

British Battles

on Land and Sea.

SEIGE OF LISLE.

The storming of the breach hornwork, which took place previously, on the evening of the 7th of September, was a desperate piece of service. Upon the trenches being relieved by Lieutenant-General Wilks, the following dispositions had been made for the attack:

Eight hundred grenadiers supported by the same number of fusiliers, with 2000 workmen, and 30 carpenters designed for cutting down the palisades, were ordered for right attack, between the lower Duele and the gate of St. Andrew, under the direction of Monsieur de Roques; while 1,600 grenadiers, supported by the same number of fusiliers were detailed for the left, under an officer named Du Mey. Besides the troops in the trenches, 2,000 men were in addition employed in the attack, being detached for that purpose from the grand army, and placed under the command of brigadier John Sabine, of the Welsh Fusiliers, a skilled officer, who had been wounded at the battle of Schellenberg, in 1704, and had shared in the glories of Blenheim and of Oudenarde.

About 8 o'clock in the evening of the 7th of September, the artillery opened fire on the counterscarp. Immediately upon this, the grenadiers and fusiliers, wearing their conical sugar-loafed caps, and having their skirts buttoned back for freedom of action, marched out of the trenches in splendid order, and rushed at the palisades, from which they drove back the defenders by sheer dint of sword and fixed bayonet; and every Frenchman there was put to death, save four officers and a few soldiers, who were taken prisoners.

While effecting this lodgement, the fire of the enemy's artillery upon this point was fearful; and three mines were sprung, each with a lurid flame and did terrible execution. The besiegers, however, lodged themselves on the salient angle of the counterscarp of the small hornwork, and on the tenaille. According to the "Life of Queen Anne," in this attack "of the counterscarp, the Allies lost no less than 2,000 men killed and wounded, and among these were sixteen of their engineers."

The troops on the right attacked the enemy with the same ardour, and successfully maintained their lodgement on that part of the works situated on the lower Duele, between the two attacks. In addition to these lodgements, the communications towards the breaches was considerably advanced. At the storming of the outworks on the 21st, the Allies sustained a loss of 1,000 more men and Prince Eugene was wounded by a musket-ball in the head. He was by this event confined to his tent for some days. The besiegers were now in possession not only of part of the covered way, but of a demi-bastion and several places of arms.

The deputies of the States of Holland, perceiving how slowly the engineers carried on the approaches, and the difficulty of supplying the army with provisions and ammunitions, proposed to raise the siege. This Prince Eugene absolutely refused to do.

"My own honor is concerned in the event" said he. And though the Dutch would much rather have seen Ghent and Berges reduced, and their own frontiers insured from the incursions of the French, Prince Eugene persisted in con-

tinuing the investment; and while he remained on the sick-list Marlborough commanded the siege in person, as there was no officer present possessed of sufficient rank and talent to whom it could be entrusted; and hence he found himself compelled to watch Vendome on one hand and keep the besiegers to their duty on the other.

Every morning saw him on horse-back at the earliest blush of dawn. When all was quiet in front, he rode back to the lines of the covering army and he returned again every evening that he might be at hand to observe such measures as his skilful antagonist might compel him to adopt. By thus appearing, as it were, at all points where danger threatened or labour was to be endured, he enthused so much of his zeal and energy into those around, that on the 23rd the whole of the tenailles, or low works in the ditch before the curtains, fell into his hands, together with the covered way.

We have stated that the covering army occupied a position between Noyelles and Peronne; the combined forces of Berwick and Vendome, maintaining a corresponding alignment in their front. The French right extended toward Ennevelin, while their left rested upon Gondecourt, and all their proceedings led to a firm belief that a desperate attempt to relieve the siege was about to be made; but save the storming of the village of Seclin nothing was done. Perceiving the hopelessness of attempting to raise the siege, Vendome and Berwick now endeavoured to place the besiegers under a series of blockade, by cutting the sluices of the canals, inundating the lower lands, and closing up the avenues that led to Brussels and Antwerp.

The road to Ostend alone remained open; yet even it was menaced, and it became a matter of the utmost consideration that an ample convoy should be sent up while means of doing so were within reach.

Bishop Burnet says they "fell to making lines all along the Scheldt, but chiefly about Oudenarde." This was more completely to isolate the forces of Marlborough, and cut off all supplies from Holland. These lines were about seventy miles long and were more like fortified ramparts than ordinary entrenchments, and were everywhere armed with cannon.

From Ostend alone could supplies come now; and there 6,000 British troops had recently landed under the command of General Erle, who was instructed to secure every horse and wagon he could lay hands upon, and load them with such munitions of war as the place contained, while General Webb at the head of 6,000 men, was detached as an escort for their protection. The first portion of this force which marched was a battalion of the Royal Scots under Lieutenant-Colonel Hamilton, with orders to halt at Oudenburg, and wait their till the convoy had passed, after which they were to join the escort at Tourout.

Rumours of these proceedings no sooner reached the French marshals than they manoeuvred to intercept the convoy, the loss of which would have compelled Marlborough and Eugene to raise the siege; but the Great Duke was not slow in countermovements.

The Count de la Mothe was ordered to march from his camp of observation at Brussels, and lead 22,000 men upon escort. On the other hand, General William Cadogan, with twelve battalions and 1,500 chosen cavalry, marched by a parallel road to support it; while the post at Oudenburg was further reinforced by the Regiment of Guethiano, 600 grenadiers, and the battalion of Fune, the whole commanded by Brigadier Lansberg. The movement anticipated La Mothe.

On the 27th of September the convoy came noisily rumbling out of Ostend; on the same night it crossed the Nieuwport at Leffinghen, and directing its course by Slype and