

PAGES OF BRITISH HISTORY.

Historical Battles—Noteworthy Events in the Story of the Creation of the British Empire.

(Continued from our last.)

Valencia de Alcantara, 1762.

In 1762, the British were fighting the French by land and sea in every quarter of the globe, or wherever they possessed ships, troops, or colonies; and the spring of the year saw our colours unfurled in a part of Europe where they had not been seen since the days of Galway and Peterborough—the Peninsula.

During the progress of the war the sovereigns of France and Spain had been endeavouring, by arguments and menaces, to induce the King of Portugal to unite with them against Great Britain. Portugal was extremely weak at this period. Its capital had been destroyed by the great earthquake in 1755, when nearly 30,000 inhabitants perished in its ruins; a conspiracy against the king's life followed this disaster, and the little realm had been shaken by civil dissension. Its army was weak in numbers and deficient in arms and in discipline; but notwithstanding its weakness and the haughty threats of France and Spain, King Joseph adhered to his alliance with Britain. He urged their Most Christian and Catholic Majesties "to open their eyes to the crying injustice of turning upon Portugal the hostilities kindled against Great Britain, and to consider that they were giving an example which would lead to the utter destruction of mankind," adding "that he would rather see the last tile of his palace fall, and faithful subjects spill the last drop of their blood, than sacrifice the independence of his crown, and afford to ambitious princes, in his submission, a pretext for invading the sacred rights of neutrality."

Before the actual commencement of hostilities, Lord Tyrwley, a peer of great military talent and experience, was sent there, with instructions to examine into the state of the Portuguese forces, and to assist the Ministry with his best advice in the organization of the army and defence of the frontier. He was also to have command of the British auxiliary forces, consisting of nearly 10,000 men, drawn partly from Belleisle and partly from Ireland, where two regiments entirely composed of Catholics were raised for this service. But Lord Tyrwley, being hot-tempered and impetuous took some offence at the lack of vigor which he found in King Joseph and his Ministry, and as these suspicions were supposed to be the result of pride and caprice, he was recalled very early in the campaign, and the command of the British troops was bestowed on Lieutenant-General the Earl of Lisbon.

As the French and Spaniards did not deem it possible to cut off Great Britain from the use of the Portuguese ports by naval operations, they attempted it by military ones, and Lisbon and Oporto were the two points aimed at. With this view three inroads were proposed to be made—one to the north; another to the south, and the third in the middle provinces, to preserve a communication between the two former.

The first army that entered upon the execution of this plan was commanded by the Marquis de Sarria.

The second column of Spanish troops, which took the central route, entered the province of Beira, and immediately laid siege to Almeida, the strongest and best-provided place on the frontiers of Portugal; while the third column, 80,000 strong, destined for the subjugation of that country, assembled on the borders of Estremadura, with the intention of penetrating into Alemtejo. Had these three corps been permitted to make a junction, they must have formed an army which the allied British and Portuguese could never have withstood.

Armed and animated by some British officers with a body of regular troops, the inhabitants seized a strong pass in the mountains, and drove the invaders back to Torre de Moncorvo. In ravaging the country, the Spanish troops perpetrated dreadful outrages upon the peasantry. The latter, naturally revengeful and ferocious, retaliated to the fullest extent; and in every encounter the victors attended to the dictates of rancour and hate.

The column which invested Almeida opened the trenches before that place on the 25th of July, and next day it was joined by 8,000 French auxiliaries. The siege was pushed with vigor, as the fortress was of the greatest importance from its central situation, and its re-

duction would facilitate the operations on every side, and ultimately lead to the fall of Lisbon.

On the 25th of August the fortress capitulated, before even a practicable breach had been effected; and 1,500 regulars, with 2,000 armed peasants, were permitted to march out with the honours of war, on condition of not serving for six months against the King of Spain or his allies; pieces of cannon, 32 mortars and 700 quintals of powder fell into the hands of the victors. This rapid career of the latter was not fated, however, to be of long continuance.

It was imperatively necessary to prevent the entrance into Portugal of that column of the Spanish army which had halted on the borders of Estremadura, since that movement would have been almost equal to a victory on their side.

The conduct of this enterprise he committed to Brigadier Burgoyne, who took with him his own regiment, the 16th Light Dragoons (afterwards Lancers), then mustering only 400 rank and file, under Major the Hon. Hugh Somerville, son of Hugh, thirteenth Lord Somerville, and a distinguished cavalry officer of those days.

The orders given to Burgoyne by the Count de la Lippe on this occasion were somewhat peculiar.

If he found it impossible to withstand the force of the Spaniards, he was to abandon to them his baggage, provisions, and everything, save what his troops could carry on their backs or on their horses, and to retreat as slowly as he could into the mountains on his left, and thence rejoin the main army.

Burgoyne crossed the Tagus at midnight on the 23rd of August, and proceeded by forced marches to Castel de Vide, the troops dismounting from time to time to permit the detachment of grenadiers who accompanied them to ride.

After a five days' march and in spite of all disappointments and obstructions to which a secret expedition of this kind is so liable, on the night of the 26th the troops left Castel de Vide, the 16th Dragoons taking the lead, and passing the borders of Portugal, approached Valencia de Alcantara, not as Burgoyne had intended, while the darkness left it, but just as the rising sun was beginning to redden its wall and spires.

All was silent and tranquil, however, in the town when the advanced guard of the dragoons, under Lieutenant James Lewis, finding the avenues clear and unguarded, galloped along the main street, sword in hand, followed by the whole regiment. Springing from bed in their shirts the Spanish infantry, alarmed by the clatter of the hoofs and the ringing cheers of the light dragoons, seized their muskets, and fired a few shots from the windows of their billets. But the 16th pressed on to the great central plaza, where they attacked the main guard, and cut down or captured every man. At the same time other parties of the regiment secured the ends of all the streets, while the main body of it formed by troops in the square, where it was attacked by several unformed parties of Spaniards, all of whom were taken or destroyed.

There the Spanish Regiment of Seville was annihilated by the sword alone; three stand of colors were captured; Major-General Don Michael de Irunbeni, his aide-de-camp, and a colonel, with many other officers, were taken prisoners; and on the grenadiers coming in at double-quick, with their bayonets fixed, all resistance ceased.

The cavalry were then detached to scour the adjacent country, and intercept fugitives. They captured a number of horses, but the Spanish soldiers concealed themselves successfully. One small detachment of the 16th, consisting only of a sergeant and six troopers, penetrated to a considerable distance, and unexpectedly fell upon twenty-five Spanish dragoons, led by an officer. Undismayed by this great disparity of numbers, the seven gallant Britons dashed upon their adversaries with resolution "and used their broadswords with such terrible effect that in a few moments six Spaniards lay dead upon the road, and the other twenty demanded quarter, and were marched prisoners, with twenty-six horses, into the town."

A quantity of military stores were afterwards seized, hostages were taken for a year's revenue, and then the dragoons and grenadiers retired leisurely across the frontier.

Save fifty-nine men, the whole battalion of Seville was destroyed; while the British loss was only one lieutenant, one sergeant, and three men killed, with twenty privates and ten horses wounded. The conduct of the 16th Dragoons on this occasion was commended by the Count de la Lippe in his public dispatch.

"The field-marshal," he wrote, "thinks it his duty to acquaint the army with the glorious conduct of Brigadier Burgoyne, who, after having marched fifteen leagues without halting, took Valencia de Alcantara sword in hand, made the general who was to have invaded Alemtejo prisoner, destroyed the Spanish Regiment of Seville, took three stand of colours, a colonel many officers of distinction, and a great number of soldiers."

Soon after this the Spaniards poured into Portugal in very great force, and though the steady valour of the British troops did much to keep them in check, some retrograde movements were necessary; and in the beginning of October fifty troopers of the 16th alone served to cover the retreat of the Conde St. Jago's Portuguese battalions from the Pass of Alviato towards Sabrino-Formosa; and on many occasions they evinced the most heroic valour.

To arrest the progress of the Spaniards, for whom nothing now remained but the passage of the Tagus, to enable them to take up their quarters in Alemtejo, a body of troops was posted on the southern bank of that river.

As General Burgoyne—ever sharp and observant—detected that they "kept no soldierly guard in this post, and were uncovered in their rear and on the flanks, he conceived a design of falling on them by surprise, and confided the execution of this to Colonel Lee."

On the 4th of October, fifty men of the 16th Dragoons, with a few Portuguese horse, advanced to a deep rocky ravine two miles up the Tagus, where, on the following day, they were joined by a number of Royal Volunteers and grenadiers under Colonel Lee. Leaving their place of concealment during the night of the 5th, these troops forded the river unseen; and making a long detour through unfrequented tracts and lonely passes amid the mountains, they gained the rear of the Spanish camps on the two eminences about two'clock the following morning.

The grenadiers and volunteers burst in at a rush, and bayoneted the Spaniards in their tents. The yells and execrations of the wounded, the groans, and cries of the dying, with a few straggling shots flashing redly amid the gloom of the October morning, gave the alarm on all sides; and getting into their saddles, some of the Spanish cavalry attempted to make a stand, but were charged by the men of the 16th under Lieutenant Charles Maitland, "who broke in upon the adverse ranks, and cut them down with a terrible carnage, while the infantry continued the work of destruction with the bayonet, and the surviving soldiers of the army fled without making further resistance. The Spanish magazines were taken and destroyed; six pieces of cannon, sixty artillery mules, some horses, and a considerable quantity of valuable baggage were captured," while the allied loss was trivial.

"So brilliant a stroke," says the Count de la Lippe, in his dispatch, "speaks for itself; and there is no necessity to lengthen this letter with the well-deserved applause due to Brigadier-General Burgoyne, as well as to Colonel Lee and the British troops." These advantages, gained at most critical moments, disheartened even the vast forces of the Spaniards, who began to fall back towards their own frontier, and thus was Portugal saved by British skill and bravery.

There never was, says Cormick, so heavy a storm of national calamity, ready to fall upon an unprovided people as the Portuguese, so happily averted and so speedily blown over. Everything at the beginning of this campaign in Portugal bore the most lowering and ominous aspect to the affairs of Great Britain. As it advanced, the sky gradually cleared up, and towards the close of it the fortune of no nation was enlivened with a more brilliant and more unclouded prosperity.

George Muller.

George Muller was born in Prussia, September 27th, 1805. He was liberally supplied with money by his father, an officer under the government; and as a result the boy, during his life at home and at school, was guilty of deception, dishonesty, and immorality. While at the university, however, he was converted at a prayer meeting; and, becoming greatly stirred by some things that he had read, longed to become a missionary. In accordance with his father's plans he had from the first been studying for the ministry; but his father had chosen the profession only with the thought that it would ensure a good salary, and that he could thus secure for himself a comfortable home in his old age. He was therefore greatly angered by a proposition that would overthrow all his plans.

George then resolved to support himself during the rest of his studies. In 1829 by several remarkable providences the way was opened for him to go to London to enter on missionary work among the Jews, and to this course his father consented. Before long he was led to take charge of a church at Teignmouth, where he had become acquainted while on a short vacation on account of illness. He had been there but a short time when he felt objections to receiving a salary, and finally put up a box into which any might drop gifts as they felt moved to do so. He soon removed to Bristol, where a similar plan was followed.

In 1834, while at Bristol, he was instrumental in starting a Scriptural Knowledge Institution for Home and Abroad, to aid missions and schools where the teachers were Christians. On October 28th he heard of an orphan that had been obliged to leave school on account of poverty, and this led him to think of relieving the wants of orphans. He had been reading Francke's life the year before, and in the next year, as he read it, he thought of attempting work on a plan like Francke's. In April, 1836, he began to receive orphans. The house was soon full. He was still dependent entirely on what he received from day to day. People wondered at his imprudence, and he rented a second house, which soon filled. People marvelled at his course, and he opened a third house. People began to talk about what would happen when he would be compelled to give up, and meantime a fourth house was being filled. People said he was a fanatic, and in 1846 he was planning to build a house; and in June, 1849, the orphans were established in a building at Ashley Down, accommodating three hundred and costing \$75,000. Astonishment had reached such a pitch that it could hardly go further when this building was followed by one accommodating four hundred, and fifty each, and by the increasing prosperity of the institution.

Mr. Muller's wish had been to lead people to live in faith, and his work has furnished a striking object lesson. Those in his charge have never suffered although at times not a single half-penny has been on hand in advance, and it is a fixed principle with him never to incur any debt.—Golden Rule.

The Insane, Blind, Deaf and Dumb in Canada.

According to religious denominational divisions, as shown by the government returns, the insane are distributed in proportion to population as follows:

	Population.	Insane.
Roman Catholics.....	41 46	48 84
Church of England.....	13 41	11 93
Presbyterians.....	15 73	14 45
Methodists.....	17 95	11 51
Baptists.....	6 33	5 34
All others.....	5 42	7 93

According to religious beliefs the deaf and dumb are distributed as follows:—

	Number.	Per cent.
Roman Catholics.....	2,673	55 4
Church of England.....	514	10 7
Presbyterians.....	598	12 7
Methodists.....	611	12 4
Baptists.....	224	4 6
All others.....	199	4 2

According to religion the blind number:—

	Number.	Per cent.
Roman Catholics.....	1,757	52 1
Church of England.....	395	11 4
Presbyterians.....	429	12 7
Methodists.....	421	12 5
Baptists.....	205	6 0
All others.....	161	5 3

Roman Catholics exceed their proportion in the whole population; the others are all below their proportion.

People on this side of the Atlantic are sometimes asked to believe that the British radicals are intensely disloyal. No greater mistake was made. The present reign has witnessed many scenes which prove that British radicals are loyal to the core. They are uncompromising opponents of what they often mistakenly call "special privileges to classes," but let one talk of a republic or dare to speak disrespectfully of our Most Gracious Sovereign, and he will soon learn that a British radical is an ardent loyalist. Speaking of Queen Victoria's reign, the London Daily News, the leading radical newspaper of Britain, says:—"The English people have during late generations had particular reason to be pleased with and proud of their royal family. Queen Victoria is the first really Constitutional Sovereign who ever reigned in England. If this should seem to any one a somewhat startling assertion he has only to think the matter over for a few minutes and he will find that it is an absolute fact in our history. William IV. had to be dragged into the acceptance of constitutional principles. George IV. had to be driven to it. George III. could neither be dragged nor driven." Queen Victoria seems to be a born Constitutional Sovereign, loved by all her people.

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