



# The Volunteer Review

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### THE REVOLT

OF THE

British American Colonies,  
1764-84.

#### CHAPTER XXXV.

The Spanish declaration of war was followed by the march of troops to occupy the works of San Roque, thus investing Gibraltar by land whilst a naval force performed the same operation by sea. Instructions were also sent to all the Spanish Colonial Governors to be prepared for the event, and especially to Don Bermada Galves, the Governor of Louisiana, in order to enable him without delay to wrest West Florida from British control.

This Province had been acquired during the war of 1754-64, and confirmed to Great Britain by the Treaty of Paris in 1763; it was thinly settled, its western frontier was on the Mississippi and at a great distance in those days from Pensacola, the seat of government. The actual military force available was very inconsiderable, so that most of the important frontier posts were without any garrison. In 1778 the town of Manchac situated at the junction of the Iberville and Mississippi, with a ship mounting 16 guns, was captured by a desperado named Willing with only twenty-five men, who also plundered other settlements on the River Amit, and held possession of them until the Governor of Pensacola sent a few Indian hunters to the aid of the inhabitants, who thereupon drove out the filibusters. This circumstance caused a reinforcement to be sent to Pensacola in the beginning of 1779, under the command of Brigadier-General John Campbell. The whole regular force of the Province amounted to 1,800 men. Soon after his arrival he detached Lt.-Col. Dickson with 500 men to build a fort at Baton Rouge, but this work was not nearly finished when it was invested by the Spanish Governor of Louisiana with 2,000 men on the 12th of September. On the 21st a battery of heavy guns was opened on the works, and

after a cannonade of three hours they were declared to be untenable, a flag of truce was sent out and a capitulation effected by which the whole British settlements from Natchez downwards on the Mississippi were surrendered to Spain.

Nearly at the same time that Galves entered West Florida the Spanish Governor of Honduras made an unexpected attack on the British logwood cutters at Campeachy Bay and expelled them from their principal settlements at St. George's Key.

General Dalling, the Governor of Jamaica, being apprehensive of such an attack had already despatched a small detachment of Irish Volunteers under Capt. Dalrymple to the support of the logwood cutters on the Mosquito shore, with a supply of arms, ammunition and stores, and instructions to collect a force sufficient for their protection. The transports arrived on the 27th of September at Black River on the Mosquito shore, and were met there by the intelligence of the attack on St. George's Key. As soon as Captain Dalrymple had enlisted some Volunteers and collected about 60 Indians the squadron again put to sea. In their passage to Honduras they fell in with a squadron of ships of war commanded by Commodore Luttrell, consisting of the Charon, Lowestoffe, and Pomona, frigates, which had been detached by Admiral Sir Peter Parker to intercept some Spanish Register ships of which he had received intelligence. It was ascertained from the Commodore that the settlers at Honduras had retired to Truxillo and the islands of Rattam on the Mosquito shore, that the Spaniards had been already dispossessed of St. George's Key by His Majesty's armed schooner Racehorse, and that the Register ships, the objects of his cruise, had taken shelter in the harbour of Omoa and were too strongly protected by the batteries on shore to be attacked by sea. Captain Dalrymple at once agreed to unite forces and make a combined attack on Omoa, but it was first necessary to proceed to Truxillo where a number of logwood cutters were collected, armed and embodied.

On the 16th of October the land force, which did not exceed 500 men, landed at

Porto Cavallo, a harbor which was supposed to be not more than nine miles distant from Omoa. It was determined to surprise the fort, but the difficulties of a night march prevented the attempt, and after an investment of a few days it fell by a well planned and vigorous assault, in which only two men of the garrison were wounded. Two Register ships and some other prizes valued at three million dollars were captured in the harbor.

This important acquisition was afterwards abandoned in consequence of the inability of the garrison to defend it and the incapacity of the Admirals commanding in the West Indies. Admiral Byron was content with protecting British commerce, and let Comte d'Estaing escape after his repulse at Savannah. Admiral Hyde Parker, who succeeded him, took or destroyed the greater part of a convoy bound to Martinique in sight of Fort Royal and a French squadron under M. de Motte Piquet lying at that place, but totally failed to bring him to action, although the Frenchman placed his squadron completely in his power by leaving his anchorage to save one of his frigates—neither of those Admirals could fight without the weather gauge. Admiral Hyde Parker managed to capture the Alcemon, 30 guns; Blanche, 36 guns; Fortunari, 40 guns, and Elis, 35 gun frigates, part of Comte d'Estaing's fleet. The prizes taken from the French and Spanish marine amounted to £1,025,600 sterling, so that if no honor accrued the gain covered more than the loss,—a sentiment of no lofty character, but suitable enough to the period in which those transactions occurred.

The operations of 1779 were of a most unsatisfactory character and reflect no honor on either branch of the service, its effects upon the issue of the contest were most disastrous. The French fleet completely paralysed the efforts of the British General on the American continent, confining his operations solely to New York and vicinity, but pointing out clearly the true strategy on which the war should have been conducted, viz., a powerful fleet on the coast, with an army concentrated on the line of communication between the Eastern and Southern Provinces, but this was a problem beyond the