000 men, and met with a most enthusiastic reception. The streets were adorned with festoons of flowers, and a train of young girls presented him with a richly embroidered flag, a Bible and a sword. On the 20th of June, the very day on which the Earl of Argyll was led in triumph through the streets of Edinburgh, *Monmouth was proclaimed King of England in the market-place of Taunton.* He then pressed on in the hope of securing Bristol, but his troops having experienced a slight repulse at Philip's Norton, he marched to Frome.

Meanwhile the royal forces under the Earl of Feversham and Lord Churchill began to close in upon him, and he was compelled to fall back on Bridgewater, while the royal troops took up their station on the half-reclaimed fens of Sedgmoor to the east of the town. Monmouth was soldier enough to know that his untrained and badly-armed peasants were no match for the well-disciplined and well-equipped forces of the royal army. He therefore determined to hazard a night attack. Accordingly, about midnight, he led his men across the morass in the direction of the royalist camp, when suddenly they were arrested in their march by a deep broad ditch, called the **Bussex Rhine**, the existence of which had been unknown to them. A random pistol-shot alarmed the royal sentinels, the drums beat to arms and soon the troops were ready for action. A fierce fire of musketry was opened from both banks of the stream. At the first volley, Lord Grey and his cavalry fled in confusion, and the men, who had charge of the ammunition, followed their example. Monmouth then advanced his infantry, and although they were armed with no better weapons than forks and scythes