

THE BATTLE OF BLENHEIM

The Duke of Marlborough

Camp at Hochstet, 4 August 1704

Sir: I gave you an account on Sunday last of the situation we were then in, and that we expected to hear the enemy would pass the Danube at Lawringen, in order to attack Prince Eugene at eleven of the clock that night. We had an express from him, that the enemy were come, and desiring he might be reinforced as soon as possible. Whereupon I ordered my Brother Churchill to advance at one of the clock in the morning with his two battalions, and by three the whole Army was in motion; for the greater expedition, I ordered part of the troops to pass over the Danube, and follow the march of the twenty battalions; and with most of the Horse and the Foot of the First Line, I passed the Lech at Rain, and came over the Danube at Donawert. So that we all joined the prince that night, intending to advance and take this Camp at Hochstet: in order whereto we went out early on Tuesday with forty squadrons to view the ground, but found the enemy had already possessed themselves of it.

Whereupon we resolved to attack them, and accordingly we marched between three and four yesterday morning from the Camp at Munster, leaving all our tents standing. About six we came in view of the enemy, who, we found, did not expect so early an onset. The cannon began to play about half an hour after eight. They formed themselves in two bodies, the Elector with Monsieur Marsin and their troops on our right, and Monsieur de Tallard with all his on our left; which last fell to my share; they had two rivulets, besides a morass before them which we were obliged to pass over in their view, and Prince Eugene was forced to take a great compass to come to the enemy, so that it was one of the clock before the battle began. It lasted with great vigour till sunset, when the enemy were obliged to retire, and by the blessing of God we obtained a complete victory.

We have cut off great numbers of them, as well in the action as in the retreat, besides upwards of twenty squadrons of the French, which I pushed into the Danube, where we saw the greater part of them perish. Monsieur Tallard, with several of his general officers being taken prisoners at the same time, and in the village of Blenheim, which the enemy had entrenched and fortified, and where they made the greatest opposition, I obliged twenty-six entire battalions, and twelve squadrons of dragoons, to surrender themselves prisoners at discretion. We took likewise all their tents standing, with their cannon and ammunition, as also a great number of standards, kettle-drums, and colours in the action, so that I reckon the greatest part of Monsieur Tallard's army is taken or destroyed.

The bravery of all our troops on this occasion cannot be expressed, the Generals, as well as the officers and soldiers, behaving themselves with the greatest courage and resolution. The horse and dragoons were obliged to charge four or five several times. The Elector and Monsieur de Marsin were so advantageously posted, that Prince Eugene could make no impression on them, till the third attack, near seven at night, when he made a great slaughter of them. But being near a woodside, a great body of Bavarians retired into it, and the rest of that army retreated towards Lawringen, it being too late, and the troops too much tired to pursue them far.

I cannot say too much in praise of that Prince's good conduct, and the bravery of his troops on this occasion. You will please to lay this before her Majesty and his Royal Highness, to whom I send my Lord Tunbridge with the good news. I pray you likewise inform yourself, and let me know her Majesty's pleasure, as well relating to Monsieur Tallard and the other general officers, as for the disposal of near one thousand two hundred other officers, and between eight and nine thousand common soldiers, who being all made prisoners by her Majesty's troops, are entirely at her disposal: but as the charge of subsisting these officers and men must be very great, I presume her Majesty will be inclined that they be exchanged for any other prisoners that offer.

I should likewise be glad to receive her Majesty's directions for the disposal of the standards and colours, whereof I have not yet the number, but guess there cannot be less than one hundred, which is more than has been taken in any battle these many years.

You will easily believe that, in so long and vigorous an action, the English, who had so great a share in it, must have suffered as well in officers as men; but I have not the particulars.

Marlborough. *Marlborough's own account of the battle from The Complete History of Spain.* (London, 1707).