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The military career of John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough

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THE MILITARY CAREER OF
JOHN CHURCHILL,
DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH

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A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY
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THE MILITARY CAREER OF
JOHN CHURCHILL, DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH

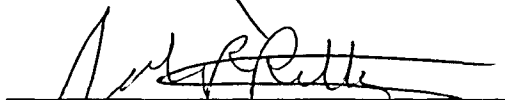
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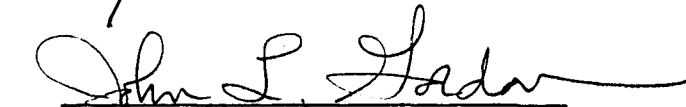
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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is two-fold: First, it is the author's intention to present a short biography of John Churchill from his birth in 1650 to the outbreak of the great continental war of 1700. The second and primary purpose is to evaluate Marlborough's military role during the War of Spanish Succession, while serving as Commander in Chief, Allied Armies, on the Continent. The four major battles to be emphasized in this section are Blenheim, 1704; Ramilles, 1706; Oudenarde, 1706; and Malpaquet, 1709, with primary emphasis on Blenheim. The central theme of this thesis is to illustrate how Marlborough's mastery of the battlefield completely revolutionized both strategy and tactics of land warfare. During each of the four campaigns, his tactics, overall strategy, logistics, support, lines of communication, cavalry and artillery employment, and personal leadership will be evaluated.

It has been said by some historians that Napoleon had no equal as a military commander; however, this author strongly disagrees and would offer the suggestion that had the two met on the battlefield under equal conditions, Marlborough would have emerged the victor.

The reader will note early that it was not the author's purpose to become involved in the complex political disputes of Marlborough's era. Only those specific occasions when Marlborough was directly involved will be mentioned.

To support the thesis that Marlborough's fame as a commander has been generally unheralded in the annals of military history, the following comments by a distinguished Field Marshall are included:

History records no greater soldier than Napoleon. For fifteen years he led the armies of France from triumph to triumph, each time against increasingly more powerful foes, until finally overcome by a combination of superior numbers and heavy attrition. For two decades, he was the most respected and most feared general in the world, noted for the audacious way he bent his enemies to his will by the decisiveness of his actions. Even today in this age of nuclear bombs that could turn the world into radioactive dust, Napoleon's campaigns are studied intensively in every military academy in the world. But as students analyzing the future course of global combat, you will find that Napoleon's military system is frustratingly difficult. At no time did he exhaustively set it down. Students are forced to rely on numerous analysis, maxims, and explanations, generally of intermissable length and impressive language.

I contend that the Napoleonic style was really a synthesis of reforms and innovations suggested by others. Thus his innovative contributions were few, and largely confined to the higher levels of warfare. But Napoleon systemized the reforms underway, and by doing so, forged the most effective army, and in turn, transformed the art of war itself.

But a point that I want to make is that many of Napoleon's innovations were merely copies of another great military leader—an often forgotten man - when discussing great heroes from the past; that is our own Marlborough. He was the master of employing men and equipment; he avoided the age old formal patterns of sieges and maneuvers; where Fredrick The Great often only fought when forced to.... Where Marshall Saxe, acclaimed as the greatest tactician of his time undertook a campaign only when the subjugation of an entire nation was at stake. His principles were aimed at the destruction of the enemy's main army; to move always for effect, then continually threaten the flanks and rear; always to cut the enemy's communications, his supply and retreat routes; always preserve your own communications and lines of supply and retreat; and know your enemy even as you are familiar with your own forces.¹

¹Colonel Joseph S. Boisvert; from notes taken at Blenheim while attending the British Command and Staff College in 1950 during an address by Field Marshall Bernard L. Montgomery (U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania).

CHAPTER I - John Churchill's Early Life

He was born in the time of the Grand Rebellion, when his father, for siding with the Royal Party against the Usurpers, who then prevailed, was under many pressures, which were common to such as adhered to the King. Yet notwithstanding the devastations and plunderings, and other nefarious practices and acts of cruelty which were daily committed by the licentious soldiery, no care was omitted on the part of his tender parents for a liberal and general education. For he was no sooner out of the hands of the women, but he was given unto those of sequestered clerymen, who made it his first concern to [instil] sound principles of religion into him, that the seeds of humane literature might take the deeper root, and from a just knowledge of the Omnipotence of the Creator, might have a true sense of the dependence of the creature.²

John Churchill was born on 24 June 1650 in the family home of Ashe. Baptized by Reverend Matthew Drake, rector of the Ashe Parish, the young Churchill shortly became heir to the declining family fortune upon the death of his elder brother, Winston, in 1654.³

²Author unknown, The Lives of the Two Illustrious Generals (London, 1713), 2 (partially complete copy contained in the U.S. Military Research Library as part of the Banks collection, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania).

³Thomas Lediard, Gent., The Life of John Duke of Marlborough, Prince of the Roman Empire (London, 1736), 6-7.

Churchill's early life at Ashe was spent under a difficult environment. The elder Churchill, a Royalist country gentleman, had been heavily penalized for his active role as a cavalier cavalry captain during the Revolution. Financially ruined by the Roundhead Parliament following the execution of Charles, the only method by which he could escape imprisonment was to forfeit his entire estate. Thus the family, now impoverished, returned to the half-destroyed homeplace at Ashe.⁴

The elder Churchill, a lawyer by profession, had considerably improved his family's financial and social status prior to the Revolution. In an era when a coat of arms and background were extremely significant, Churchill could trace his ancestry back to two stalwart warriors who accompanied William the Conqueror from Normandy, and could point with pride to the Churchill who gallantly fought with Stephen against the Empress Matilda. From the day of William I through Henry VIII, there had always been a Churchill in some lofty position closely tied to the Royal Court.⁵

⁴Author Unknown, The Life of the Duke of Marlborough: A Dutch Biography, trans. Lieutenant Colonel William R. Keantz (U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania 1919), 20-21.

⁵Winston S. Churchill, Marlborough; His Life and Times (New York, 1933), Vol. I, 33. See also Chapter I of Lediard, The Life of John, Duke of Marlborough, especially 14-19.

Winston Churchill's losses under the Cromwellian government were brief for the Restoration saw Charles II graciously reward the loyalist cavaliers who had fought for the crown by restoring many of them to their former positions of prestige and wealth. He was raised to the Order of the Middle Temple in 1661 and appointed a court justice some two months later. Following his election to Parliament he received even greater positions of responsibility from the restored monarchy.

John Churchill's father was dispatched to Ireland early in 1662 to preside over a Royal Commission established for the purpose of redistributing sequestered lands among former Royalist nobles. In Ireland young John Churchill began his formal education in the Dublin Free Grammar School and remained throughout the period that his father headed the Royal Commission.⁶ In late 1663 the elder Churchill was summoned back to England and knighted by the king for his dedicated service to the crown.⁷

At the age of fourteen, John Churchill was introduced to the Royal Court. Joining the entourage of the Duke of York as a page, he quickly won a favorable recognition from the future King of

⁶Lediard, Life of Marlborough, 69.

⁷Churchill, Marlborough, 42.

England, and was promoted to head page, a considerable honor for a youth of John's age. It was during this period that John Churchill attended St. Paul's School. The Great Fire of 1666 destroyed most of the school and all of its records, and no accurate information exists today concerning his academic record.

While accompanying the Duke of York on the numerous reviews of his two squadrons of guards, the military spirit inherited from his father was quite evident. The Duke noticed the excitement exhibited by Churchill while watching the precision drills of the pikeman and musketeers, and was soon aware of his strong inclination to take up the profession of arms.⁸ John's enthusiasm was rewarded by the Duke of York, and just prior to his sixteenth birthday, he was given a pair of colors and a commission in the guards. Some historians have commented that his reward was given only as a result of the Duke's strong attachment to Arabella Churchill, John's older sister.⁹ They have taken great pains to promote this idea, and even suggested that young Churchill should have demanded

⁸Ibid., 71

⁹Mark A. Thompson, "Louis XIV and The Origins of the War of Spanish Succession," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (London, 1954), Vol. IV, 81.

this embarrassing affair be halted. Lediard suggests that John Churchill's appointment into the Duke's guards occurred before the "Lady Arabella" and the future monarch had become involved in their affair.¹⁰

Life in the Royal Court was a fascinating experience for Churchill. Tall, handsome, and of noble appearance, he rapidly became well known throughout court circles, and in particular with the young mistresses that surrounded the King.¹¹ Churchill's duties were practically negligible except upon rare occasions when he would be called upon to fulfill missions of particular importance by the future James II.¹² The Duke thought so highly of John Churchill that he seldom traveled outside the confines of the Royal Household without his company. While in court, Churchill met and formed a close bond with Sidney Godolphin, one of the King's pages. The two youths had much in common and their friendship would endure for over forty years.¹³ Churchill would need an ally like Godolphin during the turbulent war years of the early 1700's and their close friendship

¹⁰Lediard, Life of Marlborough, 60.

¹¹Ibid., 80.

¹²Ibid., 103-104.

¹³Ibid., 110.

would never be broken, even during the most bitter years of the long war.

Much has been written about Churchill's amorous adventures while serving as a page to the Duke of York. Shortly after Churchill's arrival in the royal court, one of the most beautiful women of Europe was also presented to the English Royalty. The Lady Barbara Villiers, a second cousin of John Churchill and wife of the Earl of Castlemaine,¹⁴ soon had the "gossipers" of the court in a turmoil, for in addition to her many noble conquests, she later became the mistress of Charles II. Winston Churchill, in his three volume biography of Marlborough, freely admits that his famous ancestor was undoubtedly caught up in an amorous affair with this beautiful woman. He further admits that this affair endured for some time, and that he was the father of her daughter and possibly another of her children.¹⁵

¹⁴Churchill, Marlborough, Vol. I, 52.

¹⁵Ibid., 59.

CHAPTER II

HIS EARLY MILITARY CAREER

By 1669 Churchill had become tired of life in the Royal Court and was impatient to be in action in some far away land. This was not untypical for young men holding military commissions, and through the efforts of his patron, the Duke of York, Churchill was awarded a naval commission and joined a squadron sailing for Tangiers.¹

Marlborough's biographers do not provide much information concerning his role during the naval engagements with the Moors during this period. William Coxe, for example, makes no mention of Churchill's role as an aide to Admiral Allin during the blockades, and Thomas Lediard completely ignores his naval service. It is known that before 1670, Churchill requested and received a commission as a subaltern in a foot regiment. In this capacity, he was involved in several skirmishes with the Moors. Francis Grote writes that Marlborough's military role was significant, and that because he

¹Ibid., 100.

eagerly sought adventure by volunteering for action within the area of heaviest fighting, his zeal and enthusiasm were well regarded by his superior commanders.²

The Duke of York recalled Churchill in 1672. Tales of his daring exploits on the Battlefield had reached the court, and the Duke, fearing for his young protegee, ordered his return.³ He returned to England a hero, much admired for his bravery while fighting the Mediterranean pirates. The change in this young warrior was notable, for the page who left the court some three years earlier, returned as a battle-tested man.⁴

The affair with Barbara Villiers was soon resumed. This time, however, Churchill faced the King's wrath, for Barbara, now the Duchess of Cleveland, had become the mistress of Charles II. On one occasion, to the annoyance of Charles, he caught Churchill in the wine cupboard in the Duchess's bed chamber but forgave the

²Francis Grote, Military Antiquities: A History of the English Army from the Conqueror to the Present Time (London, 1801), 201.

³Ibid., 204.

⁴John H. Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough (London, 1926), 109-110.

the repentant usurper." On another occasion, Churchill discovered in Lady Barbara's bed, saved her honor by leaping from a window of considerable height into the courtyard below. For this act of bravery, she supposedly presented her gallant young lover with a gift of five thousand pounds.⁶

Lord Macaulay, in his multi-volume History of England, denounced Churchill for his amorous actions while in the Royal Court:

He was thrifty in his very vices and levied ample contributions on ladies enriched by the spoils of more liberal lovers. He was kept by the most profuse impervious and shameless harlots. He subsisted upon the infamous wages bestowed upon him by the Duchess of Cleveland.⁷

Thomas Lediard and William Coxe treat the affair as typical of seventeenth-century court life, and Lord Macaulay's opinions might be interpreted as reflecting the "prim and proper" attitudes of his own Victorian era.

⁵Ibid., 124.

⁶Churchill, Marlborough, Vol. I, 60.

⁷Thomas Babington Macaulay, The History of England (New York, 1861), Vol. IV, 281.

Political and military conditions throughout Europe in the late seventeenth century were chaotic. France, under the powerful Louis XIV, had risen to such prestige that she was center of arts, languages, society and literature throughout Europe. The "Sun King" was the pre-eminent monarch on the continent, and his commercial interests managed by astute ministers had enabled France to make strong gains in respect to other European rivals. France's standing army of 140,000 professional soldiers was not only Europe's largest but one of the best trained.⁸ Her general officers such as Turenne, Conde, Vauban, and Martinet were unsurpassed for their brilliance, tenacity and innovative tactics on the battlefield. If there was a weakness in the French military system, it was not in the ground forces, but was in the navy.

England at this time stood aloof from continental problems. The Parliamentary and Royal disputes had divided the country and practically unarmed her except for a strong navy. English and Dutch

⁸This opinion belongs solely to the author. While it is recognized that the Prussian Army in the late 1600's was a formidable force, it is questionable that their experience in battles involving large numbers of troops, battlefield techniques, logistical support, engineering capabilities and leadership was equal to that of the French Army.

relations were confusing and turbulent. Both had joined into an alliance against France, but, even while this was in effect, England had joined France in the secret Treaty of Dover against Holland.⁹ Charles disliked Louis XIV, but, fearing a struggle against an overwhelming force if not supporting France, joined in the effort against the Dutch in hopes of sharing in the expected triumphs and prizes from the alliance with the "Sun King".

In 1672 Louis crossed the Rhine River and invaded the Spanish Netherlands. Simultaneously, England declared war on Holland. The overwhelming odds against the Dutch should have resulted in their almost immediate defeat. However, wars are unpredictable, and through the gallant efforts of the Dutch soldiers led by the young Prince of Orange, the vast dykes of Holland were opened to stop the invaders before the conquest could be completed.

Still a page to the Duke of York, now heading the Royal Admiralty during the early stages of the war, Churchill accompanied the Duke as a naval ensign. For a man of limited naval experience, the Duke proved a capable leader, and his actions at Sole Bay prevented a complete destruction of the English fleet.¹⁰ Churchill,

⁹David Ogg, England in the Reign of Charles II (Oxford, 1934), Vol. I, 357.

¹⁰Churchill, Marlborough, Vol. I, 88.

for his bravery during the costly engagement, received two battle-field promotions and rose to the rank of captain. Louis' next invasion was set for early 1673, and this time Charles dispatched six thousand horse and foot troops under the Duke of Monmouth to support the French Army.¹¹

Churchill's company of grenadiers was attached to Monmouth, and he served the Duke's right-hand man throughout the coming campaign. Louis, ably assisted by Marshal Turenne and Prince Conde, quickly over-ran most of the United Provinces. Churchill's personal bravery at the head of his company was noted by Turenne on several occasions. The Marshal was so favorably impressed by Churchill following one particular act of heroism that during the rest of the campaign he addressed Churchill as "My handsome young Englishman".¹²

Churchill's heroism is exalted by his biographers, including an early eighteenth century book by an unknown author. The author

¹¹Lediard, Life of Marlborough, 217. Monmouth, the illegitimate son of Charles II, was one of England's most successful commanders during the continental conflicts of the late 1600's. It is interesting to note that although he was Marlborough's immediate commanding officer during many occasions in Marlborough's early military career, the two would clash as opponents during Monmouth's attempt to unseat James II in 1685.

¹²Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. I, 281.

related how the dashing captain led his company through exploding mines in a daring night assault and planted the banner of King Louis on the parapet.¹³ On another occasion, even after being painfully wounded, he remained at Monmouth's side and prevented his capture when the regiment was forced to withdraw.¹⁴ The Duke's letter to Charles II following this incident closed by stating: "I owe my life to the bravery of this gallant officer."¹⁵

Churchill's most famous exploit during that short war occurred during a costly siege against a fortress south of Maestricht. During one particularly heavy engagement, a French Lieutenant Colonel became disheartened and fled with his battalion under a Dutch attack. Marshal Turenne, in viewing this incident, said to a nearby general:

I lay you, says he, a supper and a dozen bottles of the best Florence that my handsome young Englishman regains the position with half the number of men that other fellow lost it.¹⁶

Captain Churchill, who was within hearing, immediately accepted the parley and won the Marshal his wager, as well as the applause of the entire army. For this gallantry Turenne recommended his promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. Final approval was given by Louis

¹³Author unknown, The Lives of the Two Illustrious Generals (London, 1713), 60.

¹⁴Ibid., 66.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Ibid., 91.

XIV and Churchill was placed in command of an English regiment vacated by the resignation of Lord Peterborough.¹⁷

Churchill remained with Turenne's army, and then joined Louis XIV in the final assault of this stage of the war. Maestricht had been completely surrounded by the Allies and, under the French king's guidance,¹⁸ the communications trenches were constructed in a "zig-zag" fashion towards the first lines of defense. On the day the trenches reached the outer walls of the fortress, Monmouth, now a Lieutenant General, was selected as "General of the Trenches". Receipt of this honor meant that he would lead the final assault as a tribute of Turenne's esteem. French and Swiss Guards assaulted but were driven back by heavy artillery fire. Churchill, who occupied a reserve position, saw this withdrawal and immediately moved his grenadier companies forward. He led his men through a hail of withering fire, breached

¹⁷Ibid., 96-97. Churchill, in his multi-volume History of Marlborough, confuses this promotion with a later incident. Both Lediard and Coxe agree with the unknown biographer. It was at a later date, while serving with Turenne, that Louis XIV promoted John Churchill to Colonel.

¹⁸Churchill, Marlborough, Vol I, 94. Churchill and other biographers agree that Louis XIV always took personal credit for the final victory when commanding in the field. He would say "Vauban proposed me the steps that I thought the best."

the enemy position, and planted the French colors on the wall with his own hand.¹⁹

When the army returned to England, Charles II reviewed the entire contingent of Monmouth's troops. William Coxe writes that the King was charmed by the marching veterans and praised them highly for their part in the victory. When Monmouth related how Churchill's personal gallantry had played such an important part during the final assault, Charles immediately promoted him to permanent Lieutenant Colonel of Sir Charles Littleton's regiment of foot.²⁰ Churchill's patron, the Duke of York, was so impressed by the gallant behavior of his young favorite that he raised him to the post of Master of his Wardrobe and Gentleman of his Bedchamber.²¹

In 1674 England withdrew from the war and John Churchill had no opportunity to take his recently gained command into combat. For the next year, nothing worth mentioning occurred in his life. Lediard writes that the peace left him at full leisure to pursue

¹⁹Lediard, Marlborough, 209.

²⁰Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. I, 289-290. Although Churchill had been previously promoted to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, it was under a French Command. Until his promotion by King Charles, he was still a captain.

²¹Ibid., 291.

his interests at home, such as attending his aging parents. During this period Churchill met and fell deeply in love with Miss Sarah Jennings, who had been admitted to the Royal Court at an early age and grown up under the watchful protection of the Duchess of York. Sarah became a constant companion to the young Princess Anne, and the close bonds of friendship between the two girls endured through most of Anne's reign.²² Sarah became deeply attached to the tall handsome military hero. Their courtship during the next several years was often stormy, with constant complaints, bickering, apologies, tender love letters and reconciliations. Resistance by both John Churchill and Sarah's parents nearly destroyed the romance. Churchill's inheritance would be very small, which highly displeased Miss Jennings' parents. Her inheritance would result in a "mere pittance" since she was one of many children. This alienated the elder Churchills particularly Winston, since he had "fixed his eyes" upon Catherine Sedley, daughter and heiress of Sir Charles Sedley, a man of renowned wealth.²³

John Churchill escaped the turmoil of his love life in late 1674 by returning to the continent where he rejoined the small

²²Ibid., 294.

²³Churchill, Marlborough, Vol. I, 125.

English contingent under the French command. The Duke of York, realizing Churchill's complicated situation, readily gave his approval for the leave of absence from his personal services.²⁴

For several months no opportunity for military advancement occurred. Then, in November, a vacancy for a commander opened in a composite regiment with various unattached company sized units which had been organized. Marshal Turenne again recommended his "handsome young Englishman" to be its commanding officer, and since it would be a field promotion under a French command, Louis XIV was obliged to approve and present the commission. At Versailles, the "Sun King" promoted John Churchill to a full colonel in a combined English and French regiment.²⁵

From Versailles, Churchill accompanied Turenne's army across the Rhine, through Heilbron, and took an active part in ravaging the Palatinate. From there, the army moved against the Imperialists at Enzheim on 4 January 1675, which resulted in one of the greatest battles on the continent until the early 1700's. Turenne's forces consisted of ten thousand horse and twelve thousand foot, and was opposed by a force almost twice as large.²⁶ In addition to Churchill

²⁴Author unknown, Lives of the Two Illustrious Generals, 151.

²⁵Ibid., 152.

²⁶Lediard, Marlborough, 287.

there was another young officer in Turenne's army by the name of Boufflers, who would become familiar to Churchill for they would meet again in Flanders as opponents some twenty years later. The bloody battle resulted in an opportunity for Churchill to demonstrate his bravery during the countless assaults, although over half of his regiment was lost.²⁷ Monmouth, who joined Turenne just prior to the battle, assaulted and his cavalry was nearly destroyed. Turenne encamped on the battlefield the following day, but the casualties on both sides were so high that neither could claim a victory. Lord Feversham, who served under Monmouth's command, praised Churchill's performance by stating "that no one in the world could have done better than Mr. Churchill has done,"²⁸ and Turenne lauded him in his dispatches to Louis XIV. Churchill remained with his unit under the French Marshal through Germany and around the Vosges Mountains, which would be the scene of one of the most bitter struggles some two hundred years later during the First World War. When special missions were planned such as raids or attacks against enemy rear positions, Churchill was selected to lead the combined force on numerous occasions. The daring attack across the Breusch River

²⁷Ibid., 290.

²⁸Ibid., 291.

at Enzheim was a masterpiece in land warfare, and Churchill would well remember the lesson at Blenheim, when he crossed the Nechel to destroy the French Army.

In 1676 Churchill returned once again to England as a hero. He ended the affair with Lady Barbara, although she became so emotionally distraught that she left England for France.²⁹ The romance with Sarah Jennings continued, even against the advice of his friends who urged that he not marry the "flippant girl" only half his age.³⁰

By 1677, Charles II had become one of Churchill's strongest admirers, although it can be assumed that the Duke of York's constant praise was primarily responsible for his good graces with the king. When seeking a trusted confidant for a delicate mission to Holland to renew the Triple Alliance, Charles personally selected Churchill to carry the secret instructions to the Prince of Orange. The mission was preparatory for the conclusion of an offensive and defensive alliance with the United Provinces, planned as a result of both England and Holland becoming seriously concerned over the conduct of Louis XIV and his threatening gestures beyond the fortresses of Flanders and Brabant.³¹

²⁹Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. I, 300.

³⁰Ibid., 301.

³¹Author unknown, Lives of the Two Illustrious Generals, 170.

While separated from Sarah Jennings, he continued to write at frequent intervals, and those who doubted his sincerity and love for the young woman should have an opportunity to scan his many letters, most of which have been recorded. One such letter written just prior to their marriage reads as follows:

I [writ] to you from Antwerp, which I hope you have received before now, for I would be glad you should hear from me by every post. I met with some difficulty in my business with the Prince of Orange, so that I was forced to write to England, which will cause me to be two or three days longer abroad than I should have been. But because I would lose no time, I dispatch all other things in the meantime, for I do long to be with you - you being dearer to me than my own life. On Sunday A.M., I shall leave this place so that on Monday at [nite] I shall be at Breda where the Prince and Princess are, and from there you shall be sure to hear from me again. Till then, my soul's farewell.³²

Following his secret marriage to Sarah Jennings in 1678,³³ John Churchill became a constant companion to the Duke of York on his ventures outside of England. The Parliamentary feuds had resulted in Charles sending his brother away until tempers cooled, and the

³²Ibid., 216.

³³None of Churchill's biographers have listed a definite date of marriage, since it remained a secret for several months. Most agree, however, that it probably occurred in late 1678.

problems of exclusion and restrictions upon a future monarch could be solved.³⁴ Visits to Brussels and Scotland took up much of the early 1680's and it was also during this period that the Duke promoted Churchill from a regiment of foot to command a regiment of dragoons. In 1683 he was created Lord Churchill and Baron of Aymouth in the Kingdom of Scotland,³⁵ as well as commander of the third troop of horse, which was the King's personal guard unit at the palace.

While serving the Duke in Scotland, the first breach occurred between the two men. Churchill refused to carry out instructions from York to join in the harsh punishment of Presbyterians even though the Duke actively supported the Episcopalian effort. Although James was disappointed with Churchill, his refusal was not held against him, and he continued to be the most trusted member in the Duke's household. During the crisis of 1679-1681, the Whigs failed to secure the Duke of York's exclusion from the crown, although Charles wisely advised him to remain in Scotland.

³⁴Rumors of James' conversion to the Catholic Church had been widespread. The question facing the Whig nobles was how would James react to the Test Act which excluded Papists from all offices of State? The answer would soon be apparent as James would be crowned King of England following the death of Charles II in 1685. However, his strong Catholic faith and unwillingness to allow complete religious freedom throughout England would contribute to his downfall and flight to France. For an excellent account, see William Lecky's A History of England in the Eighteenth Century, Chapter 6, especially pages 310-331.

³⁵Lediard, Marlborough, 211.

Churchill did not become involved in the squabble. He took no public view, nor did he accept a seat in Parliament. He did not want to become involved in the political disputes for he was too conscious of his own frankness and temper.³⁶ Religiously, he was fully committed to the Church of England, which would eventually create a permanent break with the future king. He was too devoted to the Protestant faith to change, and continued to profess the Protestant religion even though he was fully aware of the Duke's displeasure.³⁷

On one occasion, he related to a friend:

Though I have an aversion to popery, I am no less [averse] to persecution for conscience sake. I deem it the highest act of injustice to set anyone aside from his inheritance. You have suppositions of internal evils, when nothing that is actual appears to preclude him from the exercise of his rights.³⁸

Although York had not been formally banished from England, he continued to remain in Scotland. During this period, Churchill acted as liaison between the two and made numerous visits to London which also gave him opportunities to visit his wife, who was still serving as mistress to Princess Anne.³⁹ On one occasion when Charles fell

³⁶Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. I, 273.

³⁷Ibid., 213.

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Ibid., 279.

ill, Churchill, who was in London, was hastily dispatched to Scotland to return with the Duke. Charles survived, however, and the Parliamentary uproar was so great that York immediately returned to Scotland.⁴⁰

In late 1681 Churchill was sent to the Royal Court by York on a most important mission. The Duke strongly objected to Charles calling for a new Parliament as he felt it would exclude him completely or greatly restrict him once he became king. He also objected to an alliance with Spain and Holland against France, as he believed Parliament would become so strong that his chances of becoming king would be negligible.⁴¹

While in Scotland, Churchill continued to correspond with his new wife.

I [writ] to you last [nite] by the express and since that I have no good news to send you, The [yacts] are not yet come, nor do we know when they will, for the wind is directly against them, so that you may believe that I am not in a very good humor, since I dream nothing so much as being with you. The only comfort that I had here was hearing from you, and now if we should be stopped by contrary winds and not hear from you, you guess with what satisfaction I shall then pass my time. If you love me, you will pray for fair winds, so that we not stay here, not be long at sea.⁴²

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., p. 287.

When Charles II finally put down the exclusionists and popular party, York returned to the Royal Court accompanied by the homesick Churchill. John Churchill's earnest efforts to withdraw Sarah from Princess Anne's side were still unsuccessful, for she had become too dear to the withdrawn and unattractive princess. Since Sarah was serving as Lady of her royal highness's bedchamber, even the Duke of York would not intercede in his behalf. Churchill was troubled by his wife's remaining in Anne's company on a near continual basis, but in later years, he discovered that the future queen's devotion to his wife paid handsome rewards.

Throughout 1684, John and Sarah Churchill enjoyed their first full year together. They refurnished the old Jennings' home at Holywell, close to St. Albans, and he enjoyed the companionship of his young daughter Henrietta, born in July 1681.⁴³ He was also included as one of the king's regular tennis players along with Godolphin and Ferversham. Late in 1684, another daughter was born and named Anne. It was also during this same year that Churchill was dispatched to Denmark to escort the young prince who would marry Princess Anne.⁴⁴

In early 1685 Charles was dying and Churchill was dispatched to Brussels to notify the vacationing Duke of York. Following his

⁴³The Churchill's first daughter, Hariett, died shortly after birth while John Churchill was serving with the Duke of York in Scotland.

⁴⁴Churchill, Marlborough, Vol. I, 215.

death during the night of 26 January, his younger brother became England's fourth Stuart monarch as James II. The new king continued to lavish rewards upon John Churchill, and shortly after his coronation, created him a Baron of Sandridge, in the County of Hereford.⁴⁵ Lord Churchill was also designated as Ambassador to France for the purpose of officially notifying the French court of Charles' death. James ordered Churchill to "observe exactly the ceremony and state with which he was received so that he could pay equal respects to those sent to England in return."⁴⁶ While in Paris John Churchill commented: "If the King should attempt to change our religion, I would quit his service."⁴⁷

Lord Churchill's recall from Paris in June 11, 1685 by James II was unexpected at such an early date, although the crisis facing the new monarch was critical. The "bastard" Monmouth, who had landed only days earlier at Lyme Regis, had begun his "defense of the Protestant religion" and taken up arms against the king.⁴⁸ Churchill was immediately promoted to Brigadier General and placed under Lord

⁴⁵Lediard, Marlborough, 267.

⁴⁶Gilbert Burnet, Lord Bishop of Salisbury, History of His Own Time (London, 1875), Vol. II, 401.

⁴⁷Ibid., 402.

⁴⁸Author unknown, The Lives of the Two Illustrious Generals, 200.

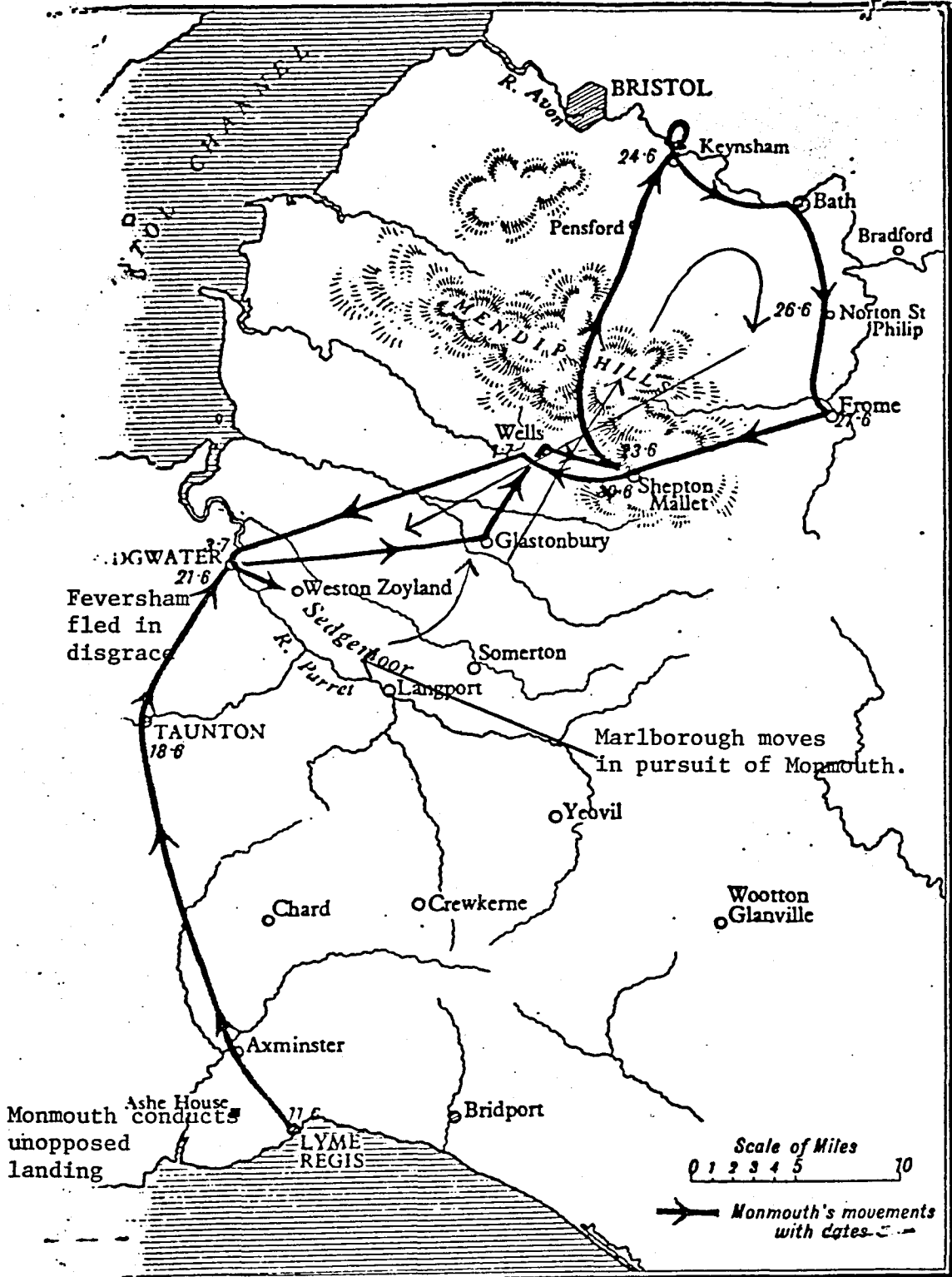
Feversham, the designated commander of the king's forces. Monmouth was able to rally a sizeable army under his banner, while Churchill suffered a serious shortage of professional soldiers. For the first few weeks, Monmouth's successes were such that Churchill urgently requested James to recall the English and Scottish regiments from Holland to assist in the battle.⁴⁹ (See Sketch Map A.)

Churchill's command, which consisted of six troops of horse and nine companies of foot, moved more than 120 miles in four days to strike Monmouth at Glastonbury on 22 June, a march resembling King Harold's move to Stamford Bridge some six hundred years earlier. His continual raids against Monmouth's rear guards and supply trains prevented his army from organizing for a set battle against Feversham. It would seem unusual for Churchill to be engaged in battle against his former mentor, however, Churchill's allegiance at this time unquestionably was to James. When Monmouth summoned Churchill to parley, Churchill did not even send a reply but continued to press the attack. Although Feversham commanded the king's forces, Churchill planned and directed the campaign,⁵⁰ and until his superior interfered, the Royalist army was gaining the upper hand. Feversham's

⁴⁹Ibid., 211.

⁵⁰Francis Grote, Military Antiquities, Respecting a History of the English Army from the Conquest to the Present Time (London, 1801), 210.

THE CAMPAIGN OF SEDGEMOOR, 1685



Map reproduced from Churchills Marlborough vol I. Comments and light arrows provided by this author to depict highlights of the campaign.

blunderings gave Monmouth one final opportunity, and on the night of 5 July he struck in a surprise assault. Feversham hastily withdrew, and only Churchill's courage and personal conduct during the initial confusion and terror prevented a rout.⁵¹ He rapidly reorganized a first line of defense with the foot troops, and then directed devastating artillery fire upon the attackers. For Monmouth, this was the decisive blow, and his army was routed and destroyed.⁵²

Following Monmouth's rebellion, James became far less receptive to the Church of England. The slaughter of Sedgemoor was followed by the Bloody Assizes. Executions ravaged the countryside, rebels were sold as slaves, and the wealthy families who supported Monmouth along his route of march paid heavy fines in lieu of their lives.

James began to arouse suspicion that he planned to turn England into a Catholic nation and to become an absolute monarch. He maintained a large standing army with Catholic officers, and to the dismay of Parliament, proceeded to publicly support the Catholic church. Churchill strongly advised James against making any public denouncement of the Protestant religion, and like many others, was

⁵¹Ibid., 211.

⁵²John Henry Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough (London, 1926), 49.

reassured by the King's solemn declarations of religious freedom.⁵³ Leaders such as Halifax, Danby, Nottingham and Devonshire who bitterly opposed James' policies fell from influence.⁵⁴ Churchill tried to warn James of the dangerous path he was taking during the summer of 1687, but the King would not heed his advice.⁵⁵ In Winchester, after James "touched" over 5,000 people during a religious ceremony, he asked Churchill, "What do my subjects say about the ceremony of the touch?" Churchill replied that "they do not approve of it and consider it an introduction of popery."⁵⁶ William Coxe writes that following a bitter argument, Churchill, in an emotional voice told James he would always remain a Protestant, and there was no way that the king could unite England by showing favoritism to Catholic subjects.⁵⁷

On 17 July Churchill wrote his first letter to the Prince of Orange, telling him of Anne's determination to face death before changing her religion. He also placed his own religion above the king,

⁵³Lediard, Marlborough, 297.

⁵⁴Ibid.

⁵⁵Burnet, History of His Own Time, 486.

⁵⁶Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. I, 306.

⁵⁷Ibid., 307. Also Maurice Ashley, The Glorious Revolution of 1688 (New York, 1966), 61.

and closed by stating that "In all but this, he would gladly die for the king."⁵⁸ Churchill was severely criticized by many nobles for not changing his faith, and it is unquestionable that he was torn between his duty to his king and that of his religion and country.⁵⁹

Throughout the spring, pressure from James increased and the country became more divided.⁶⁰ Churchill continued corresponding with William, and the king's advisors begged him to rid himself of Churchill's services.⁶¹ James would not take this step, for he believed that Churchill's loyalty to him was so strong that nothing could cause him to withdraw from the king's side. It may have been that James realized if Churchill left, the entire army would follow, for undoubtedly, he was the army's spokesman and its idol. Finally, Churchill's decision was made; he would sever all loyalty, extinguish

⁵⁸Ibid., 333.

⁵⁹Ibid., 335.

⁶⁰In May 1687 James issued a second Indulgence and had it posted in each Protestant Parish. This resulted in many Protestants banding together in support of a national cause. When Archbishop Sancroft and six other prominent bishops petitioned James to withdraw the Indulgence, they were sent to the Tower and the judges who ruled in their favor were punished. James refused to call a Parliament or to negotiate which crippled his supporters and resulted in serious correspondence with William by many influential men, including both Tories and Whigs. For an excellent account of James' final days, see Keith Feiling's A History of England, especially pages 573-577.

⁶¹Lediard, Marlborough, 306.

all gratitudes, and take all necessary measures to support his religion, and would support William in any way possible. Lord Macaulay places much blame upon Churchill for the conspiracy, but does not adequately substantiate this accusation. Generals Kirk and Trelawny, both senior to Churchill, had determined to withdraw long before, and their decision to support William strengthened Churchill's.⁶²

On 4 August he put himself in William's hands. It might appear that William would be very cynical when receiving the offer of the traitor; however, Lediard writes that William realized that James had finally alienated his most loyal subject and welcomed his offer.⁶³

At the War Council the night before William's landing, James promoted Churchill to Lieutenant General and to command a brigade.⁶⁴ It was Churchill's final meeting with the king, for afterwards he departed with a few trusted officers and 400 men to ride south. He could not be content to see James destroy the Protestant religion, and after making the necessary arrangements for Sarah and Anne to leave the Royal Household, he joined William at Sherbourn. His

⁶²Ibid., 206.

⁶³Ibid., 320.

⁶⁴The 17th century English Brigade would be similar to a divisional size force in today's army, and consisted of both horse and foot troops, and several artillery pieces.

defection meant that bloodshed would not occur, for the 40,000 man army of James would lay down its arms. It proved a blessing for William, because his small force, scattered during the Channel crossing, would have been no match for Churchill's veterans. Marshal Schomberg, upon receiving Churchill, told William that "he was the first Lieutenant General he had ever known to desert his colors,"⁶⁵ but William, a much better judge of men than his marshal, retained Churchill in his military guard and raised him as a Gentleman of His Bed Chamber.

Much has been written about Marlborough's defection to William, but his final letter to James exemplifies his deep conviction to the Protestant religion:

Sir,

Since men are seldom suspected of sincerity when they act contrary to their interests; and though my dutiful behavior to your majesty, in the worst of times for which I acknowledge my poor services much overpaid may not be sufficient to incline you to a (charitable) interpretation of my actions; yet I hope the great advantage I enjoyed under your Majesty - which I can never expect in any other change of government, may reasonably convince your Majesty and the world, that I am acted by a higher principle, when I offer than violence to my inclination and interest, as to desert your Majesty at a time when your affairs seem to challenge strictest obedience from all your subjects, much more from one who lies under the greatest personal obligations imaginable to your Majesty.

This, Sir, could proceed from nothing but the inviolable dictates of my own conscience and necessary concern for my religion, which no good man can oppose, and with which, I am instructed nothing ought to come in competition. Heaven

⁶⁵Lediard, Marlborough, 326.

knows with what partiality my dutiful opinion of your Majesty has hitherto represented those unhappy designs, which inconsiderate and self-interested men have framed against your Majesty's true interest and the Protestant religion. But, as I no longer join with such to give a pretense by conquest, to bring them to effect. So will I always, with the hazard of my life and fortune endeavor to preserve your royal person and lawful rights, with all the tender concern and dutiful respect that become

Your Majesty's

Most Dutiful and Obligated
Subject and Servant

Churchill⁶⁶

Churchill was among the sixty-peers who met at Westminster on January 1, 1689, and pledged themselves to carry out the promises made in the declaration of the Prince of Orange, and to punish all attempts on his person.⁶⁷ He was also one of the ninety peers who four days later addressed to the Prince, praying him to summon a general assembly to undertake the conduct of public affairs, and to take charge of the security of Ireland. The assembly was composed of the freely elected members of Parliament who had sat as such under Charles II,⁶⁸ and additionally consisted of the Lord Mayor of London, the Aldermen, and fifty members of the Corporation, and was imbued

⁶⁶Author unknown, The Lives of the Two Illustrious Generals, 261.

⁶⁷Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough, 61.

⁶⁸Coxe, Memoirs of John Duke of Marlborough, 82.

with the character and force of a national resolution. The Parliamentary election which shortly followed was remarkable for its tranquility and its freedom from pressure and partnership.⁶⁹

William immediately gazetted Churchill as Lieutenant General of Forces, and ordered him to reorganize the army with the object of removing all persons whose loyalty to the new authority was suspected. His brother, Charles, who had proven a capable commander on the continent, received Major General Oglethorpe's Troop of Life Guards. The Fourth Troop, raised under King James mainly from Roman Catholics, was disbanded and replaced by a Dutch Troop.⁷⁰

Churchill's role in the question of William being made regent or king would plague him in later years. In the two houses of Parliament there were heated debates on this all-important question. "Was the throne legally vacant, and was it technically or constitutionally possible to make William king or only a regent?" The Tories, for the most part, took the position of denying a vacancy in virtue of the royal right. The Commons were almost unanimous for the Whig view that James, by his departure, had broken the contract held to exist between the king and his people, and therefore the throne was vacant.⁷¹

⁶⁹Keith Felling, A History of England From the Coming of the English to 1938 (London, 1948), 71.

⁷⁰Edwards, Short Life of Marlborough, 70.

⁷¹Ibid., 71. For an excellent account of the critical debates pertaining to whether William would be elected regent or king, see Ashley's The Glorious Revolution of 1688, especially pages 181-185.

William was naturally dissatisfied with the prospect of a regency when he so strongly coveted the crown and made it very clear that he would not accept a regency or a position as his wife's usher.⁷² Churchill, who was considered a moderate Tory, was present at most of the debates except those in which the vacancy of the throne was discussed. He did not support efforts to place William and Mary on the throne, and he declared that they should be elected regents only, and serve until Princess Anne could assume the crown. This outburst by Churchill displeased William, and had Churchill been present on the day of the final vote, the outcome would have probably resulted in violence. When the votes were counted, James's vacancy was declared illegal, and William and Mary were to be placed on the throne. Churchill did vote that the nation's administration should go to William alone, and on the question of the order of succession, he supported Anne, the children of William and Mary, and the children of Anne.⁷³

On February 22, 1689, William and Mary were proclaimed King and Queen and the following day Churchill took the oath as a member of the Privy Council, and as Gentleman of the Bed Chamber. On April

⁷²Stephen N. Baxter, William III and the Defense of European Liberty 1650-1702 (New York, 1966), 247.

⁷³Lediard, Marlborough, 336.

19, he was created Earl of Marlborough.⁷⁴

⁷⁴David Green, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough (New York, 1967), 58.

CHAPTER III
MARLBOROUGH'S RETURN TO THE CONTINENT AND HIS
SUCCESS IN IRELAND

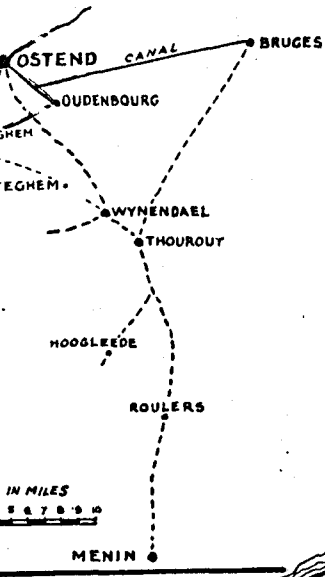
Louis XIV was obviously preparing to employ the power of France to assist the royal exile of England, and this was a sufficient spark which united the English people against France. The Commons and the Lords expressed an equal enthusiasm to the new king in their determination for war, and on May 15, 1689, war was declared against France. This marked England's entry into the War of the League of Augsburg. William was unable to make the journey to the continent, and appointed Marlborough to command his forces--a choice as wise as it was undoubtedly popular. Marlborough reached Maestricht early in July and reported to the Prince of Waldeck, the overall Commander in Chief of the Allied armies.

When Marlborough landed and took command of the 8,000 troops of the British contingent, he discovered that they were in a poor condition. However, his rigid discipline, training and drills resulted in a great improvement in only three months. His personal efforts to restore a high state of morale by reissuing back pay, food and new uniforms improved the contingent until they were the best

managed in Waldeck's army of 35,000 men.

The French forces, now under the command of Marshal Luxembourg, constituted a magnificent army, but were under-strength for the task of fighting on more than two major fronts. Waldeck placed the Allies along a 300 mile crescent from the upper Rhine to the Belgian coast (see Map B). Waldeck's army grew to an overall strength of 60,000, which enabled him to take an immediate offensive. Four separate armies advanced simultaneously against the French frontiers. In the north, the Spaniards and Dutch, under the Prince Vaudemont moved towards Courtrai; further south, the largest force of Dutch, Swedes, and the English contingent under Waldeck struck between the Sambre and the Meuse; beyond the Ardennes, the Prussians and North Germans under the Elector of Brandenburg pushed towards Bonn; and further south, the Empire forces under the able leadership of the Count of Lorraine struck at Maissy.

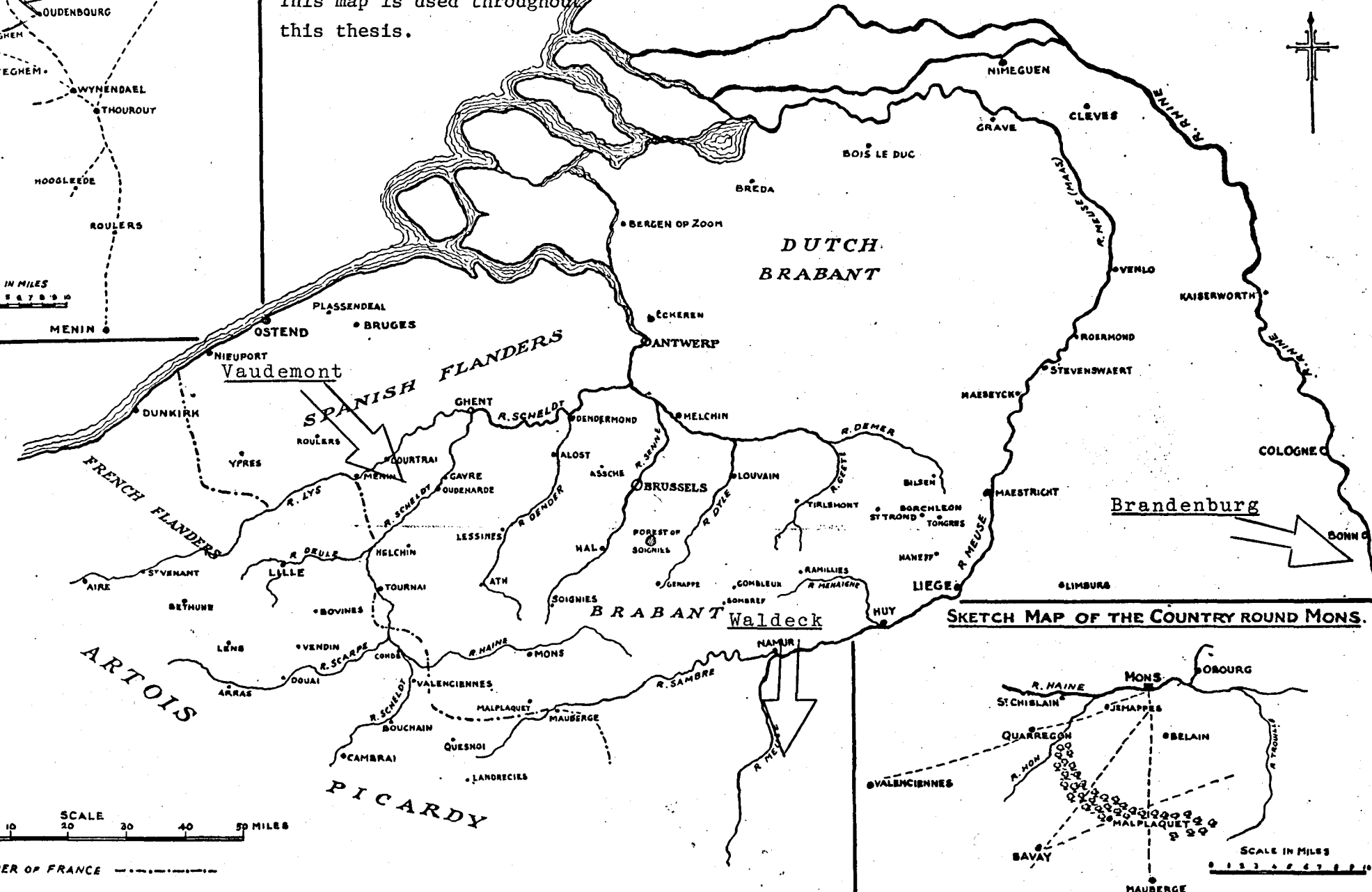
On 27 August the French, under Marshal d'Humeres, struck towards the village of Walcourt on the Sambre River (see Sketch C). His forces, which numbered some 50,000 fell upon the English regiments manning the first lines of defense. The results were surprising for d'Humeres, because Marlborough took such a high toll of the French attackers that the French Marshal was forced to strike with the bulk of his army. As the English retired in good order, Waldeck had sufficient time to position his artillery on both sides of the village.



SKETCH MAP OF THE THEATRE OF OPERATIONS IN THE NETHERLANDS 1702 - 1711.

Sketch Map reproduced from Burton's The Captain General. This map is used throughout this thesis.

MAP B



At the height of the assault the Allies almost broke, and it was at this time that Marlborough chose to strike the right flank with his large cavalry force.¹ The results were disastrous for the French, as the shock of the cavalry, covered by well-placed fire from the infantry and artillery, turned defeat into victory, and the French were routed. Marlborough's first independent command saw him exhibit the same tactical skill which would characterize his victories some fifteen years later. His tactical employment included good fire discipline, proper use of infantry in the defense, artillery placement, and the cavalry to counterattack an exposed flank. Today's tactics on the battlefield are identical, with the exception of main battle tanks replacing horse cavalry to penetrate in the counterattack role. Waldeck highly praised Marlborough and wrote King William a glowing account of Marlborough's role in the victory. He closed by saying that "Lord Marlborough saw more into the acts of a general in one day than others did in many years."² Thomas Lediard writes that upon returning to England, William showed Marlborough a cordiality seldom seen by a man as reserved as the new king, and that William's judgment that Marlborough's value was unlimited was certainly coming true.³

¹Parker, Memoirs of the Most Remarkable Military Transactions from the Year 1683 to 1718 (London, 1747), 108.

²Author unknown, The Lives of the Two Illustrious Generals, 299.

³Lediard, Marlborough, 340.

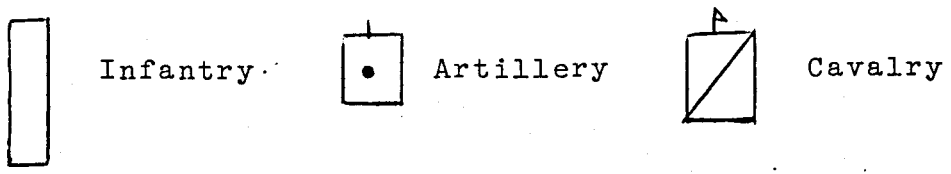
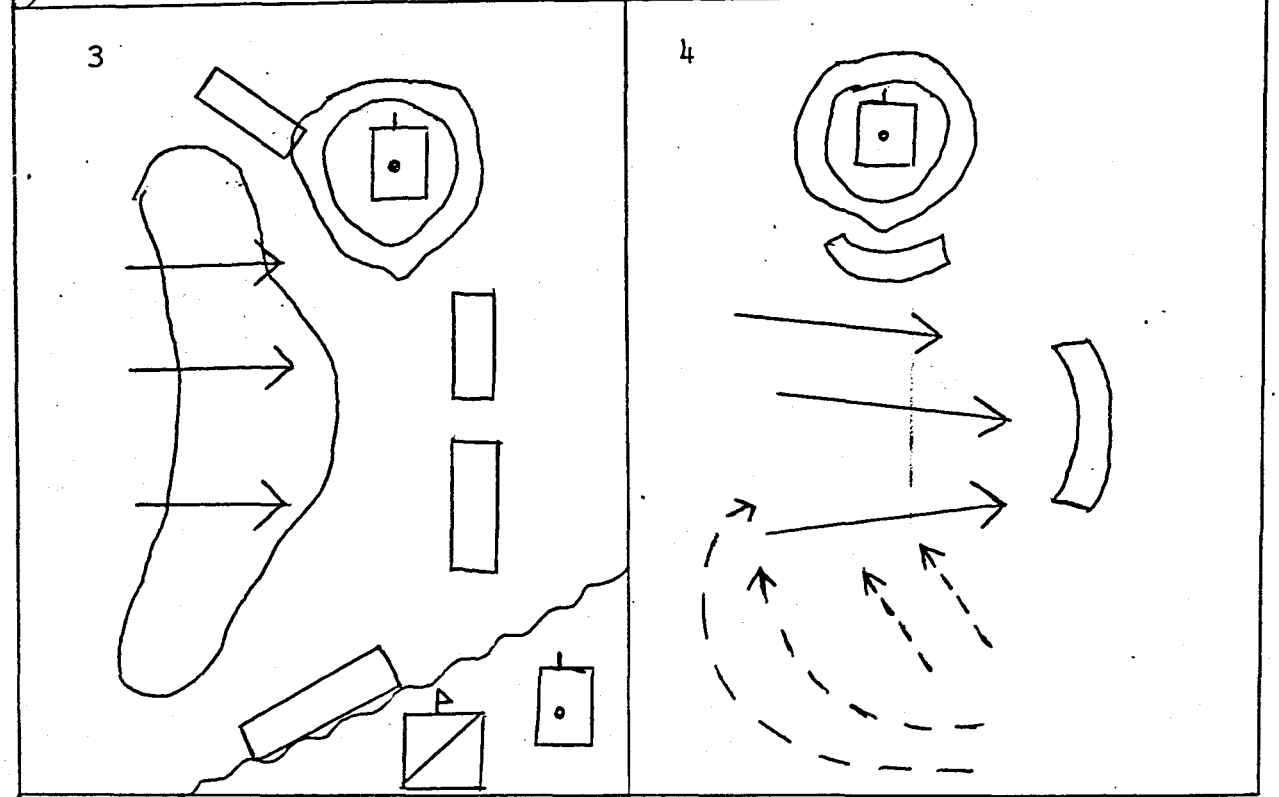
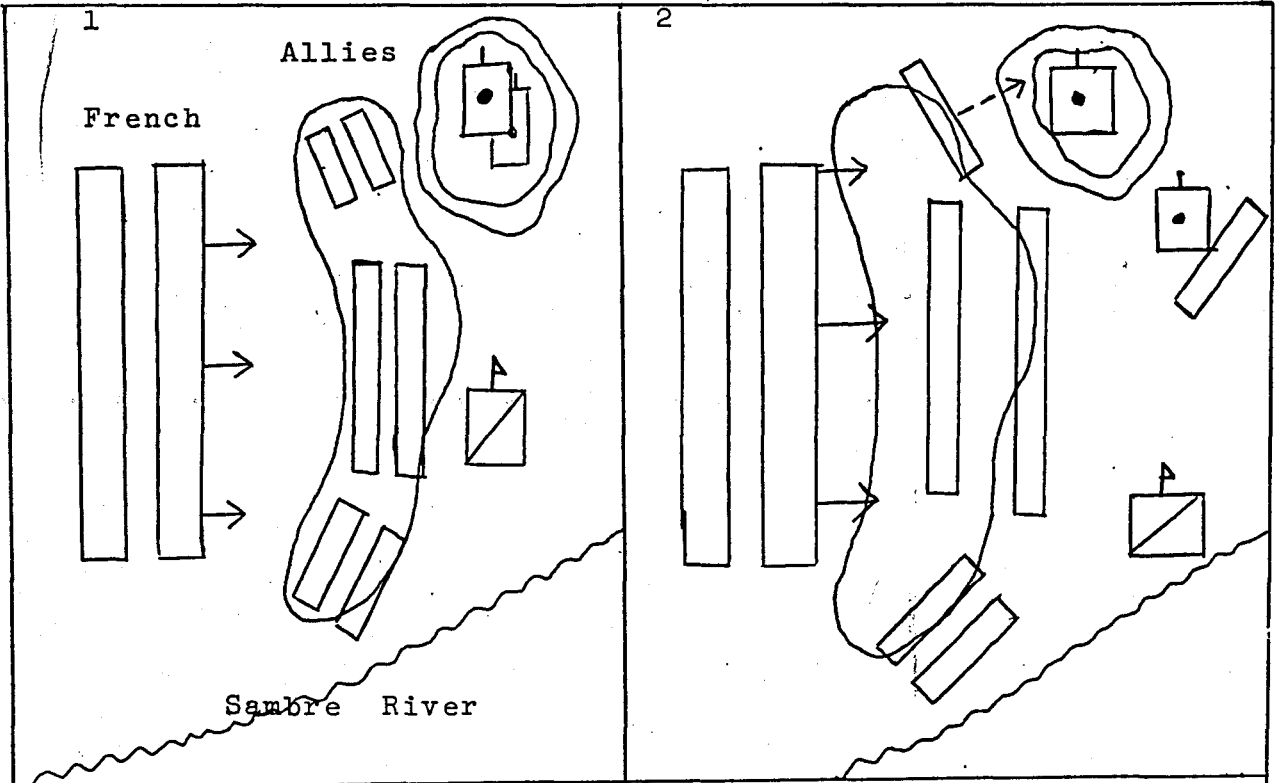


Illustration from written accounts; not to scale

Other biographers do not agree with the early version, and Henry John Edwards, former Trinity College Scholar and Dean of Peterhouse, Cambridge, writes that William committed a serious error by not fully appreciating Marlborough's value as a commander on the battlefield.⁴ It may be that William remembered his own previous success as a commander, and refused to recognize any of his subordinates as equal to his own ability.⁵ Whether or not a rift existed at this early stage cannot be determined, however, it is obvious that the French fully appreciated Marlborough's ability. Without his leadership the following year, the Allied army was virtually destroyed at Fleurs.

While James was present with the French-supported forces in Ireland, Marlborough declined to serve William as a field commander. His loyalty to his former sovereign was still too great,⁶ and under no

⁴Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough, 65.

⁵It must be emphasized that although William has not been elevated to any prominent level by military historians concerning his tactical genius on the battlefield, in one critical area his role has often been overlooked. That was his personal leadership that resulted in the soldiers willingness to be led by him and to fight for him! As a result, during the struggles with France during 1690's, William was often forced to lead the Allied Army. It should be brought to the readers attention that the English contingent was greatly outnumbered by that of the Dutch, that Marlborough was too inexperienced during this period to command an army, that Waldeck was physically incapable, and that the jealousy among other leading contenders for overall command virtually destroyed any chances for command unity.

⁶Churchill, Marlborough His Life and Times, Vol. 1, 151.

circumstances would he engage James in open warfare. This brought damaging remarks from William's Dutch generals, but the king accepted Marlborough's reasoning and appointed him as one of the nine counselors to advise Queen Mary during William's absence.⁷ His service to the state was valuable and indispensable, and for the first time, the Queen fully appreciated his value as a loyal advisor.⁸ Following William's brilliant victory at Boyne,⁹ which sent James back to France, Marlborough took the field and ravished the Irish countryside for two months. His appointment to command caused a considerable stir among many of William's advisors, and there were many hot debates concerning Marlborough's appointing his brother George Churchill to command an infantry brigade.¹⁰

After returning to England in August, Marlborough was directed by William to return to Ireland to secure two major harbors being used

⁷Ibid., 152.

⁸Lediard, Marlborough, 363.

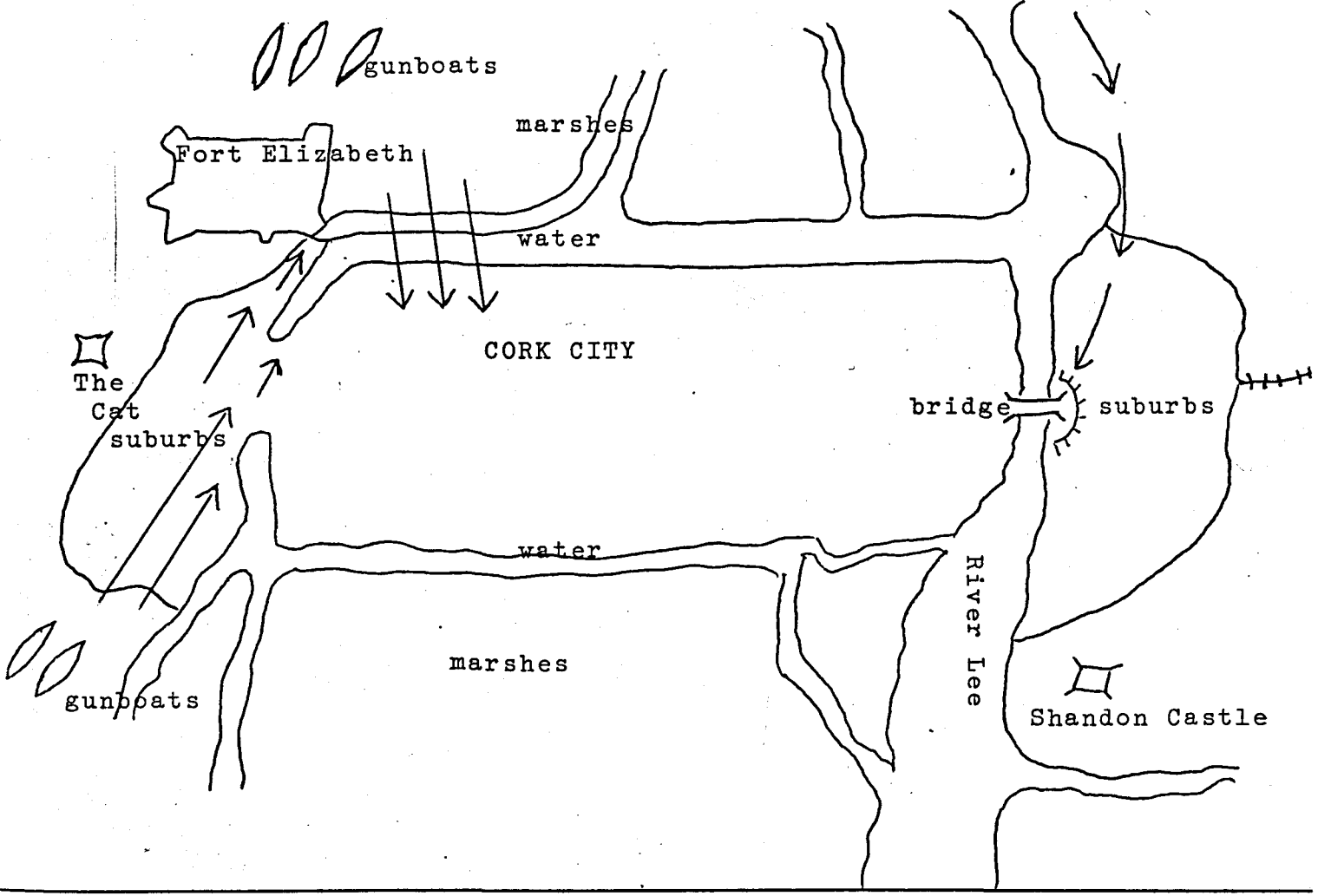
⁹Baxter, William III and the Defense of European Liberty 1650-1702, 266. William's victory over James at Boyne hastened the reconquest of Ireland. It also must be emphasized that Marlborough took the field only after James had fled Ireland. It is ironic that Boyne is not mentioned by J.F.E. Fuller or Samuel Espisito in their widely read books on decisive battles and campaigns, because tactically and strategically, it was a classic engagement, planned and directed by William. Of equal significance to Boyne, was William's sound defeat of the French at Landau in 1693 from which it took Louis' forces six weeks to recover. This battle has also for the most part been overlooked.

¹⁰Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. II, 37.

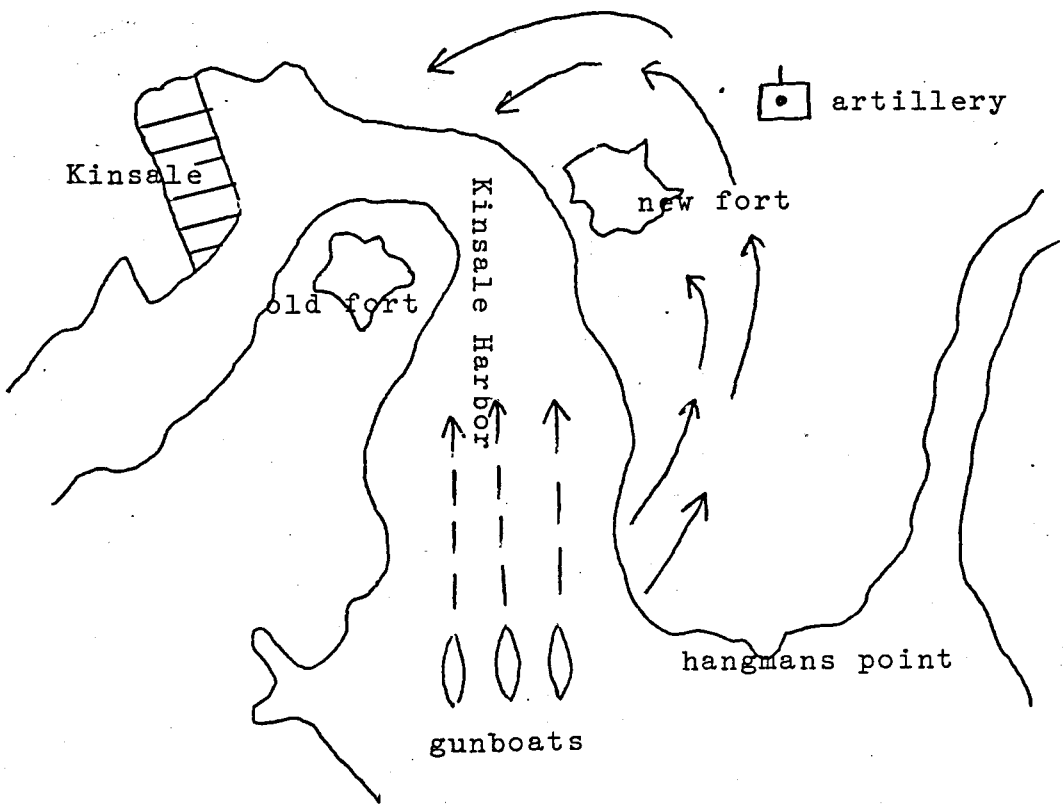
by the French, and with 10,000 troops under his command,¹¹ he sailed from Portsmouth on 27 September, reaching Cork Harbor on 10 October. Cork was a formidable fortress, and a less daring commander than Marlborough might have expended many lives and heavy losses of equipment in preparing for a costly seige. Instead, his well-executed amphibious assault was a masterful combined arms operation and certainly equal in achievement to those conducted during World War II against heavily fortified shore positions, see Map D. Naval gunfire prepared the beaches for landing areas, and once a foothold had been gained, land-based artillery was rapidly moved ashore to support the infantry as they moved further inland. The French forces who left the confines of the fortress to oppose the landing were driven back, and Brigadier Charles Churchill's daring infantry assault against the flank of the fortress carried the outer walls.¹² Marlborough's opponents, led by Brigadier Villiers, hastily dispatched a troop to Kinsale for reinforcements. It would be to no avail, for Cork fell, and within days Kinsale was to meet a similar fate. Marlborough's main problems

¹¹The actual troop strength of Marlborough's forces appears to be questionable. Some early biographers possibly include the 5,000 troops under Count Wurtemberg's command who joined Marlborough just prior to the Cork engagement after traveling overland.

¹²Ibid., 51. Winston Churchill also emphasizes Marlborough's success at Cork and Kinsale, however, much of his analysis of the battles were extracted direct from Coxe and Lediard's earlier books.



Map D not to scale



were not with the enemy, but with the question of overall command. The outspoken and incompetent Count Wurtemberg, who commanded 5,000 Dutch, Danish and Huguenot troops, initially refused to serve under Marlborough, and only agreed to alternate the command on a daily exchange.¹³ At the campaign's end, Wurtemberg was so impressed by Marlborough's ability, that he highly praised the Englishman and gladly placed his entire command at Marlborough's disposal.¹⁴

King William, in praising Marlborough for his victories with a vastly outnumbered force, declared that "no other general in Europe could have accomplished as much with such a small force."¹⁵

In 1691 when war appeared imminent with France, Marlborough accompanied William to the United Provinces in his command. While in the Hague, Marlborough watched the jealous opposition and bickering over command appointments and strategy discussions by officials of the States General, and would remember it well, for similar events would plague him in less than one decade. The hostilities with France did not materialize and the huge Allied army was disbanded. While attending a final council with the Allied commanders, William asked the

¹³Churchill, Marlborough, 154. This exchange of command was not unusual during the 17th century. Senior Generals not desiring to subordinate commands would alternate commands on a daily basis. Marlborough did this later on the Continent with Prince Eugene, even though Eugene completely placed his army under Marlborough's command.

¹⁴Ibid., 155.

¹⁵Lediard, Marlborough, 362.

Prince of Vaudemont for an evaluation of his generals. Vaudemont replied, "Kirk has fire; Lanier, judgement; MacKay, experience; and Colchester, courage; but there is something in the Earl of Marlborough I cannot express--there seems to be united in him all those qualities distributed within the others."¹⁶

Marlborough did not remain in William's good graces for long. The rift between the two powerful men widened to a point where William would no longer retain Marlborough in his service. The reasons for Marlborough's dismissal have never been clearly defined. Only Churchill's Marlborough: His Life and Times offers a comprehensive step-by-step explanation of William's complaints with his popular general.¹⁷ The most significant problem between Marlborough and William involved Princess Anne. Anne was a definite thorn in William's side, and a person who had to be dealt with in a most careful manner. He was well aware of Sarah Churchill's influence, as well as Marlborough's close ties with Mary's younger sister.¹⁸ On one occasion when Prince George

¹⁶Ibid., 360.

¹⁷Churchill, Marlborough, 174-178.

¹⁸Feiling, A History of England, 586. It is interesting to note the disagreements by various historians pertaining to the growing rift between Marlborough and William. Although Feiling is somewhat sympathetic to Marlborough, he supports William's ultimate decision to dismiss him. Baxter completely denounces Marlborough and suggests that his dismissal was long overdue. Coxe, Lediard and Churchill attempt to blame William for Marlborough's fall, however each state that Marlborough's contacts with the Jacobites, his arguments with William over foreign employees and his attempts to organize the English officer corps, certainly contributed to his dismissal.

of Denmark wrote to request that William bestow the Garter on Marlborough, he refused to grant the request and did not even send a reply. Anne, in a second letter, wrote:

I cannot help seconding the request the prince has now made to you to remember your promise of a garter for my Lord Marlborough. You cannot certainly bestow it upon anyone that has been more serviceable to you in the late revolution, nor that has ventured their lives for you, as he has done ever since your coming to the crown.¹⁹

William again refused this supreme honor, but he did think well enough of Marlborough to appoint him to command for the impending continental campaign of 1692.²⁰

Then, suddenly, on 20 January 1692, without a word of warning, Marlborough was dismissed from all his offices. The news fell like a thunderbolt on society, and it seemed for a moment that the army would rally behind Marlborough against William.²¹

A Letter from Lord Basil Hamilton to the Duke of Hamilton reflected the confusion over Marlborough's dismissal:

I believe your grace will be surprised to hear that my Lord Marlborough is out of all his employment, and the manner was very disagreeable to him; for in his waiting week, which is then, after having put on the King's shirt in the morning, before twelve o'clock, my Lord Nottingham was sent to him, to tell him that the King had no further need of his services, and that he was to dispose of all his employments, besides

¹⁹ Author unknown, The Lives of the Two Illustrious Generals, 191.

²⁰ Ibid., 195.

²¹ Lediard, Marlborough, 366.

forbidding him the court. Everybody makes their guesses what are his crimes. I dare say that he was endeavoring to breed discontent and division in the Army, and to make himself the more necessary, besides his endeavoring to make ill correspondence betwixt the Princess and the Court, but everybody (have) their different thoughts; but this being late of yesterday, all the matter is not well known, but I believe a few days will bring it to light.²²

The writer's conclusions are ironic, for some two centuries later, there is still a controversy over why Marlborough was dismissed from his official duties and the army.

So far as the army was concerned, Marlborough's influence was as great as it had ever been, and there is little, if any, evidence that he was guilty of attempting to cause division or disloyalty in the service.²³ Some of his critics, spoke of him as the "General of favor" and obviously William's Dutch friends were jealous of his battlefield successes.

It is difficult to determine exactly to what extent Marlborough promoted or was the victim of the strained relations between Princess Anne and the King and Queen. It is obvious, however, that his interference on several occasions did anger William. Anne took considerable steps to defend Sarah and to commend Marlborough to her sister, but Mary's devotion to William was so complete that she would

²²P.M. Thornton, "The Hanover Papers (1690-1719)," English Historical Review (June, 1886), 116-117.

²³Although Winston Churchill does not criticize Marlborough for attempting to organize English officers into a collective bargaining organization, from William's viewpoint, this could certainly be considered a disloyal act.

allow no differences of opinion or unkind remarks from Anne.²⁴

Mary was unhappy over what she considered was Sarah's role in the question of succession, and the Queen's open refusal to speak with her only intensified the affection between Anne and Sarah.²⁵ As long as Marlborough remained Anne's chief advisor, the Queen's animosity towards Sarah Churchill widened, but Anne would not let even the strongest royal influence come between her and Lady Marlborough.²⁶ Harsh remarks about William by the two women were overheard and reported to the Queen, including Anne's naming him as the "Dutch abortion" which resulted in violent arguments between the sisters.²⁷ A particularly heated argument between the Queen and Princess occurred the night before Marlborough's dismissal, and several early biographers attribute this as a primary reason for Marlborough's fall from favor. Mary had threatened to reduce Anne's allowance by one-half,²⁸ and Sarah immediately petitioned the Tory ministers to vote against this

²⁴Lediard, Marlborough, 289.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶David Green, Queen Anne (New York, 1970), 59.

²⁷Lediard, Marlborough, 361. David Green, in Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, makes no mention of this slandering remark, although pages 60-65 clearly illustrate Anne's and Sarah's closeness which was extremely irritating to Queen Mary.

²⁸Green, Queen Anne, 60.

scheme. Marlborough, of course, vetoed Mary's scheme and William backed the Queen.

In the opinion of this writer, the split was a result of far more important reasons than a difference of opinion over the future Queen's allowance. First of all, Marlborough was definitely dissatisfied with William, as the change of masters had not brought to the nation all that he and other advocates of the change had expected.²⁹ In the preservation of religious and civil liberties that had seemed to be in such jeopardy, the English nobility had been forced to accept the personality of a foreign sovereign in every respect.³⁰ English nobles were seldom admitted to the King's table, but were compelled to stand behind the royal chair while Dutchmen dined.³¹

Marlborough, as well as other English noblemen, resented the Dutch promotions at the expense of Englishmen, and on one occasion, he respectfully protested to William "that while he himself had no reason to complain, many of the King's good subjects were sorry to see his Royal munificence confined to foreign lords."³² Thomas Lediard reported that this so angered William that he turned his back on

²⁹Lediard, Marlborough, Vol. II, 41.

³⁰Ibid., 46.

³¹Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough, 71.

³²Lediard, Marlborough, Vol. II, 50.

Marlborough and refused to reply.³³

Many Englishmen were possibly troubled by their conscience for neglecting the exiled king, and several leaders of the revolution, including Marlborough, began corresponding with James following his flight from Ireland. Marlborough's letters expressed a sorrow for his conduct and a plea for mercy. While not convincing James of his sincerity for a restoration, he did obtain a pardon for himself, his wife, and others such as Sidney Godolphin.³⁴ On another occasion, he gave James a complete account of the military forces, preparations and designs of William's plans, both in England and Ireland, and he even suggested that he be placed in charge of the English troops in Flanders to fight under James.³⁵

Marlborough obviously realized the extreme danger corresponding with the exiled monarch, and it is questionable whether he actually

³³Ibid.

³⁴Clarke, Life of James, Vol. II, 446.

³⁵Ibid., 447. It should be noted that this letter was carefully designed to reach James after the mentioned military excursion was underway. French agents usually learned of such maneuvers far in advance, so Marlborough's letter did not cause any military defeat. Although Clarke appears to amplify this point in an effort to denounce Marlborough's loyalty to William, Green, Coxe and Lediard agree that although Marlborough did correspond with James, including forwarding military information, that the letters were carefully timed to reach James too late for any positive military results.

believed a restoration was possible, but instead may have entered into this venture for the purpose of encouraging William to be more mindful of his English subjects. When Marlborough stirred Commons over the subject of foreigners holding responsible positions, William was naturally alarmed, for he realized that his contempt and dislike for Englishmen was widely recognized. It would require a lengthy venture to describe William's true feelings toward his newly acquired subjects, however, it is necessary to examine his personal views about his role as the English King. First of all, it appears that he regarded England primarily as a tool for his continental schemes, and repeatedly urged Parliament to address itself to continental problems.³⁶ He appeared extremely hesitant in allowing English soldiers to win fame on the battlefield, and would place Dutchmen or foreigners in all key positions in the army.³⁷ William may have recalled the days following Oliver Cromwell's rule when General Monck easily gained control with the army's backing, and did not want a similar incident

³⁶Feiling, A History of England, 579. In defense of William, Stephen Baxter emphasizes throughout Chapters 11 and 12 in his William III, that the King's almost fanatical hatred of France and Louis XIV was the reason for his efforts on the continent.

³⁷Ivor F. Burton, The Captain General; The Career of John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough (London, 1968), 7.

to occur in the event of an open break by English nobles.³⁸

Marlborough, like other capable English senior officers, desired the privileged positions of prestige. His most coveted desire was to gain the Ordnance Department,³⁹ but this position went to Henry Sidney, a civilian with no military qualifications. General Ginkel received the overall command in Ireland, while Waldeck remained as commander in chief in Flanders, even after Fleures. Marlborough was succeeded in his appointment as Lieutenant General of Infantry by Colonel Tollemanche; in his command of the Third Troop of Life Guards by Lord Colchester; and his Fusilier Regiment was given to Lord George Hamilton. William Coxe writes that Marlborough took his dismissal with unconcern, realizing that he had deliberately courted an open breach with the King.⁴⁰

Anne, in the meantime, had been warned that Sarah Churchill would shortly be dismissed by the King, and that further trouble was in store for Marlborough. She continued to employ Sarah, who attended her at royal levee of the Queen on 14 February. The following day, Mary sent Anne a strong letter demanding Sarah's dismissal, stating

³⁸This opinion belongs solely to this author. It is based upon William's basic unpopularity in England and it would appear very possible that an English military hero might be in a position to gain control with the backing of the English Army.

³⁹By virtue of commanding this department, Marlborough could insure that an ample supply of weapons and ammunition of all types was maintained and available when required.

⁴⁰Coxe, Life of Marlborough, Vol. II, 161.

that Anne had scorned the King's wishes by bringing Sarah to the court.⁴¹ Anne, still headstrong and upset over Marlborough's dismissal, refused her sister's demands even after Sarah offered to leave her service. On 16 February, Marlborough was arrested for being sympathetic to James and sent to the Tower.⁴² Although several of Marlborough's biographers ignore the fact that this arrest was timed to the knowledge that a French expedition was about to sail to return James, it seems very possible that William used this arrest as a precautionary measure to insure the army did not turn to Marlborough if the landing succeeded.⁴³ The expedition was aborted, but Marlborough was not freed. An intriguing plot soon developed which resulted in Marlborough being charged with high treason.⁴⁴ A forged letter of association, supposedly signed by Marlborough, set the stage for the trial, but the Lords had such a poor opinion of the plot that they refused to sign a warrant against him. The trial was held, and although the plotters confessed, Marlborough remained in the Tower. It was also during Marlborough's imprisonment that

⁴¹David Green, Queen Anne, 60. For an excellent account of the growing rift between Queen Mary and Princess Anne, see Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough, especially page 76.

⁴²Churchill, Marlborough, 178.

⁴³Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough, 76.

⁴⁴Churchill, Marlborough, 183-184.

another attempt by James to return to England ended in a decisive naval defeat off the coast of La Hogue.⁴⁵

It appeared now that William had no further reason for keeping Marlborough in the Tower. On 25 June the king released him on bail following heavy pressure from the Privy Council. Admiral Russell, a lifelong friend of Marlborough, and the victor at La Hogue, incurred the royal displeasure for "upbraiding" William by stating that "Marlborough set the crown on your head, and there is no reason to hold him in the Tower."⁴⁶

Once freed from the Tower, Marlborough immediately requested reimbursement for his losses. His request was refused by Parliament, only after a heated debate, with the King putting heavy pressure on certain members of the Lords to vote against it.⁴⁷

Marlborough spent the next four years in retirement at his wife's apartment at Berkeley House in Saint Albans, and although many loyal English officers begged him to lead a military revolt, he would not speak of it. Although almost financially destitute, his pride

⁴⁵Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. II, 101.

⁴⁶Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough, 78. Feiling's account of La Hogue, page 590, calls it a total victory and removed the threat of invasion.

⁴⁷Grote, Military Antiquities, 301.

would not accept a one-thousand-pound annual grant from Anne.⁴⁸

The exiled James, upon learning of Marlborough's disgrace, re-opened correspondence with his former favorite, and this time, a serious attempt was made to return James through Parliamentary means.⁴⁹

Noted Englishmen such as Godolphin, Russell, and Shrewsbury were also included in these privileged communications, for each had expressed a dissatisfaction with the former Prince of Orange. Marlborough would serve James as a military commander, but only after strong assurances of certain conditions were agreed upon. These of course included maintaining the Church of England, a declaration that James would frequently assemble Parliament, and a renunciation of all personal dispensing power.⁵⁰ Although James disliked the terms, he issued a public proclamation on 17 April 1693, agreeing to each specification.⁵¹

It was also during this period of disgrace that Marlborough openly communicated with James in a letter which some historians have termed treacherous.

⁴⁸Ibid., 306.

⁴⁹Feiling, A History of England, 586-587.

⁵⁰Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. II, 120.

⁵¹Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough, 80.

It is but this day that it came to my knowledge what I can now send you - which is, that the Bomb Vessels and the twelve regiments that are now encamped at Portsmouth together with the two marine regiments, are to be commanded by Tollemanche--and designed to burn the harbor of Brest--and to destroy the men of war that are there; this would be a great advantage to England, but no consideration can, or ever shall from letting you know what I think may be for your service, so you make what use you think best of this intelligence, which you may depend to be true.⁵²

William's attack on Brest was a failure, not only as a result of Louis' intelligence being already aware of the English plans, but also because of the great Vauban's command of the defenses.⁵³

William continued unsuccessfully in Flanders throughout the next two years, for without employing Marlborough and other capable English generals, the soldiers would not respond.⁵⁴ Although William's popularity steadily decreased, James' decision that he could not accept

⁵²Clarke, Life of James II, Vol. II, p. 552. Again this correspondence was timed not to divulge the mission, but only to render a service to James in the event of a successful return. See also William Coxe's Marlborough, Vol. II, 130-131.

⁵³Marshal Vauban has often been called one of the greatest military engineers. William Coxe in Memoirs of John, Duke of Marlborough, writes "that a fortress which Vauban defended was safe, and a fortress that he attacked was doomed." (See page 381). Keith Feiling writes that William's constant search for an engineer officer equal to Vauban was never fulfilled. Only when Coehoorn was assigned as Chief Engineer did William's complicated sieges began to achieve success, but Corhoorn was never equal to Vauban.

⁵⁴Coxe, Memoirs of John, Duke of Marlborough, 382.

the full conditions that the restoration required proved a stroke of fortune for William.⁵⁵ As the war continued badly for William, several of Marlborough's friends urged the King to reinstate the General. Shrewsbury, who had been commending Marlborough to William for over two years, wrote to William in Holland in July, 1695, that "there was a strong feeling in England that a certain general might mend matters in Holland."⁵⁶ On 16 July, William responded "that I can say no more than that I do not think it for the good of my service to entrust the command of my troops to him."⁵⁷ William's displeasure with his commanders' continual failures grew and he wrote Shrewsbury the following letter in reference to his senior commander after a defeat at Calais:

I am indeed extremely affected with the loss of poor Tolle-mache, for, although I do not approve of his conduct, yet I am of opinion that his too-ardent zeal to distinguish himself induced him to attempt what was impracticable.⁵⁸

Shrewsbury wrote a second letter to William requesting he restore Marlborough to favor, for now that James refused to comply with the proclamation, Marlborough would no longer support his return to England.⁵⁹

⁵⁵Although Robert Parker, in his Memoirs suggests there was an opportunity for James to return this does not appear to be justified.

⁵⁶Edwards, Life of Marlborough, 85.

⁵⁷Ibid, 86.

⁵⁸J. Nevelle Figis, English History Illustrated from Original Sources (London, 1902), 97.

⁵⁹Parker, Memoirs, 191.

He desired a command, and could not bear to remain idle at home while English soldiers were being defeated at every turn for lack of an English leader. The second letter read as follows:

It is impossible to forget the probable conveniency of your Majesty's receiving my Lord Marlborough into your favor. He has been with me since this news to offer his service with all the expressions of duty and fidelity imaginable. It is so unquestionably his interest to be faithful that single argument makes me not doubt it.⁶⁰

William's reply closely resembled his first one, and Marlborough did not receive a command in Flanders or England. Then came the disaster at Steinkirk where the Allies suffered a serious reversal under William's personal command.⁶¹ William's desire for a long needed victory overcame his usually sound tactics on the battlefield, and the frontal assault against a heavily fortified position, ended in a rout.⁶² It was also evident to the king during this battle, that he was no longer capable of rallying the English, Dutch and Scottish troops in a united effort, and that changes must be made if the war was to succeed.⁶³

Queen Mary's death in January 1695 caused new problems for

⁶⁰Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. II, 131.

⁶¹Feiling, A History of England, 590.

⁶²Robert Parker, Memoirs, 119.

⁶³Ibid., 121.

William, as the question of the King's sovereignty was reopened.. In addition, the hopes of the Jacobites were revived, and many urgent letters were sent across the Channel to William's father-in-law urging him to prepare to move against William. Others felt that William's right to the throne ended with Mary's death, and that Anne should immediately succeed. Still others called for dissolving Parliament since it had been summoned in the name of both William and Mary, and was no longer valid. These men overlooked the fact that William had been vested with the sole and whole administration of the Government,⁶⁴ and was King in his own right. Fortunately, Anne did not push the matter as an open rift might have caused a violent disruption resulting in another attempt by James to return.⁶⁵ Instead, Anne sent the King a letter expressing her sorrow and requesting an audience to show further proof of her affection.⁶⁶ Although William did not care for Anne, he received her in a very cordial manner, and he was well aware that his successor to the crown must be reckoned

⁶⁴Lediard, Marlborough, Vol. I, 81.

⁶⁵This opinion belongs solely to the writer. It is very likely that an open fight between the forces of William and Anne would have paved the way for James' return backed by a strong French Army.

⁶⁶Parker, Memoirs, 127.

with in a more serious manner.⁶⁷ Early biographers such as Lediard and Coxe suggest that Marlborough convinced Anne not to claim the crown, but rather effected a conciliation between the two royal cousins.

James towards the end of 1695, resolved to make another attempt to overthrow the Prince of Orange with French assistance, and when the plot finally emerged in February 1696, the villainous Sir John Fenwick implicated such notables as Bath, Godolphin, Russell, Shrewsbury and Marlborough.⁶⁸ The entire matter was placed before the Commons and Lords, and Marlborough's strong defense in his own behalf was proof enough to clear him of all charges. The trials created a sensation throughout England, and as they progressed, it became obvious that Fenwick, in order to save his own life, implicated many of William's closest advisors.⁶⁹

⁶⁷Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough, 82.

⁶⁸Parker, Memoirs, 131. Also see Baxter's William III, especially 333-334.

⁶⁹Ibid., 136-137.

CHAPTER IV

RECOMMISSIONED BY WILLIAM

The peace of Ryswick, signed by England, France and Holland, in 1697 was in reality more of a truce than a peace treaty.¹ The war had reached the point where neither side could prevail against the other and both were exhausted from the long struggle. Ryswick strengthened William's position against outside influence, and of particular importance, it gained William one significant point, his recognition by Louis as the rightful king of England instead of James II.² With the Jacobites no longer a serious worry and by virtue of his equal status with the Sun King, William relaxed his restrictions on such men as Marlborough,³ even though he must have been aware that Louis' agreement was no real assurance.

¹Walter P. Hall and Robert G. Albion, A History of England and the British Empire (Boston, 1937), 409. The Peace of Ryswick provided for the mutual restoration of territory captured since 1679. Nicely chosen terms of honor were exchanged between the two kings, and it seemed for a while that together the two powerful monarchs might settle the problems of Europe in a peaceful manner.

²Lediard, Marlborough, Vol. II, 90.

³Ibid. Also see Macaulay's The History of England, Vol. IV, pages 409-410.

Marlborough's return to favor was sudden and he was restored to many of his former positions in a single day. When it was time to take the young heir, the Duke of Gloucester who was Princess Anne's only surviving child, out of the hands of women and put him under the care of some experienced noblemen, Marlborough was given the responsibility.⁴

Although many persons of distinction hoped to receive this position of honor, William selected Marlborough. When presenting the young lad to Marlborough, he said, "My Lord, teach him to know what you are, and my nephew cannot want accomplishment."⁶ Marlborough was restored to the Privy Council in 1697 and on three occasions, was made a Lord Justice when the King was out of England. Within the following year, he was raised to Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the States General, and finally, General of foot and Commander in Chief of His Majesty's forces in the Dutch Republic.

To deal with Louis XIV as an equal, William needed a strong military force, as only through strength could England's influence be

⁴Lediard, Marlborough, Vol. I, 90. Gloucester, the son of Prince George and Princess Anne, died just prior to his 11th birthday.

⁵Receipt of this honor would result in an almost daily contact with the Royal family and as such, could prove most advantageous to the recipient.

⁶Lediard, Marlborough, Vol. I, 93.

felt throughout Europe. However, the King was thwarted in his attempts to raise a large standing army. The English people, for the most part, did not share William's desires and cried for peace, a reduction in taxes, and disarmament.⁷ This pacifist view prevailed and it was only through the superlative effort of Marlborough that a terrible disaster was averted in the bloody continental war which was to shortly begin. When the question of disarmament was discussed in Parliament, the strength of the English Army was 17,000 men. Both Marlborough and William strongly urged a standing force of 30,000 soldiers, but funds were approved for only 7,000 men.⁸

Marlborough's strong arguments in the House of Lords went unheeded, and only his closest friends supported his position in the final vote. William was forced to return the Royal Dutch Guards to Holland, and this caused him to confide to Marlborough that he seriously intended to leave England for good and abdicate the Crown. Thomas Lediard writes that it was only a result of Marlborough's insistence that

⁷Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. II, 161. See also Keith Feiling's A History of England, page 592, for an updated analysis of why the British people eagerly put the war behind them. Feiling additionally offers an excellent comparison of similar problems that faced Cromwell some forty years earlier.

⁸Lediard, Marlborough, Vol. I, 119. See Feiling's A History of England, especially page 592 for an excellent analysis of how the British people argued that in time of peace, the army conflicted with the Bill of Rights. The 7,000 man force did not include a 10,000 man force positioned in Ireland or 2,000 soldiers in the West Indies.

William was talked into remaining in England. Keith Feiling amplifies Lediard's much earlier statement and writes that William was so infuriated that he considered abdicating.⁹

The public apathy in reference to the Army in late 1698 would create serious problems for William and Marlborough following Ryswick, but nowhere in England did any situation equal that of the English soldiers returning from the Continent. Soldiers throughout the country were shunned and turned adrift penniless, and forced to beg in order to exist. Within months after Ryswick, the position of the English soldier had been degraded to one of the lowest points in history. In the meantime, soldiers who had a complaint against officers--and there were many--laid these complaints by petition before the Commons.¹⁰ These petitions, gleefully supported by the new Whig majority, further downgraded the officer corps and resulted in a mass resignation of commissions.¹¹ Fortunately for England, Marlborough restored the officer corps to a high level of esteem prior to the war

⁹Feiling, A History of England, 370.

¹⁰Spencer Wilkinson, From Cromwell to Wellington, Twelve Soldiers (London, 1908), 58.

¹¹It should be emphasized that the English soldier, unlike the sailor, was not compulsorily recruited. Each colonel at regimental levels would enlist his own men, and was given a specified grant for their pay and clothing. There was corruption at both the officer and enlisted level, resulting in extremely harsh disciplinary measures to enforce orders. As a result, soldiers gladly poured out their complaints against such "abuse" to the Whig Commons.

with France. He brought back strong discipline in the ranks and placed qualified subordinate commanders in key positions. This was essential, because without well trained and combat proven leaders, an army is nothing more than a leaderless mass of people.

Parliament continued its opposition to the King, and three specific examples are presented to clearly illustrate an almost open hostility. The debt owed to Prince George was repaid only because the opposition desired to appease the Prince at William's expense. The Irish grants were denounced by Commons and all foreigners in Ireland were removed from positions of responsibility. Finally, Parliament dismissed the Dutch Guards over Marlborough's strong disapproval, as he felt it was an unwarranted personal insult to the King.¹² Although Marlborough opposed William's views in the House of Lords on several occasions, the King did not retaliate, because he recognized that Marlborough remained consistent in his views and had checked the violence of his own party without deserting his principles.¹³ Although Marlborough's Tory party was out of power, William's confidence in him steadily increased.¹⁴ Marlborough's role turned the Whig party violently against him and although he worked very closely with

¹²Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. II, 193 and Baxter, William III, 370.

¹³Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. II, 200.

¹⁴Ibid.

the Whigs for over ten years, would cause him serious problems in later years.

Two significant events occurred between 30 July and 1 November 1700, which temporarily halted the growing rift between Parliament and the King. First, the death of the Duke of Gloucester had a profound effect on the population.¹⁵ The boy had been the binding link towards continued Protestantism in England, and English political leaders viewed his death as a threat to the Protestant Succession. Secondly, policies of Louis XIV concerning a successor to Charles II in Spain not only alarmed William, but were to arouse England to the point where William felt the tide had turned in his favor in dealing with France.¹⁶

When William was notified of the death of Charles II and that Louis XIV accepted the Spanish bequest for his grandson to be crowned Phillip V, he saw the work of his lifetime shattered.¹⁷ For England, it

¹⁵Sir George Murray, A Memoir of Charles Modaut, Earl of Peterborough, with sections from his correspondence (London, 1853), 208.

¹⁶Churchill, Marlborough, 231.

¹⁷Ibid., 233.

meant that French inroads into the maritime industry supported by Spain would seriously interfere with England's commercial interests. This added naval support, would, at the expense of England, considerably alter the balance of sea power. Not only would the Spanish - French juncture affect commercial and naval interests of the Dutch Republic, but of even greater significance, the fortresses of the Spanish Netherlands would no longer serve as barriers against a French advance northwards. Now they became outposts through which the armies of Louis would move to the invasion of the United Provinces. Austria, who joined William's Grand Alliance, was primarily interested in fighting in Italy where she hoped to recover territory lost to the Spanish.¹⁸ To the average Englishman, the danger was not clear, however to William and the English Parliament, the potential of Louis achieving a Western European hegemony was self evident.¹⁹

When analyzing the overall seriousness of the situation and now fully realizing that an impending attack against the Dutch would include the seizure of Antwerp, increased French influence in the Mediterranean and the shifting of the balance of power in that area, the feeling in the English Parliament became more warlike.²⁰ On 30

¹⁸Hall and Albion, A History of England, 415.

¹⁹William B. Willcox, Star of Empire; A Study of Britain as a World Power, 1485-1945 (New York, 1950), 119.

²⁰Thomas H. Dyer, A History of Modern Europe From the Fall of Constantinople (London, 1901), 70.

December the two houses met and requested that William begin negotiations with the States - General.²¹ Louis' recognition of the Pretender, James Edward, as King of England following his father's death united the nation against France. Robert Parker, although writing from a Whiggish viewpoint, states that William viewed this breach as the highest indignity possible to every man who had a regard for the Protestant religion.²² It was to be William's final speech before Parliament, and his emotional voice for the cause against the Pretender and the Sun King rallied even the most antagonistic of his subjects to his side.²³ William recognized that Louis, by placing his grandson on the Spanish throne, was in a position to oppose the rest of Europe unless speedy and effectual measures were taken. In an almost unprecedented event, Parliament voted forty thousand soldiers and forty thousand sailors to William for the impending war.²⁴

William once again appointed Marlborough on 12 June 1701 as General of Infantry and Commander in Chief of all his forces in the United Provinces.²⁵ It is obvious to this writer that the King had to

²¹Charles Knight, The Popular History of England From the Revolution of 1688 to the accession of George I (London, 1926), Vol. V, 245.

²²Parker, Memoirs, 291.

²³Author unknown, The History of John Duke of Marlborough (London, 1755), 107.

²⁴Ibid., 109.

²⁵Archibald A. Allison, Marlborough and the Rise of the British Army (London, 1921), 194.

select Marlborough, as there was no one else with equal ability to cope with the emergency.²⁶ In addition to commanding the military forces, his title of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenepotentiary to the States General placed him in the position of personally conducting negotiations with the Allied Governments in an attempt to improve the military posture of the forces to oppose the French.

The entangling alliances between the two sides were so intriguing that they alone would allow an interesting thesis subject. The shrewd Louis XIV had already allied France with Portugal and seven Italian states, realizing that war would break out at any time. Additional support would be provided by Spain, Bavaria, and at the outset, Savoy.²⁷ Emperor Leopold of Austria joined William and Holland in

²⁶It would be unthinkable for a military strategist of today to be imbued with the authority and responsibility that Marlborough received from William. Not since Napoleon have commanders in the field enjoyed such a total responsibility for managing a war effort. Robert E. Lee was responsible to Jefferson Davis; Grant to Lincoln and the War Cabinet; Kuropatkan and Oyama to their respective civilian governments in a higher central authority; Eisenhower was governed by a combined staff during World War II, and Zhukov by Stalin; but Marlborough, within a year, had no higher authority in managing the complete war effort, including directing naval operations. A less capable man could have never joined together dissenting factions including his own government into a united effort against France. In this author's opinion, William was the only other man with the capability to direct this difficult undertaking, and his failing health prevented him from taking the field.

²⁷Hall and Albion, A History of England, 415.

the Grand Alliance, and sent Prince Eugene with forty thousand soldiers to guard the mountain approaches from Italy.²⁸ Charles XII of Sweden was courted by both sides, and had he not joined the English camp, the war's outcome would have been challenged early during the campaign. Charles XII had already defeated Denmark, had seriously hurt Poland, and even considered challenging Russia. Had Louis gained his support, then a large buffer force would have been necessary to remain in the north to prevent any surprise assault by Charles. Marlborough hastened a meeting with the young ruler and pressed the English ministry to fulfill all promises made to Charles. A considerable amount of cloth and saltpeter for the Swedish army was immediately dispatched, and to counteract the influence of French gold, he lavished presents on the Swedish leaders and gained their support.²⁹

Marlborough's next diplomatic ventures resulted in troop commitments from Denmark, Holstein, and even Prussia. Negotiations between Marlborough and Frederick III of Brandenburg resulted in an agreement where five thousand men would be furnished now and twenty thousand more when required.³⁰ His letters and arguments in support

²⁸B.H. Liddell Hart, Strategy (New York, 1967), 94.

²⁹June Milne, "The Diplomacy of Dr John Robinson at the Court of Charles XII of Sweden, 1697-1709," Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (London, 1948), Fourth Series XXX, 80.

³⁰Sir George Murray, ed. Letters and Dispatches of John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough, from 1701 to 1712 (London, 1845), Vol. II, 110.

of the common cause placed him, in the opinion of this writer, in the same category as the ablest foreign ministers of Europe. It is most unusual for a military figure to become so involved in negotiations, alliances, treaties, and other responsible areas normally managed by Parliament or diplomats, but William's confidence in him was so great that he was unrestricted in his efforts to form an alliance against France. His powers were extensive. He was entitled to make regulations, grant commissions, make promotions, set troop allocations and devise the war's strategy.³¹ It was obvious that Parliamentary opposition would result, and it was also unquestionable that Marlborough usurped Parliament's authority, but there was no time to waste in fruitless floor disputes, personal jealousies and senseless arguments by those who would hinder the war preparations.

In the Dutch Republic where the battles would begin, Louis had already conducted diplomatic negotiations with Heinsius, the Grand Pensionary, before Marlborough's arrival. Although Heinsius was zealously attracted to William, the forceful negotiations caused him to hesitate, for, after all, the Dutch would bear the brunt of the early fighting.³² His delicate task with the Provinces required caution, but at the same time boldness, for Heinsius must be made aware that

³¹Ibid. See Christopher T. Atkinson, Marlborough and the Rise of the British Army (London and New York, 1921), 120, for additional comments pertinent to Marlborough's role.

³²Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. II, 301.

Louis would never consent to let Holland remain neutral in the war.

Realizing his dependence upon Parliament for supplies and finances, Marlborough used both caution and boldness when speaking for the Crown. He never implicated England in individual treaties without first furnishing Parliament a copy of his proposals for their approval. It should be noted, however, that the English Parliament never failed to approve his recommendations.³³ Only the Allies were stubborn in following his guidance, and this caused Marlborough the absence of a complete victory in the Spanish Netherlands during the first year of the war. When Parliament ratified his proposals, the preparation for a formal declaration of war was complete. William III died before the war began. He has been in failing health for quite some time, but a riding accident hastened his death which occurred on 19 March. His death was not mourned in England, and his funeral in Henry VII's chapel was meager and insignificant.³⁴ The Dutch mourned almost in despair the loss of a true champion, while the French rejoiced. All nations were reckoning without Marlborough, whose hour had come.³⁵

³³Francis Hare, The Conduct of the Duke of Marlborough During the Present War, with Original Papers (London, 1812), 88-89.

³⁴Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough, 107.

³⁵Hare, The Conduct of the Duke of Marlborough During the Present War, with Original Papers, 91.

In accordance with the provisions of the Bill of Rights, confirmed by the Act of Settlement, William was succeeded on the throne by his sister-in-law, Anne, daughter of James II.³⁶ It appears initially that the war's effort might have been altered by William's death. William was a military figure, tested in battle, a warrior most of his adult life, and now was succeeded by a woman completely unfamiliar with the tedious planning involved in the impending crisis. The Queen differed considerably from William. She did not profess his statesmanship or his resolution; she lacked his strength of character, and remained under the influence of others.³⁷ She could not be expected to take the lead in establishing new policies for England, but Anne surprised her critics by growing stronger in the years to come. The Queen was kind, affectionate, sincerely religious, and devoted to the Church of England. Her character was irreproachable, and she was extremely popular with the English people.³⁸

Although Marlborough was devoted to Anne, William's death caused serious problems for the Army. William had made a maximum effort towards making it the best military force in Europe, and continually fought to insure the soldiers never suffered from the lack of supplies and sufficient weapons on the battlefield.

³⁶Ibid., 93.

³⁷Edward E. Morris, The Age of Anne (New York, 1876), 25.

³⁸Green, Queen Anne, 233.

There is no question that Anne would continue with Marlborough as her military commander. After all, he had been her chief advisor for over fifteen years; she relied on his judgment and respected his innate Toryism; she admired his strong religious strain; but of most importance, he had become invaluable as her "great Captain" who had steered her ship through so many storms. She made him Captain of her armies at home and abroad,³⁹ and within five days of the coronation, Marlborough received the Garter that she had requested for him several years previously.⁴⁰ Her most significant appointment was his additional command of the Quartermaster and Ordinance Departments, which to Marlborough meant that England's military forces would never lack necessary equipment throughout the war.⁴¹

England welcomed Anne to the throne. Although William faithfully discharged his duties to England, he had never concealed his dislike for the nation and his preference for his native land. Not only were his Dutch favorites replaced, but his policies were now being questioned in an attempt to determine if his interests were with England or the Netherlands.

³⁹Yonge, Our Great Military Commanders, 108.

⁴⁰Author unknown, The History of John, Duke of Marlborough, 216, and Green, Queen Anne, 94.

⁴¹See footnote 39 Chapter III. It should be noted that these two departments did not belong to what we would call the War Department. It was essential that Marlborough manage these agencies to prevent political strife and mismanagement of logistical efforts during the war.

Anne spoke to her Parliament of the Protestant succession, of the Church of England, and continued resistance to France.⁴²

Her opening address resembled that of another great queen one hundred years in the past. Her dress was designed after a picture of Elizabeth, and her melodious but firm voice brought repeated cheers from her ministers.⁴³

Marlborough wanted a government that would support the war, regardless of political party. He pushed hard for Godolphin to receive the Lord Treasurer's position, and on one occasion, remarked that he might not fight unless he knew that Godolphin received the job.⁴⁴ He supported Harley for Speaker, even though he had been a Whig and remained friendly to former party connections. Marlborough promoted Harley because he realized that he was an expert who could advise him in advance on what action Parliament would take in any situation. Of most importance was the fact that with Harley in the powerful Speaker's position, Marlborough could direct the war's efforts independently and not be tied to party channels.⁴⁵

After completing all preparation in England, Marlborough left for the field in May, 1702. His first letter to Sarah, written while

⁴²Churchill, Marlborough, 247. Churchill further wrote that following her opening address that many spoke of Anne as a second Elizabeth, and believed that great days were to come to England.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴Lediard, Marlborough, 309.

⁴⁵Churchill, Marlborough, 269.

on board an English man-of-war, and recorded by William Coxe and George Murray reads as follows:

It is important to express with what a heavy heart I parted with you when I was at the water's edge. I could have given my life to have come back, though I know my own weakness so much that I [durst] not - for I would have exposed myself to the company. I did for a great while, with a perspective glass, look upon the cliffs in hopes that I might have one sight of you.⁴⁶

Thus the first half of this paper terminates, with the War of the Spanish Succession to follow. The fifty-two year old general would make his mark in military history during the next ten years, and this writer will attempt to show why he should be ranked alongside Napoleon, Wellington, Hindenburg, Hannibal, and even Caesar, as a military commander.

⁴⁶Coxe, Marlborough, 151.

CHAPTER V
THE WAR IN FLANDERS

Marlborough arrived at the Hague on May 6, 1702, after a hazardous two day journey across the storm swept channel.¹ The problems which faced him upon arrival would prove so numerous that a less determined man might have returned to England and never become involved in the war.² His efforts to organize and direct the war during its first year would meet so many stumbling blocks that the Allied inactivity suggested to the French that the myth of Louis' invincible armies was strongly believed by their enemies.

In his own country, the political strife and dissension had reached the point where Marlborough questioned if England would even support the war. The Tory party pushed hard for a strong navy and a small army, while the Whigs, normally opposed to a large standing army, argued for a sizeable one, realizing that land victories were the key to overall victory³ and the achievement of their war aims. The Tories

¹William R. Kane, General, Campaigns of King William and Queen Anne from 1687 to 1712 (London, 1741), 209.

²George Macaulay Trevelyan, Illustrated English Social History, (London, 1944), Vol. III, 2.

³Joseph H. Belloc, The Tactics and Strategy of the Great Duke of Marlborough, British Battle Series (London, 1911), 89-90!

believed that capturing a town by sea assault was more important than a land battle, and they leaned towards operations against Spain, capturing overseas colonies and gaining command of the sea. The Whigs opposed every Tory plan and the rivalries and personal jealousies between the two parties continued for the war's duration.⁴ Norman Cantor offers an excellent synopsis of the Whig-Tory confusing struggle for power during the early years of Queen Anne's reign in his interpretation of English history.⁵ This author has intentionally avoided any analysis of the political strife.

The tactical situation facing the Allies when Marlborough landed was even more dismal. With one bold stroke in late 1701 before the war's declaration, Louis captured all but one fortress in the Spanish Netherlands. This surprise assault resulted in the Dutch garrisons being overwhelmed,⁶ losing twenty-two battalions of elite troops captured (see Map E). In order to gain the release of these soldiers, the Dutch were forced to formally and publicly recognize Phillip V as the rightful heir to the Spanish throne.⁷

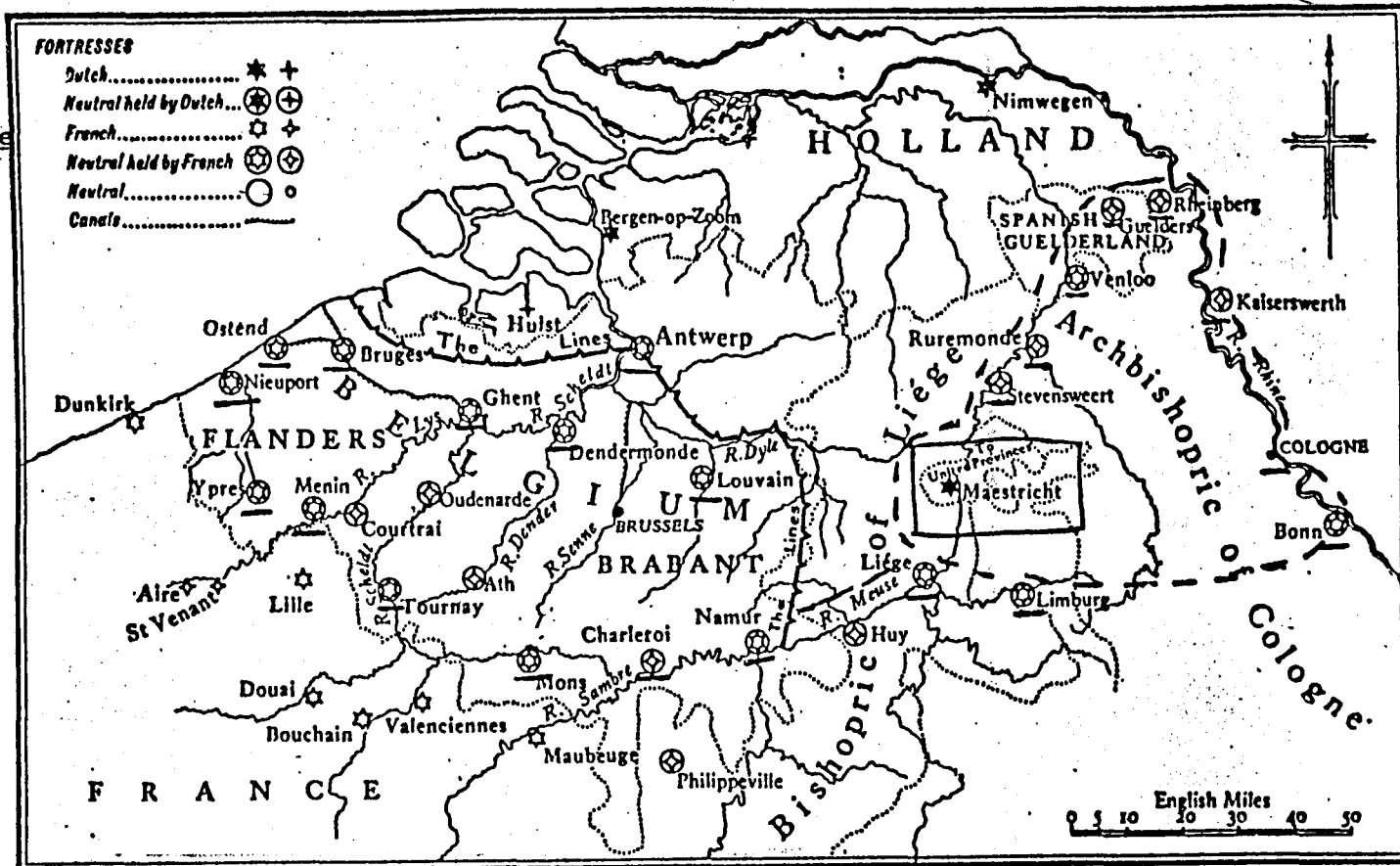
⁴Kane, Campaigns of King William and Queen Anne, 241.

⁵Norman F. Cantor, The English: A History of Politics and Society to 1760 (New York, 1967), 481-484.

⁶Following Ryswick, Dutch soldiers occupied the barrier fortresses in the Spanish Netherlands.

⁷Edwards, Short Life of Marlborough, 102.

Map reproduced from
 Edwards' A Short Life
of Marlborough.



It should be noted that the map clearly illustrates the early advantage gained by Louis XIV when he seized the key fortresses throughout the Spanish Netherlands. Only Maastricht held against the French assaults, and it was completely surrounded on all sides.

MAP E

The French also shortly captured the two great fortresses of Cologne and Bonn on the upper Rhine without bloodshed. These cities fell as a result of strong Catholic sentiment,⁸ and the French occupation completely blocked any Allied plans for movement against France.

This was a brilliant strategical move by Louis, for if he had waited until the war's formal declaration, it is very doubtful that these areas would have fallen so easily. As portrayed on Map E, these newly acquired fortresses gave the French a tremendous advantage for conducting both offensive and defensive operations. When the Brabant lines were completed in early 1702, the French Army occupied strongholds from Huy to Bonn, and northwards along the Rhine to Rheinberg. Lines of communication were greatly reduced, logistical problems minimized, and of primary importance, only a small force was required for defensive operations behind the line, freeing the bulk of Louis' armies for offensive action elsewhere. Only the fortress of Maastricht held, and strongly reinforced with a force of fourteen thousand Dutch soldiers, it would prove a formidable obstacle. In the opinion of the French generals, however, there was no rush to launch a costly siege. The fort was surrounded and sufficient artillery existed to shell the

⁸Lediard, Marlborough, 297.

garrison into capitulation.⁹ At the same time that Marlborough was enroute to meet with the Allied Ambassadors, Marshal Boufflers and the Duke of Burgundy arrived on the lower Meuse with a combined force of sixty thousand men. A force of this size, which far surpassed numerically any single Allied ground force, could easily strike to the northeast of Nimwegen or even into Holland.¹⁰

The detailed strategy of Louis XIV will not be discussed in this paper, however it is necessary to update the tactical situation in areas outside of Flanders. The French territory at the war's outbreak consisted of the Spanish Netherlands, Sardinia, Sicily, Naples, Milan, South America, part of the West Indies, and the Philippines. By gaining the confidence of the Elector of Bavaria, who joined against the Allies, Louis additionally could plan a strong combined operation against Vienna. With the strong fortress at Ulm under French control, a strengthened line of communication now ran from the Danube to the Rhine. This also left the heart of Germany open to invasion, and it was obvious to Marlborough that immediate and positive offensive action must be taken, or the Allied cause would be lost before the Allied force could even take the field.

⁹General DeLessai Plances, De Fortification et D'Attaque et Defense (Berlin, 1797) 91. This oversized manual was translated into English by an unknown author in 1801. Only the sketches remain in French, however, ample diagrams exist so that this writer could easily follow the author's step-by-step planning.

¹⁰Charles M. Clode, The Military Forces of the Crown: Their Administration and Government (London, 1869), 197.

Marlborough's timely arrival to address the States General was met with cheers and optimism. He was their champion and savior, hand-picked by William to lead them against France, and after reading Queen Anne's strong message to the leaders of the seven provinces, their hopes for victory reached new heights.¹¹ Marlborough informed the Imperial Ambassadors that the Queen would totally support the interests and all alliances agreed upon during William's rule and guaranteed England's full support in ridding Europe of the French menace. Anne's guidance, presented in French by Marlborough, reads as follows:

Her Majesty is firmly resolved to contribute all that is in her power towards the advancing and increasing union, friendship, and correspondence, and to make that a constant effort of her government. She will not only exactly and faithfully observe and execute the treaties and alliances made between the King, her predecessor and your High and Mighty Lordships, but is likewise ready to renew and confirm them; as also to concur with you in all the measures which have been taken by the late King of glorious memory, in pursuance of the said alliances. Her Majesty is likewise disposed to enter into such other alliances and engagements, which shall most conduce to the interest of both nations, and preservation of the liberty of Europe and reducing within just bounds the exorbitant power of France.¹²

Both Heinsuis, the Grand Pensioner, and Dykeveldt, the Assembly president, welcomed Marlborough's address with praise, and the

¹¹Churchill, Marlborough, 256.

¹²William F. Lord, "Political Parties in the Reign of Queen Anne", Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (London, 1921), XIV, 216.

Queen's strong promise of support solidified the Allied Alliance into one single body with one primary mission: to defeat Louis XIV.¹³

Unfortunately for the Allies, another serious problem arose which proved almost more disastrous than any prior to 1702. The question of command had to be solved, and since there were numerous applicants for the overall position of commander-in-chief, valuable time was wasted while each applicant presented his qualifications. Queen Anne secretly wished for her husband to receive the high command, relying on Marlborough's judgment for decisions in all operational matters.¹⁴ Thomas Lediard writes that the Prince was a man of very modest ability, and although Marlborough realized it, he pressed the matter supporting the Prince according to Anne's desires.¹⁵ The Dutch were violently opposed to such a command structure, as they did not want a royal commander. Frederick of Prussia made a half-hearted claim for the supreme command, as did Prince Louis of Baden. Generals Ginkel, Opdam, Overkirk and Slangenberg each insisted their records were equal to Marlborough's,¹⁶ and in actuality, each had

¹³It must be emphasized that this was the only thing the two countries had in common. The Dutch war effort was a major undertaking and their 100,000 man force was continually in the field. However, their primary goal was to keep the Scheldt closed, and to hold the barrier in Spanish Flanders and took no interest in campaigns in Spain or Austria.

¹⁴Green, Queen Anne, 94.

¹⁵Lediard, Marlborough, Vol. I, 299.

¹⁶Burton, The Captain General, 33 and Churchill, Marlborough, 286.

commanded much larger units in combat. They argued that he was not a student of war and had gained his position by court favor and political intrigue. However, years earlier, great commanders such as Turenne, Vaudemont and more recently King William, had seen in Marlborough the ability for high command.¹⁷

Heinsius and Dykevelt supported Marlborough for the supreme command, but he never pushed the matter for himself. His command, therefore, consisted of only the Queen's soldiers and those in England's pay. He sat through the war councils silent and observant, treating his Dutch counterparts with respect and reserve. He was quick to realize that the States General wanted a strong commander but one who would submit to their desires, and unfortunately for the Allies, this was the role he accepted for the first year of the war.¹⁸

On 20 June, Ginkel, now the Earl of Athone, made a costly error in attempting to show his prowess on the battlefield. His venturesome foray south of Nimwegen was designed to bring the bulk of Boufflers' force north from the Meuse River, relieving the pressure from Maesticht. His small fifteen thousand man army was no match for the large French army which surprised and routed him at Treves. What Ginkel failed to

¹⁷Ashley, The Glorious Revolution, 191. Also see Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. III, 79.

¹⁸John Blackader, Lieutenant Colonel, Life and Diary (Edinburg, 1824).

realize, however, was that Count Tallard (later Marshal Tallard) watched his every move and moved into position in order to surprise Ginkel's smaller Allied forces at Treves.

On 30 June, when the news reached the Hague, Marlborough realized that it was time to take the field, and he immediately left for Nimwegen. In his own words, he left to take command of the British troops and those in England's pay.¹⁸ The officials of the States General, already unnerved by Ginkel's failure, and fearing an invasion, presented Marlborough with a patent which made him Deputy Captain-General of the Republic, and gave directions to all their generals to obey his instructions.¹⁹

Marlborough soon realized that although the Dutch officials had recognized him as the most qualified, they were also determined not to let him fight a decisive battle. According to their constitution, two members of the Republic accompanied him, and no important operations could be fought without their consent. Baron Heydria and Mynheer Geldermalsen were chosen as Marlborough's advisors,²⁰ and their blunderings and timidity were to cost the Allies the chance for

¹⁸Archibald A. Allison, The Military Life of John Duke of Marlborough (New York, 1855), 39.

¹⁹Archibald Wilberforce, ed. The Great Battles of All Nations, from Marlborough to Santiago (New York, 1898), Vol. I, 386.

²⁰Churchill, Marlborough, 286.

a complete victory during the war's first year.

When the news of Marlborough's appointment reached the camps, further indignations arose among the Dutch generals. Even Ginkel, after being routed only days before, asked for command on alternate days. Marlborough, however, assumed his new position quietly and without fanfare. He reviewed only his British troops, spending much time with subordinate commanders to insure the force was prepared to mount an offensive operation. In the nightly war councils, he listened to the Dutch generals planning costly sieges, small raids, and operations which he described as absolutely meaningless.²¹ He became more intimate with the captains of other Allied nations, gaining their confidence. He came to realize that the Dutch would always pose an obstacle to any plans he proposed unless they required no boldness or decisive action.²²

It may have been that Marlborough had already planned the great offensive of 1704 and realized his main support must come from the other Allies and not the hesitant Dutch. His discussions and operational planning both amazed and frightened his generals. They learned very quickly that he did not approve of the cautious methods of making war according to the doctrines of past years.²³ He was not interested

²¹It must be explained that any major battle resulting in a decisive defeat, could prove disastrous for the Dutch.

²²Sir John W. Fortescue, A History of the British Army (London, 1899), Vol. I, 364.

²³Churchill, Marlborough, 286.

in fighting small battles of limited importance, but instead, spoke of annihilating the French army in a great battle and bringing Louis XIV to his knees.²⁴ He insisted that the English army would not remain stationed at Nimwegen while the enemy army moved unopposed between the Meuse and the Rhine Rivers.

It was obvious to Marlborough that Flanders was the key area, at least for the first year. Terrain was ideal for moving large troop concentrations even though there were but few roads. There were no serious natural obstacles to hinder offensive operations by either side, and ample water transportation routes existed to ease logistic problems. The lands were fertile and would sustain both men and animals during the warm weather months. Of most significance, however, was the attitude of the States General. They would never consider supporting the war effort anywhere until Flanders had been cleared of the French threat to Holland.

There are four definite invasion routes into France. The southern route includes following the coast from Italy, which required exclusive supply by sea. Prince Eugene favored this approach, but to Marlborough, it would be a costly march as small bands of infantry supported by artillery from the high hills would make the venture dangerous. The second approach, also in the east passed through the gap

²⁴Ibid., 290.

between the Jural mountains in Switzerland and Vosges in southern Germany. Although the Black Forest looms as an obstacle along this route, there were ample pathways through the lower end. The third route parallels the Moselle through Thionville and Metz, and from a map survey, offers the best approach into Paris. Marlborough favored this approach and only the German weakness and Dutch timidity prevented him from immediately assaulting France along this route. The fourth approach passes through Flanders and leads southwest into the heart of France. Although not the easiest route, the latter was the area of major operations during 1702 and 1703. As mentioned previously, Flanders had no significant natural obstacles to hinder military operations, however, a glance at Sketch Map E immediately discloses the problem facing any invader. There are close to thirty major fortresses with dozens of others located along every major highway and waterway. Only through the southern area of Flanders around Liege were the fortresses weak enough to permit a penetration without fear of the attacker being enveloped by the enemy garrison units on all sides.

Upon arriving at Nimwegen with seventy guns,²⁵ Marlborough took command of the English contingent which had been stationed under the supervision of his brother, General Churchill. His small force steadily grew in size until he commanded the largest single army in the entire Allied camp. He gained twenty thousand infantry and cavalry

²⁵Robert C. Parker, Memoirs of the Most Remarkable Military Transactions from the Year 1683 to 1718 (London, 1714), 101.

from the Elector of Brandenburg, and the States of Lunenburg and Brunswick provided ten thousand more. Marlborough additionally brought the neighboring provinces of Saxe-Gotha into agreement to renounce their treaty with France, which resulted in Louis losing the twelve thousand man force which had been levied upon the two provinces.²⁶ He rapidly organized the scattered elements of the Allied army into a formidable force, and for the first time, the army enjoyed a single commander of a powerful field army. Every major commander except Ginkel and Cohorn subordinated themselves to Marlborough,²⁷ but these two generals, along with the Dutch civilian deputies, would prove a frustrating thorn in his side in every major plan Marlborough presented during the first year of fighting.

Marlborough's initial plan called for a bold move from Nimwegen south to Maestricht, some sixty miles south on the Meuse River. Quickly, realizing that the Dutch would never consider leaving Nimwegen unprotected, he presented the plan as only a move towards Rheinberg, the northernmost French fortress on the upper Rhine. Once the army was in a campaign which the cautious Dutch would approve, Marlborough planned to engage Boufflers' sixty thousand man force into a decisive battle. A glance at Sketch Map F clarifies Marlborough's overall strategy and even to the reader not fully aware of strategical planning,

²⁶Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. III, 85.

²⁷Robert E. Scouller, The Armies of Queen Anne (Oxford, 1966), 58.

BETWEEN
OSTEND AND MENIN.

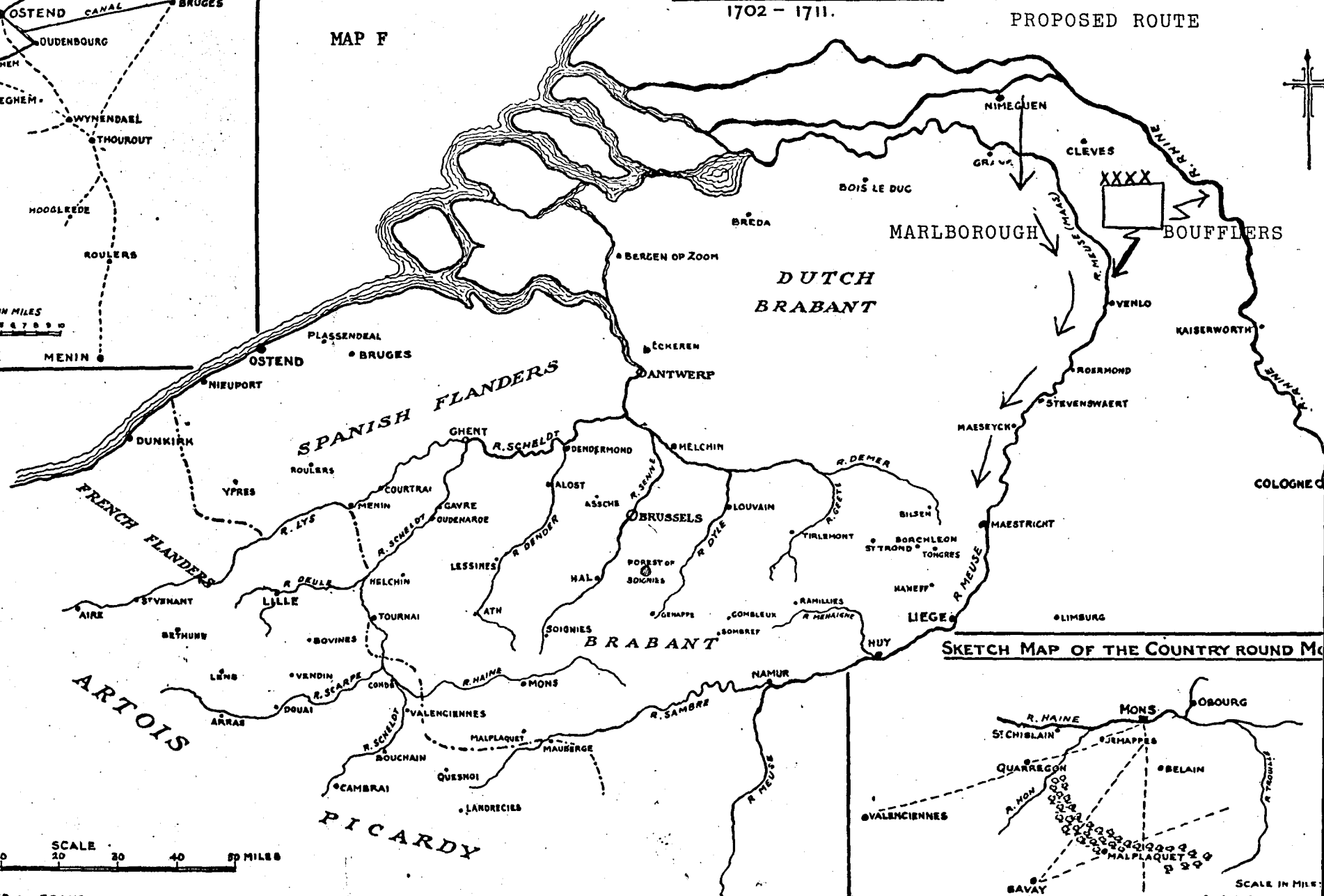
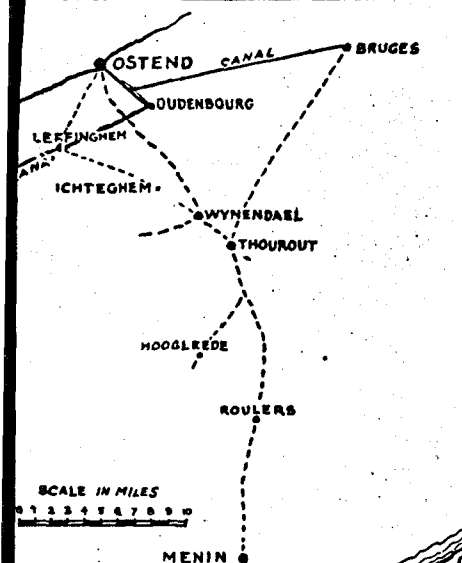
SKETCH MAP OF THE THEATRE OF OPERATIONS

IN THE
NETHERLANDS

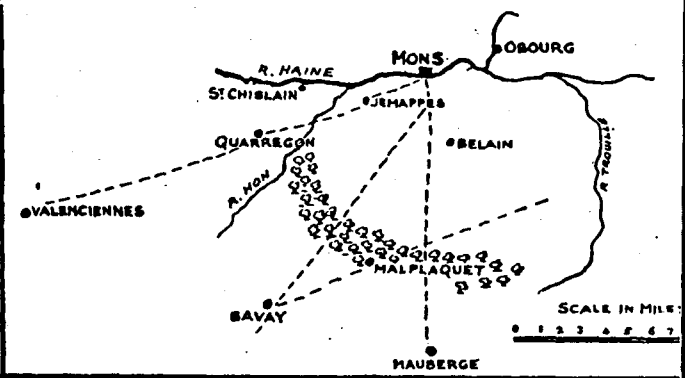
1702 - 1711.

PROPOSED ROUTE

MAP F



SKETCH MAP OF THE COUNTRY ROUND M...



his goal is very clear. The advance of a strong army south towards Maestricht would force Marshal Boufflers into one or two courses of action. First, he must accept a decisive engagement west of the Meuse or become cut off from his lines of communications; secondly, and obviously his only sound course, was to immediately withdraw westward, leaving the entire area between the Meuse and the Rhine free from French influence.²⁸ As the Allies army moved, a feeling of self confidence grew throughout the contingents because, for the first time, they were marching to meet and fight the French army.²⁹

While the bulk of the army continued south, supposedly to Rheinberg, Marlborough, the Dutch deputies and General Ginkel, accompanied by seventy squadrons of cavalry,³⁰ left the main body to locate Marshal Boufflers. Immediately upon locating the French camp, Marlborough confronted his Dutch counterparts with his primary goal. After wasting ten valuable days while the Dutch bickered over such a

²⁸This analysis belongs to the author. In examining the relative strengths of the opposing forces and the terrain, the French could not remain in place and lose the vital lines of communication.

²⁹Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. III, 101.

³⁰The actual strength of each cavalry squadron could not be located, however most accounts list a one-hundred man total for each. This figure is equivalent to a reinforced cavalry troop in the English army today.

bold move, they consented, but had no confidence that the move would cause Boufflers to withdraw.³¹ Finally on 26 July, the Allies crossed the Meuse and struck southward. On 30 July, Boufflers learned of the move and immediately hurried westward with his entire army. During the next four days, the two powerful armies closed, except that Marlborough's approach formation remained in assault increments, while the entire French flank was exposed when the forces met. The French were in a serious predicament, and Boufflers had no idea how many men the allies left at Nimwegen. All he knew was that Marlborough suddenly had the entire French army in a very perilous position, and he could not afford a pitched battle at such a distance from his supply lines and reserve units. As Marlborough pressed southward, his cavalry detachments forced Boufflers to swing closer and closer to Maestricht, until only twenty miles separated the French from the formidable fortress. This was the opportunity that Marlborough had awaited, and he hoped that the cautious Dutch, once being made aware of this overwhelming advantage, would be compelled to agree. On 1 August, a tentative agreement was given by the deputies and all unnecessary baggage was dispatched to rear. The following morning, all was in readiness, and

³¹B. H. Liddel Hart writes that Marlborough became so disgusted with the Dutch that he became more susceptible to the arguments that the English forces should be stretched to the Danube; Hart, Strategy (New York, 1967), 96.

Marlborough was riding along his front lines issuing instructions to his subordinates for the attack. As the long lines of French soldiers came into view, one of the most remarkable blunders in military history occurred. The Dutch officials withdrew their consent for the attack, and according to the Duke of Berwick, Marlborough's long-time friend commanding a French corps, the French army was saved by the timidity of the Dutch, who refused their approval to engage in a decisive battle.³² To Marlborough, this rare opportunity where the Allies could have struck the French with almost every advantage in their favor was a crushing blow. Unfortunately, Marlborough was to learn on other occasions that a coalition army cannot be managed like those of a single nation, and more than one additional opportunity would be lost in bringing the French army to a decisive battle.³³ Even after being reinforced with nine additional infantry battalions, the Dutch still refused to fight. Marlborough somehow checked his temper after useless pleadings, but finally insisted that the deputies ride with him to where the attack was to take place and judge the prospects of victory for themselves. On 2 August, the deputies rode out

³²Coxe, Marlborough, Vol. III, 192.

³³Sir Wilkinson Dent, "British Land Strategy in Four Great Wars, 1702-1802", The Army Quarterly XX (1930), 30-31.

to a small hill overlooking the proposed battle site. While sitting there, they watched the French army in considerable disorder, marching across the Allied front with their entire flank exposed.³⁴ It would appear that after seeing this opportunity to strike a decisive blow lost, the officials would rely on Marlborough's judgment. Unfortunately, this was not true, and within days they would thwart a second major attack.

The Dutch veto on any major engagement continued, so Marlborough continued south towards Maestricht, leaving General Opdam behind with a small force to maintain surveillance with the French army. Without disclosing the plans and action to the Dutch, Opdam's force was used to entice Boufflers into an attack. The French Marshal had already abandoned the fortresses along the Meuse and needed a victory to put him back in good graces with Louis. For three days the French army steadily pushed Opdam's meager forces southward, when suddenly, the entire Allied army appeared in combat formation to their front. The trap was sprung, and Marlborough's well-placed artillery began taking a heavy toll of the nearest French units. He reinforced Opdam with five thousand additional infantry and ordered him to attack the French

³⁴Sir John W. Fortescue, Marlborough (New York, 1932), 197-198. See also John Deane, Journal of a Campaign in Flanders (London, 1846), 161-162.

left.³⁵ For some untold reason, but in this writer's opinion as a result of gross incompetence, Opdam delayed his attack until darkness. Since the entire Allied attack depended upon Opdam's assault against the French left, the attack never materialized, and the French withdrew. Thus Marlborough's second great opportunity to strike the French army was foiled, and he was so distraught that he sent a messenger to both Berwick and Boufflers, assuring them that the failure to attack was not his fault.³⁶

It was obvious to Marlborough that the Dutch would not agree to a major battle, even under the most ideal conditions.³⁷ It was also apparent that he must conduct war along conventional lines of the chesslike tactics of maneuvers, sieges, and shows of force. He would comply with such restrictions through 1702, but following the winter break, he would never succumb to this type of warfare again.

Marshal Boufflers profited by the Dutch Deputies poorly timed intervention and was able to retain his army intact behind the Brabant lines. In addition, Tallard's strong force soon joined him giving him a numerical superiority over Marlborough's forces. Even though the

³⁵John W. Fortescue, History of the British Army (London, 1914), Vol. IV, 289.

³⁶Lediard, Marlborough, 310.

³⁷Ibid.

field armies had not clashed, the French evacuation of the entire Meuse and lower Rhine valleys except for several key fortresses was considered an Allied victory. A victory without bloodshed was the name given to the campaign by the Dutch,³⁸ and in Marlborough's opinion, was the only way they would ever win a victory.

Prior to examining the second phase of the war it is imperative to briefly evaluate the powerful French army. According to several historians, the ground forces of Louis XIV were unparalleled in Europe, and the professional 200,000 man French army remains one of the most remarkable achievements of seventeenth century France.³⁹ The numerous wars of the past years enabled an experienced officer corps to emerge as well trained, highly proficient leaders, well adapted to fight in any area. Louis had the capability of placing two separate sixty thousand man armies in the field simultaneously and supporting each logistically.⁴⁰ There were, however, two serious weaknesses in Louis' military system, and both would contribute to the army's downfall. First of all, it was not the intent of the French army to seek out and destroy the enemy force.⁴¹ Their design was

³⁸Deane, Journal of a Campaign in Flanders, (London, 1846), 166.

³⁹W. H. Lewis, The Splendid Century (London, 1954), 166.

⁴⁰Kranz, Life of Marlborough, 219.

⁴¹Fortescue, Marlborough, 221.

mainly to always fight from a position of advantage; to enter the enemy's borders and to march back and forth in a great show of force, resembling a chess match often lasting weeks at a time. Just as serious as the first weakness, was the interference of the French Minister of War in all tactical decisions.⁴² The great Turenne never permitted his "outside" advice, nor did Vauban or Luxembourg, but with the deaths of these three great leaders, no single man emerged to overrule the court influence. Marshals Villeroy, Villers, Boufflers, Tallard or Marsin never gained the supreme confidence of Louis to be granted complete authority on the battlefield, thus the often ill-timed and unsound interference plagued the French army just as it did Marlborough during the war's first year. It was not uncommon during major sieges for the entire court to arrive and direct the assault efforts. Normally there would be a great deal of ceremony, and when the capitulation occurred, it would be greeted by a band, while the foes marched in formation past their French conquerors, lowering their banners as they passed.⁴³

This form of warfare would change as a result of Marlborough's leadership. He did not promote the old warrior virtues of honor,

⁴²Lewis, The Splendid Century, 146.

⁴³Grote, Military Antiquities, 281.

nobility, and dash. Instead, he advocated the qualities of discipline, organization and decisiveness. He initiated new principles of warfare which alarmed both the French and his allied subordinates. When he directed an assault upon a besieged fortress, no quarter was given to the inhabitants, and unless a surrender was submitted prior to the final assault, the defenders were often annihilated. No foes ever marched out accompanied by a band and other ceremonies, and his enemies were soon to realize the fruitlessness of refusing a surrender offer. Clausewitz, in his Principles of War, is highly critical of the timid offensive tactics and strategy of the early 1700 French Army, and appears to have copied Marlborough's earlier directives when discussing offensive operations; i.e., that they should be directed at the destruction of the enemy's forces.⁴⁴

Marlborough's position was securely established in the affection of the army,⁴⁵ as the troops saw on a number of occasions that his generalship gave them chances of success. The soldiers also realized that chances for victory had been lost only as a result of the timidity and inefficiency of his subordinate commanders and Dutch politicians.⁴⁶

⁴⁴General Carl Von Clausewitz, Principles of War (Washington, 1950), 89.

⁴⁵Bird, British Land Strategy in Four Great Wars, 33.

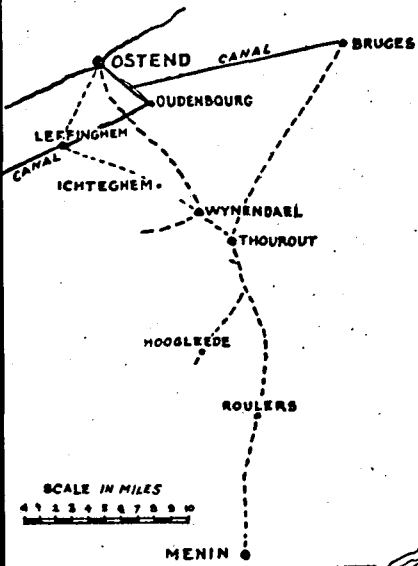
⁴⁶Ibid.

His only hopes for victory now revolved around attacking and reducing the French fortresses along the Meuse River. It was not his kind of war but the only type the allies would let him fight. In his opinion, Venloo was the most important fortress tactically, and it was by far the strongest. Marlborough's first directives split the Allied army into four separate forces for the Meuse campaign.⁴⁷ On the upper Rhine the Germans under Prince Louis of Baden were directed to conduct harassing operations and raid French installations and supply points. A Prussian-Dutch force under the Prince of Saarbruck was directed to seize Kaiserworth on the Rhine. Strategically, it was necessary to secure this fortress in order to prevent any interference towards Venloo.⁴⁸ Ginkel was assigned a corps and directed to act as a covering force between the Meuse and Rhine Rivers, while Cohorn was ordered to take Venloo (see Map G). Critics may question such an unusual command division, but for this particular operation, it appears to be sound tactically. Neither siege force was without a covering force, and allied cavalry units could give ample warning of any large enemy movements, allowing sufficient time to consolidate in strength prior to a decisive engagement. In addition, Marlborough ordered a feint toward Bruges, far to

⁴⁷Hart, Strategy, 94-95.

⁴⁸This opinion belongs to the author following a detailed examination of the terrain and French Lines of Communications.

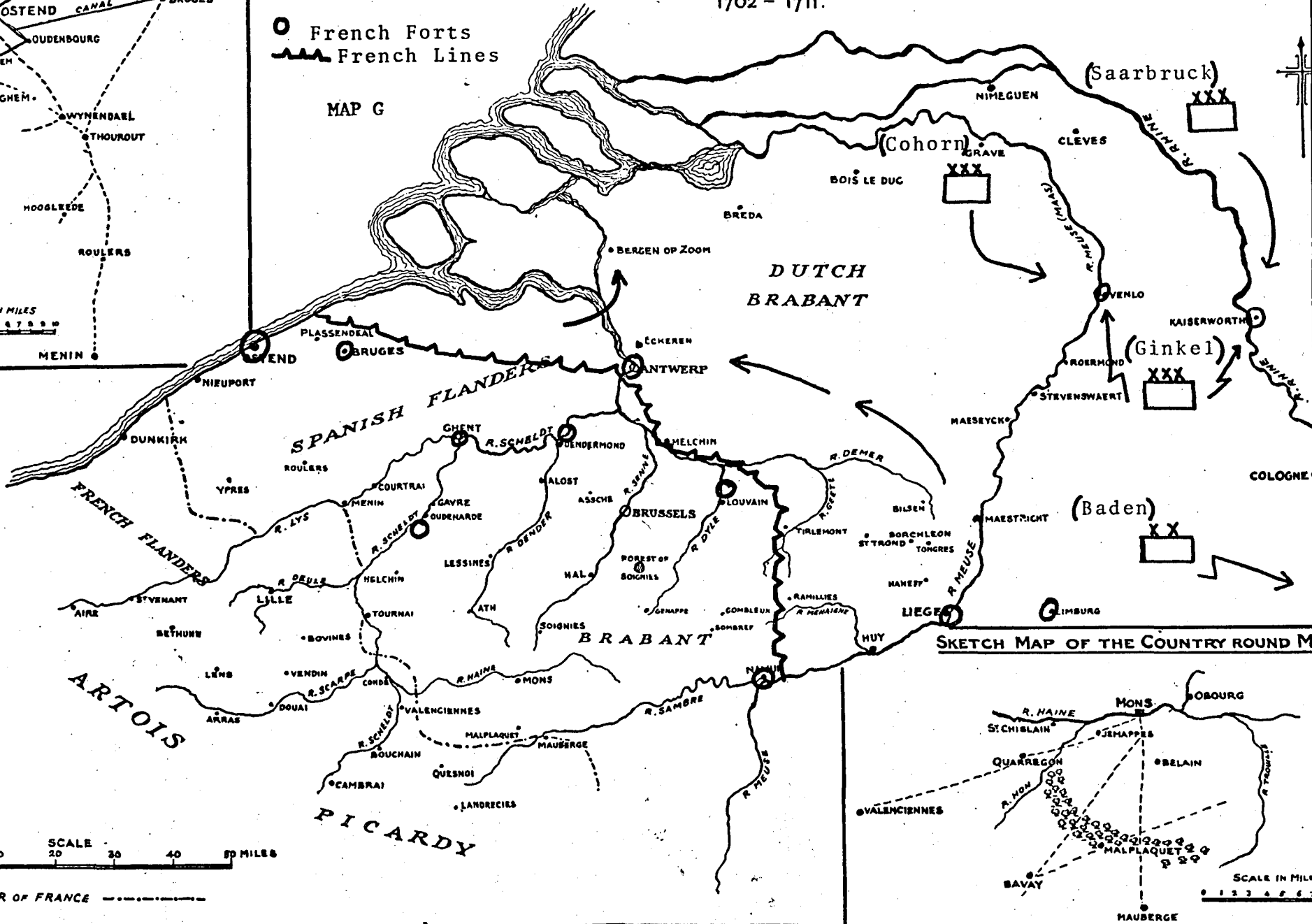
SKETCH MAP OF THE COUNTRY BETWEEN OSTEND AND MENIN.



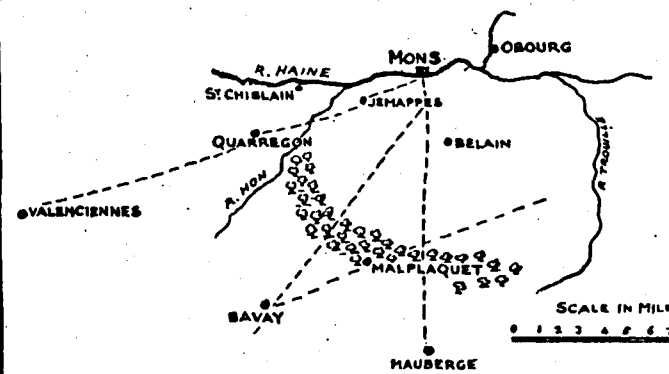
SKETCH MAP OF THE THEATRE OF OPERATIONS
IN THE
NETHERLANDS
1702 - 1711.

○ French Forts
— French Lines

MAP G



SKETCH MAP OF THE COUNTRY ROUND M



the north, which additionally tied down Tallard's force until it was too late to react.⁴⁹

The raids around Bruges were successful and the Allied forces then withdrew towards Bergen-op-Zoom before a much larger force. Ginkel, again exceeded his orders and moved a ten thousand man force from Maestricht,⁵⁰ leaving the fortress almost unprotected. Boufflers struck Ginkel a hard blow, completely delaying any siege at Venloo until the situation stabilized. With the covering force engaged, the siege at Kaiserworth lasted two months, during which time the Dutch and German generals blamed each other for the delay in accomplishing the mission. When Kaiserworth finally fell, Marlborough reorganized the allies into a sixty thousand man field army and struck southward. The Allies successfully captured Venloo on 18 September while Marlborough personally directed the assault.⁵¹

He next besieged and took Ruveponde and Stebensweert and reinforced the depleted garrison at Maestricht. He struck and captured Liege on 23 October, and additionally received the news that Prince Louis had captured the strong fortress at Landau. Following the capture of Liege, which Louis directed Boufflers to hold at all costs,

⁴⁹Kane, Campaigns of King William and Queen Anne, 299.

⁵⁰J.F.C. Fuller, The Decisive Battles of the Western World and Their Influence Upon History (London 1955), 133.

⁵¹Ibid., 134.

Marlborough assaulted the strong citadel at Chartreuse. Since the French commander refused the honorable surrender terms offered by Marlborough, every Frenchman who did not throw down his arms was killed. Over three thousand of the fort's defenders were killed during the assault.⁵² Following the capture of the fortress along the Meuse, Marlborough next directed the assaults against Cologne, which fell before winter. Only Rheinberg and Bonn were left, and Marlborough did not allow the allies to depart for winter quarters until a strong force surrounded the northernmost fortress.⁵³

Thus by November, Marlborough had accomplished more in five months than William had in eight campaigns in Flanders. The Allies were elated over the results, but this writer suspects that Marlborough was probably the least contented soldier in the field because he had been restrained from striking a decisive blow against the French army. In early November he left by boat for the Hague, and although captured but released while enroute, Marlborough arrived to a tumultuous reception in the capital.⁵⁴

⁵²Parker, Memoirs, 291.

⁵³John Campbell, The Military History of Eugene and Marlborough (London, 1736), Vol. I, 166.

⁵⁴Marlborough's boat was captured by a French raiding party, and during the search, he was given a pass by his aide which had been issued earlier to his brother. Since the French lieutenant did not recognize Marlborough, he released him. The news of his capture electrified both the Allies and King Louis, but unfortunately for Louis, his escape was successful.

His return to England was as widely acclaimed as at the Hague. Queen Anne was elated by the performance of her Captain-General and prepared to present his reward immediately upon his return. Both houses of Parliament praised Marlborough for his role in 1702, but party squabbles began almost overnight concerning his financial reward. Anne recommended Marlborough to a dukedom with a proposed grant of five thousand pounds annually, but when the financial grant caused such a furor, Marlborough quietly refused it after discussions with Harley and Godolphin.⁵⁵ After all, his payments from the British, Dutch, and Allied governments already totaled some sixty thousand pounds annually, so the opposition could easily portray him as a greedy military general determined to bleed England while adding to his already overflowing finances. What Parliament did not realize was that a bullet could quickly end any previous financial gains and that Marlborough desired the grant for the sole protection of his family.⁵⁶

Just prior to Marlborough's arrival in England, his last surviving son caught the dreaded smallpox and died. There was no time

⁵⁵David Green presents an entirely different analysis and writes that Parliament absolutely refused to consider the Queen's recommendation. (Green, Queen Anne, 110.

⁵⁶Coxe, Marlborough, 261.

for mourning the death of his son because the Allied Army was moving from winter quarters to the field positions. On 17 March, Marlborough arrived at the Hague, and immediately departed for Maestricht where he concentrated the bulk of his army.⁵⁷

He met with the Dutch and Allied officials after reviewing the infantry and cavalry units, and presented his plan for the forthcoming campaigns of 1703. Marlborough's intelligence reports presented an unfavorable situation. It appeared that Louis planned to fight only a defensive war in Flanders, while conducting the main French efforts against the Empire.⁵⁸ The way for such an offensive had been considerably aided by military victories along the southern German-French border, including a defeat of Prince Eugene in Bavaria.⁵⁹ Marlborough offered two tactical plans to thwart the French designs for 1703. The first plan involved moving a large force into the upper Rhine area to block French efforts to penetrate into the Empire. The second plan called for decisive action in Flanders.⁶⁰ Both plans met with stern opposition from the Dutch officials. Frederick of Prussia

⁵⁷ Christopher T. Atkinson, "Marlborough's Sieges", Journal, Society Army Historical Research, XIII (March 1934), 195-221.

⁵⁸ Grote, Military Antiquities, 300.

⁵⁹ Nicholas Henderson, Prince Eugen of Savoy (New York, 1965), 82.

⁶⁰ Parker, Memoirs of the Most Remarkable Military Transactions (London, 1747), 133.

offered Marlborough eighteen thousand soldiers for the battle in the Spanish Netherlands, but the Dutch officials, fearing political designs, refused his offer. The frustrations of 1702 seemed to carry over to the following year, and here was a proven commander, his hands completely tied by incompetents, even to include the refusal of eighteen thousand additional soldiers. Even though Marlborough realized that the States would never consent to a decisive battle unless it was forced upon them, he still offered his recommended courses of action for 1703.⁶¹ The plan was daring, as it included a bold strike against the major fortresses of Ostend and Antwerp. Ostend would open a new sea route to England and Marlborough knew that the Tory party would approve a sea assault by the navy. The navy needed a boost following the mistakes of 1702, and an amphibious assault would offer a chance to redeem itself following the Cadiz fiasco. Antwerp controlled the Scheldt and its vast canal system and would be of great commercial value to the allies.⁶²

Characteristically, the Dutch officials were opposed to such a daring plan even though most of Marlborough's generals were solidly in favor. It was a bold venture; combining a sea assault with a well

⁶¹In defense of the seemingly hesitant Dutch, it should be clearly understood that a tactical disaster in the Spanish Netherlands could prove fatal to Holland's defenses.

⁶²Coxe, Marlborough, 269.

timed overland penetration, but this is what made Marlborough stand out so far above his contemporaries. He could visualize long range operations and their impact upon both the allies and the enemy. Fortunately for the French, Marlborough did not enjoy full supreme command of the Allied Army. The Deputies wanted Bonn captured prior to any offensive action and would not agree to Marlborough's plan, but this time he did not fully give in. Prior to agreeing to any siege at Bonn, Marlborough forced the Deputies into approving his plans for offensive action, and even insinuated he might step down as Commander-in-Chief unless the Allies became more offensive minded. After all, he reminded them that "the Empire was desperate for soldiers, and the English contingent would certainly not want for lack of action under Eugene."⁶³

Marlborough placed Overkirk's corps between Maestricht and Liege as a covering force, and departed for Bonn with the Prussian, Hessian and Hanoverian forces. There were forty battalions and sixty-six squadrons⁶⁴ in Marlborough's forces, and the celebrated engineer Cohorn was directed to begin the siege. Marlborough realized the inherent dangers of the Bonn campaign because it left both Liege and

⁶³Parker, Memoirs, 134.

⁶⁴Author unknown, The Lives of the Two Illustrious Generals (London, 1713), 216.

Maestricht open to attack. Bonn must fall quickly for he realized that the French would not stand by without taking some positive action. Cohorn delayed the siege forcing Marlborough to personally direct the assault efforts.⁶⁵ It was a well defended fortress, but not able to withstand the awesome pounding by the Allies. Marlborough brought up ninety mortars of the six inch and eight inch bores and over five hundred smaller size calibers.⁶⁶ This heavy barrage broke the outlying walls and the fortress was stormed and overwhelmed by the assaulting infantry. Simultaneously, Villeroy and Boufflers struck towards Liege with a forty thousand man army. Overkirk's corps of fifteen thousand men was no match, and when it became apparent that his army was the target and not Liege, he steadily withdrew towards Maestricht.⁶⁷ Marlborough, when learning the French move, directed his brother to immediately move to Maestricht with ten thousand soldiers. Thus on 9 May when Overkirk reached the outer walls of the fortress, Churchill's force bolstered the defenses, which caused the French to withdraw their plans for an attack.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Fuller, The Decisive Battles of the Western World, 133.

⁶⁶ Author Unknown, The Lives of the Two Illustrious Generals, 217.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 220.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

The Allies were fortunate to escape without a defeat. It was a risky operation and Marlborough was prepared to take such risks; what he was not prepared for was Cohorn's blundering, delaying the siege at Bonn. Once the forces had consolidated outside Maestricht, Marlborough called his subordinates and the Deputies into war council on 18 May 1702.⁶⁹ It was at this time that he proposed his "Grand Design;" an attempt to bring the French army to a decisive battle that neither side could avoid.

In a letter to Godolphin on 19 May, he unfolded his daring scheme of operations:

I shall tomorrow send an express to The Hague to see how far they have prepared for what I call the great design; so that we may not lose time in endeavouring to put it into execution. Before I left Bonn, measures were taken for the embarking of 20 battalions of foot, if it be possible to get boats enough, and 21 squadrons of horse are to march the nearest way to Bergen-op-Zoom, where they are to join the 20 battalions that go by water. These troops are to take the most advantageous port near Antwerp, after which there will be care taken to join more troops to them. If this design of Antwerp can be brought to perfection, I hope we shall make it very uneasy for them to protect Brussels and the rest of their great towns.⁷⁰

The armies of both sides totaled over one hundred forty thousand men, being fairly equal in numbers but with the French still retaining the advantage of operating behind defensive lines. At the

⁶⁹Kane, Campaigns of William and Marlborough, 112.

⁷⁰Parker, Memoirs, 213 (Partially extracted letter, the remaining portion did not pertain specifically to the campaign, thus was excluded.)

war council, the Dutch still pressed for additional sieges while Marlborough unfolded his plan to fight a major battle.⁷¹ The first phase of his design as mentioned in the letter to Godolphin, was to use the existing waterways to transport troops upriver to Bergen-op-Zoom. During the second phase, Marlborough directed Cohorn, assisted by an amphibious assault, to attack and seize Ostend. Marlborough, with the bulk of the army would move southwest towards Huy to draw major French units southward. General Opdam would then advance toward Antwerp from the northeast. After Marlborough's feint, he would then strike for Antwerp from the south⁷² (see Map H).

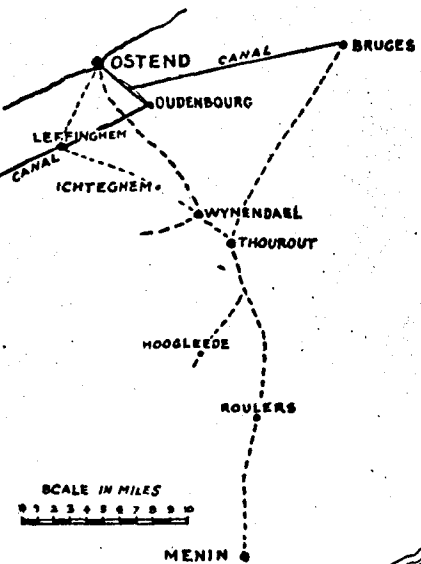
In examining the proposed courses of action, it should become obvious to the reader that there are two essential elements for this operation to succeed. First, the timing of the overall operation must be precise, and secondly, Marlborough must retain absolute authority throughout the campaign. Unfortunately, there was a serious breakdown in each area and the campaign was a failure.

As the Dutch army struck in the northeast with the seaborne landings, Cohorn received permission from the States General to change

⁷¹Kane, Campaigns, 116.

⁷²Ibid., 117; also see Coxe, Marlborough, 289, and Francis Hare's The Conduct of the Duke of Marlborough, 116.

BETWEEN
OSTEND AND MENIN.

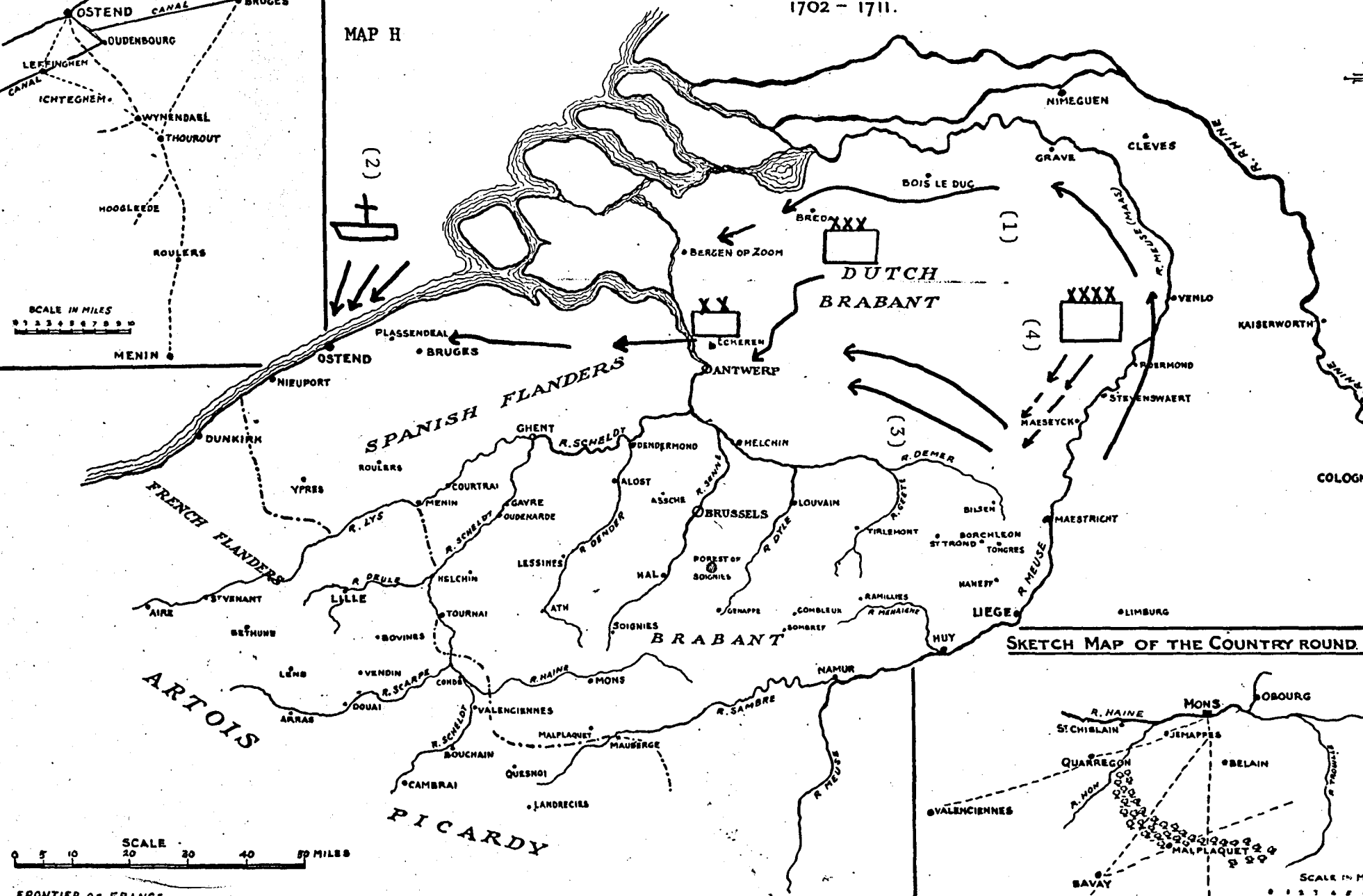


SKETCH MAP OF THE THEATRE OF OPERATIONS

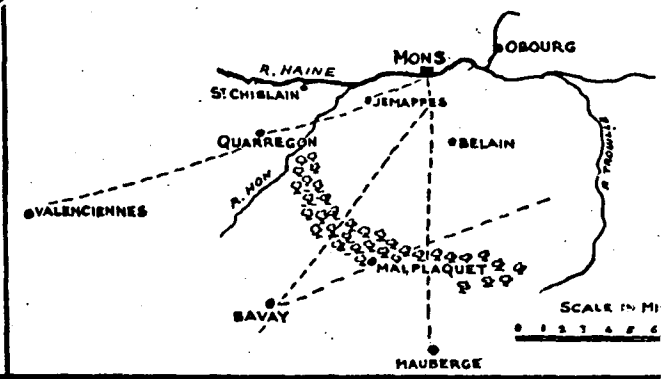
IN THE
NETHERLANDS

1702 - 1711.

MAP H



SKETCH MAP OF THE COUNTRY ROUND



his mission. He did not attack Ostend, but instead, penetrated the French lines of communications and conducted useless raids against smaller towns. Consequently, the large French forces between Ostend and Antwerp did not move northward. Secondly, Opdam launched his attack towards Antwerp too early and was struck and routed by Boufflers. Marlborough, when learning of the disaster, hurried towards Antwerp, but there was no way he could arrive in time to prevent Opdam's defeat.⁷³

Although the efforts to capture Ostend and Antwerp failed, Marlborough continued to press for a general attack. He insisted that the French Marshals could not meet this attack and would either retire, or accept a battle unfavorable to them. All Allied generals except the Dutch agreed to Marlborough's plan,⁷⁴ but their refusal caused it to fail. Thomas Lediard writes that rupture of the French lines and a major defeat in Flanders would have turned the tide of the war in all of Europe.⁷⁵

⁷³Schematics of Marlborough's designs are contained in the U.S. Army Historical Research Library at Carlisle Barracks, Penn. Unfortunately, the writer was unable to get the oversized maps reproduced for this paper. Hopefully, Map H will show a sufficient overview of the plan that the reader can follow.

⁷⁴Parker, Memoirs, 216.

⁷⁵Lediard, Marlborough, 314.

Marlborough became so distraught that he considered retiring to his wife's home at Holywell.⁷⁶ Only his devotion to the Queen and the common cause prevented him from departing Flanders forever, but to get away from the obstinate Dutch, he departed for Limburg where he personally directed the siege operation. The capture of Limburg completed the fighting in 1703, and even though the Dutch were pleased with the results, in Marlborough's opinion, it had been a dismal failure. The French were victorious on the upper Rhine, had penetrated in Bavaria, won a great victory in Italy, and were planning a major assault against Vienna. Only in Flanders were the French unsuccessful tactically, but strategically, they had completely tied down the strongest and best led army on the continent for the entire year.⁷⁷

⁷⁶J.F.C. Fuller writes that Marlborough informed the Dutch Deputies that he "considered it his duty to inform you that because of the experiences and little success of the campaign and no prospect of improving," and furthermore, he was considering relinquishing his command. Fuller, Decisive Battles, 130.

⁷⁷Lediard, Marlborough, 316.

CHAPTER VI

BLLENHEIM

For the campaign of 1704, Louis planned to reinforce the 55,000 man Franco-Bavarian army (now commanded by the Elector and the French General Marsin) with an additional 30,000 troops, commanded by Marshal Tallard. In the middle of May, however, Marlborough rudely wrested the strategic initiative away from the French. Leaving 60,000 troops to guard the Netherlands, Marlborough, without informing his over-cautious Dutch Allies of his plan,¹ took the 21,000 English and German troops paid by the English government on a two hundred fifty mile march into Germany with the primary intention of engaging the French-Bavarian force and breaking the dangerous alliance.²

Before examining this campaign, which most military analysts call his most brilliant, recapitulation of both the political and tactical situation facing the allies is necessary. Marlborough had suffered much despair in 1703 in dealing with the defensive minded Dutch generals.³ Time and time again he had skillfully maneuvered

¹Lynn Montross, War Through the Ages (New York, 1944), 360.

²Grote, Memoirs, 309.

³Deane, A Journal of the Campaign in Flanders, 291.

his forces into extremely advantageous positions in an effort to fight a decisive battle, only to be vetoed by the Dutch, thus allowing the French army to escape. It became readily apparent to Marlborough that the Dutch were only interested in protecting their frontiers and not engaging in an all-out offensive campaign, which in Marlborough's opinion, was the only method by which the French army could be defeated.

Meanwhile, there was a serious danger of Austria falling.⁴ In Hungary, there was a full scale revolt, actively supported by France, thus Austria could ill afford to dispatch troops to the allied cause. Bavaria entered the war on the side of France and threatened to destroy the allied position in south Germany because this enabled the enemy to establish secure bases and lines of communications for a direct assault on Vienna or across the Alps into Northern Italy.⁵

By April, intelligence agents were reporting that Tallard was preparing a march through the Black Forest to join the Franco-Bavarian Army on the Danube. To allow a juncture of this nature to succeed would have resulted in a disaster, since the enemy could achieve an overwhelming numerical superiority in southern Germany,

⁴Henderson, Prince Eugen of Savoy, 91.

⁵Coxe, Marlborough, 273.

and could operate from interior lines of communications while ravaging Germany, Austria and Northern Italy with little opposition.⁶ Although Marlborough was aware of this, there was no possibility that the Dutch would agree to any weakening of the Netherlands forces since they were positive that such action would invite a French attack.

In examining the opposing forces in 1704, we find three major French armies north of the Alps; Marshal Villeroy in the Netherlands with 100 battalions and 100 squadrons (150,000); in the Alsace area, Marshal Tallard commanded 30 battalions and 43 squadrons (34,300), with an additional 41 battalions and 30 squadrons under General Coigny designated to guard the Moselle; in Bavaria, Marsin had succeeded Villars, and with the Elector's troops, commanded 50 battalions and 60 squadrons (56,000). In addition to Marlborough's 21,000 troops for the German campaign, he would be joined by Prince Eugene with 30,000 and an additional 15,000 under the Prince of Baden.⁷

To prevent a major disaster from occurring in the south, it was necessary for Marlborough to gain the support of the Emperor.

⁶Ibid., 274.

⁷Numerous references were examined in an attempt to ascertain exact troop strengths on both sides. Most are in complete agreement concerning relative numbers of battalions and squadrons. The ultimate reference was General Sir George Murray, The Letters and Dispatches of John Churchill, First Duke of Marlborough from 1702 to 1712 (London, 1845).

The previous two campaigns convinced him that there was no possible way to gain a rapid decision in the Netherlands, as a result of the formidable French lines and fortresses combined with Dutch restraints.⁸ He decided that the sole course open if the Alliance was to be saved was to transfer his army to the upper Danube and prevent the French and Bavarians from reaching Vienna. As certain as Marlborough was concerning the strategical situation, he was just as convinced that the Dutch would never approve. Even if Dutch approval was granted, a move south would be a most dangerous undertaking. Not only was the proposed march to cover a considerable distance, it would involve a flank march across the French center, with only a small covering force to screen the main body. Therefore, it was essential for Marlborough to conceal the ultimate aim of his plan from the French armies on the Moselle and in Alsace, as well as the Dutch who he was convinced would oppose it.⁹ To mask the move and to reduce the French forces, he planned and directed an expeditionary force to Lisbon, and a naval/land assault on the Riveria. Once these operations were begun, Marlborough would then move overland to the Danube.

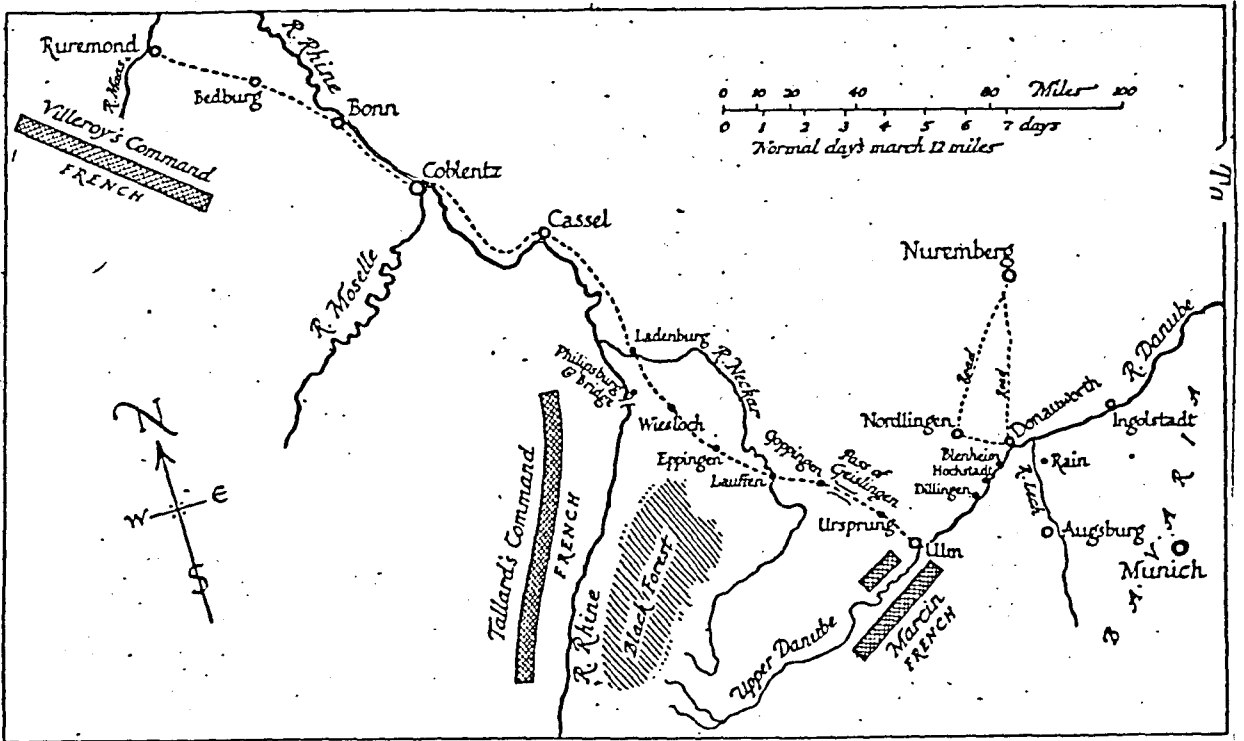
⁸Kane, Campaigns, 126. Winston Churchill also substantiates that Marlborough planned to move south with or without the Dutch. Churchill, Marlborough, Vol. II, 401.

⁹The information was initially withheld from the Dutch because of the veto power concerning tactical plans. Once the movement south had achieved the desired results, Marlborough could continue without the Dutch forces.

With the complete support of the Lord Treasurer Godolphin and the Queen, he secretly substituted a campaign on the Moselle for the Danube. Part of this new plan, and certainly of such magnitude that Marlborough would have never moved without it, was that Prince Eugene was directed by the Emperor to take the field and join Marlborough in Germany.¹⁰ As was previously mentioned, Marlborough devised his plan with the utmost secrecy, and of particular importance, obtained prior approval for all troops under English pay to come directly under his command. This was essential, for when he was to finally inform the Dutch officials of his forthcoming campaign on the Moselle, they at once began to obstruct him.¹¹ Nevertheless, handing over the defense of the United Provinces to General Auverquerque and 70,000 men, he fixed the first rendezvous of his own army at Bedburg, twenty miles west of Cologne for 16 May. In all, he had under his command 90 squadrons of horse, and 51 battalions of foot, of which 19 and 14 respectively, with 38 guns, constituted the British contingent. From Bedburg, Marlborough wrote to Mr. George Stepney, the English representative at Vienna, requesting him to inform the Emperor of his intention of marching to the Danube, but on no account, to let the

¹⁰Mark A. Thompson, "Louis XIV and the Origins of the War of the Spanish Succession", Transactions of the Royal Historical Society, 5th Series, Vol. IV (1954), pp. 111-112.

¹¹Lediard, Marlborough, Vol. I, 493.



General tactical situation in the spring of 1704, showing line of Marlborough's march to the Danube.

Reproduced from Burton's The Captain General.

Dutch hear of it.¹²

On 18 May, Marlborough reviewed his troops, and two days later the army marched for the Rhine. It was five days later when the advanced elements of Marlborough's army reached Bonn and almost immediately Allied agents reported that Villeroy was paralleling his line of march towards Alsace. Marlborough was confident that Villeroy would maintain contact with his army, and his move would actually strengthen Dutch security by drawing away forces from the Netherlands frontiers.¹³ In fact, as soon as Marlborough was aware of Villeroy's move, he dispatched the following letter to Heinsius arguing that now the Dutch could afford to send further reinforcements.

I am assured that the Marshal Villeroy will take with him 35 battalions and 45 squadrons...if he should take so strong a detachment, they will hardly be able to leave the name of an army behind them, and in that case I should think it would be very much for the good of your service to draw into the army a good part of the troops in your garrisons, by which means you might send us so many troops as might make me succeed against the Elector of Bavaria, and M. Overkirk be able to undertake what ever you should think best in Flanders.¹⁴

¹²Murray, ed., The Letters and Dispatches of John Churchill, First Duke of Marlborough, from 1702 to 1712, 304. It should be noted that the superintendent of Blenheim discovered the letters and dispatches in October, 1842, when he happened to find 18 folio books bound in vellum. This is significant because, according to the editor, this information was unknown to Coxe when he wrote John, Duke of Marlborough.

¹³Burton, The Captain General, 55.

¹⁴Author unknown. The Lives of the Two Illustrious Generals, 111. Also see Burton, The Captain General, 55-56, for an additional analysis of Marlborough's tactical reasoning.

Heinsius released a Dutch force of 7 battalions and 22 squadrons, and on his authority, General Auverquerque dispatched an additional 10 battalions and 16 squadrons southward to catch up with the Allied army.

Prior to discussing the great battles which lay ahead, it is essential to analyze the move into Germany, for this move consisted of far more than a short route or forced march to pin down an enemy force, where problems of security, available troops, and logistics would be minimum. This was a drastic move by Marlborough, and the implications were serious. It was a move seldom undertaken in the annals of military history. To organize, move, and tactically employ an Allied army was no easy task, and only a commander of Marlborough's ability could achieve success in such a venture. It should be emphasized that his march was orderly; it did not create hardships on the populace, and above all, Marlborough was concerned with the welfare of his soldiers throughout the long march. Robert Parker writes:

that in food supply as in so many things, most really depended on the personal capacity of the Commander-in-Chief in the field. It also depended on the local agriculture. In the barren dust of Spain, Peterborough worked vainly to provide food and fodder, while his troops starved and sickened, and his army could hardly move for want of beasts for transport, artillery, and cavalry. Marlborough, on the other hand, planned his march through rich agricultural lands, with plenty of green forage or hay and plenty of animals to ride, to harness, or to eat.¹⁵

¹⁵Parker, Memoirs of Military Transactions, 1683-1718, 199.

Next to his tactical genius, administration was possibly Marlborough's most important attribute. It was the supply system that he created and watched over, rather than the sketchy and chaotic government machinery that supported the war.¹⁶ He signed long term contracts on behalf of the entire army with local contractors of high standing, knowledge, and resources. He followed through on the details of performance and made all the special arrangements for particular marches.¹⁷ Obviously, this administrative ability was significant during the long two hundred fifty mile march to the Danube, and his troops were continually amazed by their general's care. One soldier wrote:

As we marched, commissaries were appointed to furnish us with all manner of necessaries for men and horses. These were brought to the ground before we arrived, and the soldiers had nothing to do but to pitch tents, boil their kettles, and lie down to rest. Surely there was never such a march carried on with more order and regularity, and with less fatigue to both men and horse.¹⁸

Marlborough expressly forbade any misconduct or stealing by the army while passing through the countryside. To make things easier both for the armies and the countries it marched through,

"his Grace was not unmindful to provide money and order regular payments for everything that was brought into the camp; a thing hitherto unknown in Germany...and to prevent any failure herein, he (order'd) the Treasurer of the Army

¹⁶Board of Ordnance: Reference Books; Ordnance Book; War Office 44, (London, 1703) 16-17. Military records pertaining to the Ordnance Book and Commissariat were made available by the British Liaison Officer to United States Army, Europe.

¹⁷Burton, The Captain General, 58, and Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough, 169.

¹⁸Lediard, Life of Marlborough, 309.

to be always in cash to answer bills, and daily to have a months subsistence before hand, and the supplies should be laid from Frankfurt to Nuernburg. Furthermore, that he should lose no time in sending credit to these places."¹⁹

Following the Rhine valley southward, the allied advance had a profound effect on the French, for it forced them on the defensive. Louis and his generals believed that once reaching the Moselle valley, Marlborough would strike westwards in an attempt to penetrate the French defensive positions and relieve the pressure against Germany. Thus, as Marlborough continued southward, more and more French forces were withdrawn from the Netherlands until a threat to the Allies in that area ended, with the final result showing an additional ten thousand troops released to move behind Marlborough protecting the lengthening lines of communications. The scarlet caterpillar, which the English army resembled because of the color of their uniforms, proceeded up the Rhine River at a steady pace of 12-15 miles daily. Every fifth day, Marlborough halted to rest the troops, and as has been previously discussed, a continuous network of supply depots, to include bridging equipment, awaited the columns.²⁰ On 3 June the allied column crossed a floating bridge over the Neckar at Ladenburg, and halted for the entire army to join together. Then, to

¹⁹Coxe, Memoirs of John, Duke of Marlborough, Vol. II, 131.

²⁰Ibid., 133.

the utter amazement of the French command, Marlborough turned sharply east. The news of Marlborough's turning movement was a cause of concern for Marshal Tallard and created a sensation at Versailles,²¹ and even though his steady march had been carefully monitored, the fact that he turned east instead of west, shocked the French generals. Marlborough's calculations were all correct; Villeroy did not strike the weakened Dutch lines in the Netherlands, but had followed to the Moselle; the Dutch, once being made aware of Marlborough's plans, reinforced his army.²² He was now in Central Germany with a concentration of 50,000 troops, and in contact with the Margrave of Baden, who could muster 50,000 more. Although the total French troops numbered 100,000, they were split at opposite ends of the country with a long march ahead if they were to join. Both French armies were vulnerable, and the French army closest to Vienna was open to a direct attack. The strategical advantages held by the French in May had been completely reversed by June. The Allied commanders conference held on 10 June was highlighted by the arrival of Prince Eugene,²³ a soldier that Marlborough insisted be transferred

²¹Fuller, The Decisive Battles, 139.

²²Francis Hare, The Conduct of the Duke of Marlborough During the Present War, 134-135. See also Grote, Military Antiquities, 300; updated analysis are presented by Churchill, Burton and Edwards, however, each heavily refer to earlier books by Hare and Grote.

²³Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough, 139.

to the Allied army. Eugene was received with the highest military honors, and thus began a glorious brotherhood that neither victory or misfortune could ever disturb.²⁴ Seldom have two great commanders seen "eye-to-eye" more than Marlborough and Eugene, and both completely agreed that the full destruction of the French field armies was the key to ending the long struggle.

The Allied armies joined in the vicinity of where the Danube and the Lech join, and very near the great fortress at Donauworth. Capturing this formidable position was essential for two reasons. First of all, it would deny the approaching French army a base of operations and supply, but of even more significance was that its capture would enable the allies to fight on either side of both rivers as necessary. Donauworth was a well defended fortress and obviously would result in heavy casualties if it were attacked. This challenge caused much bickering among the allied generals, however, Marlborough stood firm with his plan to attack. The mission is essential, and Marlborough was prepared to lose 10-12,000 men if necessary in order to take the fortress.²⁵

The struggle for the fortress resulted in terrible casualties with bitter fighting on each side. Artillery and explosive mortar

²⁴Ibid., 139. Also see Lediard, Marlborough, 306.

²⁵While this may seem to be a ruthless approach, it must be clearly understood that in combat, the mission always is the primary consideration and the welfare of the men is secondary.

rounds took a deadly toll of both the attackers and defenders, and some 3,000 Englishmen fell during the first assault. Almost immediately, Marlborough ordered a second wave to charge forward,²⁶ and by sheer numbers alone, the English carried the outer wall. It was a struggle where no quarter was given; it was featured by vicious hand-to-hand combat, but the final result was that Marlborough's English troops routed the Bavarian-French force while suffering over 6,000 casualties.²⁷ Having taken Donauworth, Marlborough had the freedom of action he desired, and regardless of whether the French joined forces or chose to fight, he could move from within his own interior lines to engage them.

During the next five weeks, the Franco-Bavarian army continually evaded Marlborough. Facing an opponent who would neither fight nor negotiate, Marlborough attempted to force the Elector to battle by devastating the Bavarian countryside, burning crops and villages reminiscent of the armies of the Thirty Years' War.²⁸

²⁶Churchill, Marlborough, 385.

²⁷Grote, Military Antiquities, 303. Fletcher Pratt, in The Battles that Changed History, p. 202, briefly mentions the Donauworth battle and additionally writes that the French forces suffered 10,000 casualties. This was the only source that explicitly mentioned French casualties.

²⁸Churchill, Marlborough, 388-389.

This, of course, had an adverse effect on the Bavarian people in continuing their support of the Elector, for if he could not protect them from the Allies, why should they actively support his ill fated divorce from the rest of Germany?

By the end of July, Marshal Tallard's force had completed its forced march through the Black Forest, pushed by Eugene's 30,000 man blocking force, and joined the Elector. Now the stage was set for Marlborough's finest hour, and he wasted little time. The Allies, who were operating within interior lines, moved over well prepared roads and controlled the key bridges and crossing sites.

Although Marlborough and Eugene's relationship was one of perfect harmony and agreement, the Margrave of Baden presented several problems which could have been a disaster for the Allies. By title he was senior to both Marlborough and Eugene, which meant that he could insist on the command at least every third day. Tactically and technically, he was incompetent, however, and to "rid him" from the battle area, Marlborough convinced the Margrave that he should strike north with 15,000 soldiers to continue ravaging the countryside.²⁹

This proved satisfactory to the Margrave, and two days prior to the

²⁹Henderson, Prince Eugen of Savoy, 106 In a discussion with Eugen, Marlborough and the Prince both agreed that even though they would lose 15,000 men, it would be worth it to rid themselves of the worthless commander.

great battle at Blenheim, he was beginning the siege at Ingolstadt, twenty miles away.³⁰

Marlborough and Eugene had spent most of the tenth of August conducting a personal reconnaissance of the French positions, when a messenger arrived stating that the main enemy body was moving to the east. It was apparent to Marlborough where the French would emplace their lines, even though they did not expect the Allies to do battle.³¹ He stated to Eugene that the enemy would pass through Hochstadt and occupy the high ground east of the village and overlooking the fordable, but marshy Nebel Creek.³²

Marlborough was not wrong in his estimate of the enemy's intentions, for on the twelfth of August, Tallard and the Elector had pitched a new camp in exactly the area Marlborough had predicted. Tallard and his generals were still confident that there would be no battle,³³ for during the past three years of marches and counter marches, there had never been a decisive battle fought, where the destruction of the opposing army was the ultimate goal of both sides.

³⁰Churchill, Marlborough, 399.

³¹Lediard, Marlborough, 401.

³²John Millner, A Compendious Journal of all the Marches, Famous Battles and Sieges of the Confederate Allies in the Late War (London, 1733), 100.

³³Burton, The Captain General, 67.

Tallard's position was sound; it connected with the Danube on the southern flank and a heavy woodline on the north.³⁴ He occupied the key terrain, or high ground, with approximately five hundred yards of open ground between his troops on the Nebel creek. (see Map M)

The French were surprised to see the Allies encamp only six miles away, and in particular, since six captured soldiers had each indicated that they were to withdraw to the east on 13 August.³⁵

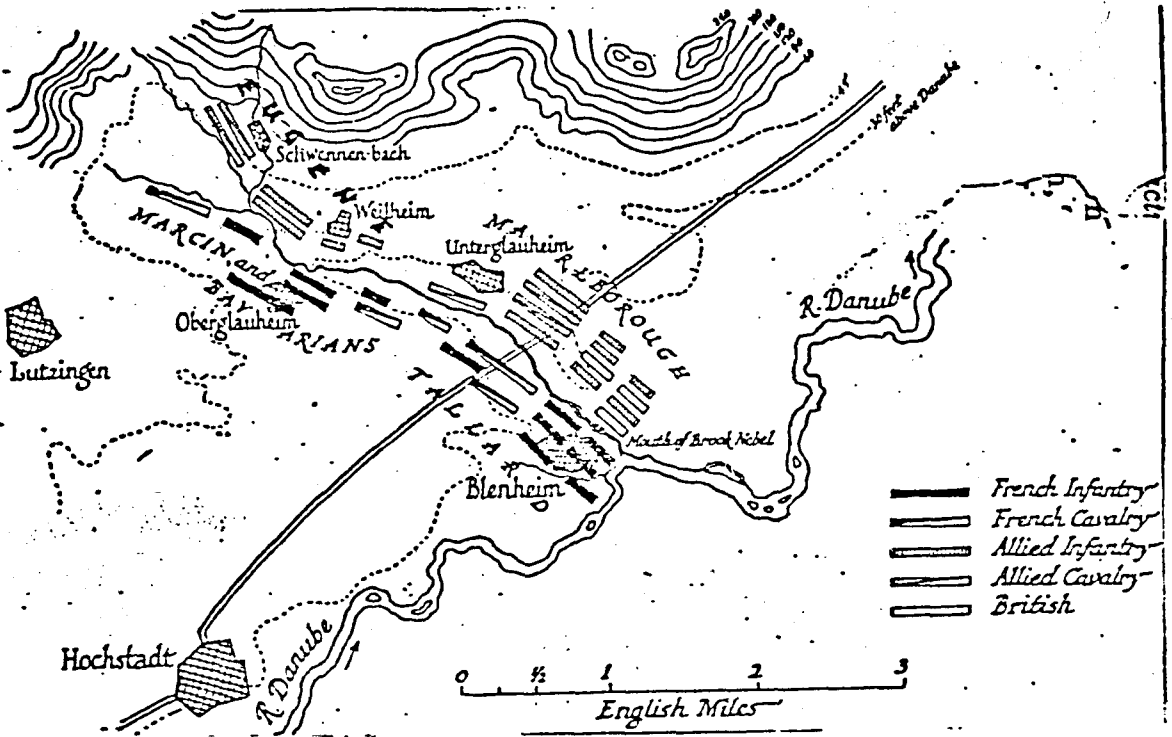
On the evening of 12 August, the senior French and Bavarian generals were entertained by the Elector at an elaborate "dining-in" celebration. All were in good spirits, and none were remotely aware that the next day would find their soldiers locked in mortal combat. For they had not reckoned with Marlborough, and now that his hands were no longer tied by the cautious Dutch Allies, he was preparing to strike a decisive blow aimed towards the destruction of what was considered the most professional army in the world.

At 3:00 a.m., the Allied army moved westward. Eight columns slowly filed over prepared roads soon to be followed by a ninth column. Forty cavalry squadrons screened the infantry's move, and in all, Marlborough and Eugene had 66 battalions, 160 squadrons, supported by

³⁴Fuller, The Decisive Battles, 145.

³⁵Robert Parker writes that these captured soldiers were hand picked intelligence specialists from different units, with the specific mission of insuring that the Allied plans were masked from the French

MAP M



This very basic illustration of the first phase of Blenheim is solely used to picture two glaring weaknesses of the French defensive positions. Note the heavy preponderance of infantry in echelons around the village of Blenheim, and the weak French center. This was caused as a result of what appeared by Tallard to be a main attack on each flank, thus not only did he weaken his center, he "divided the command", which would prove fatal.

Reproduced from Burton's The Captain General.

66 guns.³⁶ An early morning mist covered the march over part of the route, and the columns moved into battle lines only two miles from the enemy front. Surprise, one of the most important principles of war, had been achieved primarily as a result of a total lack of security by Tallard.

Marlborough's plan was simple. He would launch two main attacks, one against each flank. Eugene was to command on the right, and Marlborough on the left.³⁷ Each depended on the other, while Marlborough's ultimate objectives was to weaken the French center drawing off reserves, and then to strike the decisive blow with his cavalry.³⁸

Marshal Tallard was shocked upon awakening on the thirteenth of August when he saw Allied tents in plain view. He still disbelieved that any battle was impending and that Marlborough's move was a show of force which would be withdrawn. In fact, he was so confident of

³⁶Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough, 155. Numerous sources were examined to determine actual troop strengths of both sides. The authors, for the most part, agree with Edwards, or are within two to three battalions and squadrons. It is interesting to note, however, that the majority of the Blenheim information published subsequent to 1950, heavily rely upon Coxe, Lediard, Kane and Millner, for illustrating the battle.

³⁷Henderson, Prince Eugen, 107.

³⁸Coxe, Marlborough, 308.

this, he drafted a short note to Louis XIV only moments before the attack begun, and as his messenger sped westward out of the camp, the opening volleys had already commenced. His ill timed letter to the King stated:

This morning before day break the enemy beat the general at 2 o'clock and three the assembly. They are now drawn up at the head of their camp, and it looks as if they will march this day. Rumour in the countryside expects them at Nordlingen. If that were true, they will leave us between the Danube and themselves and in consequence they will have difficulty in sustaining their posts and depots which they have taken in Bavaria.³⁹

The English columns continued forward, and by 7:00, were deploying across the battlefield. Now was the moment of truth for the French, for they were suddenly aware that were about to be attacked.⁴⁰ Fortunately, Tallard had selected his position well, and even though unprepared initially, rapidly moved his battalions and brigades into fighting positions.⁴¹

The artillery duel began around 9:00 and its thunders rolled up and down the Danube Valley.⁴² The allied crossings over the Nebel all succeeded, although extreme casualties were suffered at the hands of the cannon shot. At half past noon, all the assaulting infantry units were in position, and Marlborough's simple command of "Gentlemen,

³⁹Parker, Memoirs of the Most Remarkable Military Transactions, 221-222.

⁴⁰Ibid., 223.

⁴¹Ibid., 230.

⁴²Fuller, Decisive Battles, 149, and Fortescue, The History of

to your post"⁴³ was the long awaited word. General Churchill's infantry crossed the Nebel; Cults, with fixed bayonets, assaulted the village of Blenheim, and Eugene struck the northern flank. For the next four hours the battle raged, and although the French lines wavered, they did not break. From all accounts of the battle by many noted historians, the French held the upper hand throughout the fighting, but when examining it from a purely military point of view, we find Marlborough's plan working exactly to his expectations. Winston Churchill writes that by 3:00 p.m., Marlborough was confident of victory⁴⁴ and began his final plans for the decisive assault against the center. Since Tallard's center and right flanks appeared to be stabilizing, around four o'clock, he departed the battle area to evaluate the position of Marsin who with the Elector, was holding the French left. Shortly after his departure, a deputy reinforced Blenheim with ten battalions.⁴⁵ This appeared to be a premature move, for the Blenheim garrison was successfully defending against the English frontal assaults and taking a high toll among the attackers. Upon arriving at

⁴³Parker, Memoirs, 231.

⁴⁴Churchill, Marlborough, 411. This writer does not agree with the author concerning Marlborough's confidence at this particular time. For if Tallard had not made two fatal mistakes at approximately 4:00 p.m., Marlborough could not have successfully assaulted. This will be further discussed in analyzing the battle.

⁴⁵Fuller, Decisive Battles, 150.

Marsin's command post, he watched a major counter attack by some 20 cavalry squadrons miserably fail. What amazed Tallard, was that the attack was unnecessary since the English had not breached the lines.⁴⁶

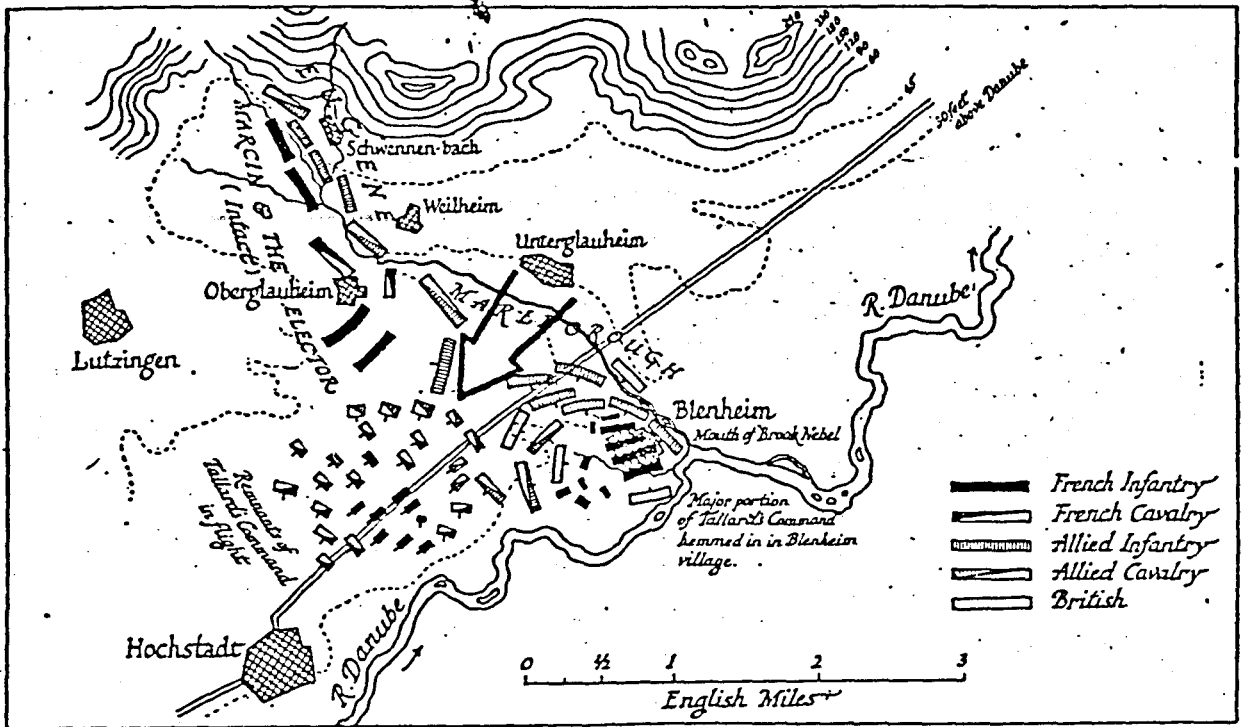
Marlborough's flank attacks continued to draw French reserves from the center. As the French poured into the wings, they were hastily committed and soon became decisively engaged, thus losing the freedom of maneuver required for a reserve mission. By five o'clock, Marlborough was prepared to launch his decisive attack in the center. Facing him was the French cavalry, drawn up into a single line across a 1000 meter front.⁴⁷ As the Allied cavalry struck, the French stood only long enough to fire one volley, then broke away in confusion. As the cavalry regiments poured through the center, the gap was widened, and the French were doomed. Tallard attempted to restore the battle lines,⁴⁸ however the panic spread to a point where a general retreat occurred all long the line. The retreat became a route; the Allied pursuit was relentless, and thousands of enemy soldiers were killed and drowned in the unfordable Danube. Tallard and 1,200 of his officers were captured and his entire army was captured or destroyed.⁴⁹ Only

⁴⁶Ibid., 150 and Burton, The Captain General, 71.

⁴⁷G. deLamberty, Memories pour servir a l'Historie de XVIII siecle (Paris, 1727) 161 (translated at the U.S. Army War College, 1959, translator unknown).

⁴⁸Fuller, Decisive Battles, 152.

⁴⁹William Coxe states that the French combined losses exceeded 35,000 officers and men, while Marlborough's letter to Godolphin, recorded by Sir George Murray in his Letters and Dispatches, Vol. II, 166, informed him that Tallard admitted losing 40,000 soldiers.



The final assault by Marlborough's Cavalry. Note how the Allied infantry began the initial penetration and held the "shoulders" while the Cavalry dashed through the gap.

Marsin was able to conduct an orderly withdrawal, and only because Eugene's troops were too exhausted to pursue. It was a brilliant victory against the French army and David Green writes that for the first time in modern history an absolutist regime had been beaten to its knees by a limited monarchy and that the charge at Blenheim would open to Britain the gateways of the modern world.⁵⁰

Marlborough's audacious attack at Blenheim re-introduced an aggressive form of war into an era that had become accustomed only to the static doctrines of siege and maneuver for position. An analysis of three additional decisive battles will follow, and in each, Marlborough's principle objective was the destruction of the French Army.

It is essential to analyze Blenheim, since this was the first truly decisive battle during the war. Of particular significance are the tactical moves by both sides prior to the clash in an attempt to gain at least an initial advantage.

In the opinion of this writer because of its' superior position, Marshal Tallard's army should have been the victor in this battle, and when the smoke cleared late on the afternoon of the thirteenth of August, the French should have remained on the high ground. However, battles are much like a rampaging fire and the

⁵⁰Green, Queen Anne, 130.

leader's role in being at the "right place at the right time" to make key decisions cannot be overemphasized, thus we shall see how Marlborough's personal role was so significant in determining the final outcome of this bitter struggle.

To provide a step-by-step analysis of Blenheim, current army terms will be used to offer a more detailed account of the overall situation. The term METT [mission, enemy, troops available (fire support), and terrain] is significant. Circumstances dictated that Marshal Tallard's mission should have been to defend, not so much by plan, but primarily as a result of his entire army being surprised by Marlborough's bold attack. Under normal battlefield conditions, a numerical superiority of up to four to one is necessary to penetrate a well defended position with a reasonable chance of success.⁵¹

Fire support was nearly equal in numbers, with the English weapons possessing superior mobility (there were differences in methods of employment which will be illustrated).

The terrain definitely favored the defender. The French were dug-in on the high ground, anchored by the Danube on their right flank, and a dense forest on their left. To reach the French, an attack crossed a formidable obstacle in the form of a thick marsh and a stream, and was required to move uphill across 500 meters of fairly open ground

⁵¹Headquarters Department of the Army, Field Manual 100-5 (Washington, 1976), 5-1.

to reach the breastworks.

The obvious question is, that with these advantages, how did the French Army suffer such an inglorious defeat?

There were several flaws in Tallard's defense, and each was fully exploited by Marlborough. First, Tallard defended along the military crest of the high ground and not on the forward slopes. Secondly, the French did not contest the Allies crossing of the marsh and stream except for interdicting fire with their artillery. This second error was fatal, for by allowing the allies to cross and then deploy unhindered for the attack, Tallard invited disaster. It must be emphasized, however, that both Tallard and Marsin were confident that their strong defensive positions could not be penetrated.⁵² Establishing a foothold across an obstacle is a difficult military feat, for the most vulnerable moment is when the crossing force is divided. Had Tallard ordered an all-out cavalry assault during the crossing, it may have turned the tide against Marlborough. A third error by the French was a lack of "unity of command". Tallard gave Marsin complete responsibility for the left flank, thus at the decisive moment when troops were required for the center, Marsin refused to send the badly needed battalions since he believed that he was too decisively engaged. Marlborough, on the other hand, commanded the entire allied army, and when he ordered troops from Eugene to support the final assault, they

⁵²Coxe, Marlborough, 315.

were immediately released, even though the Prince's attack required every soldier under his direct command.

The French moved too many units to the flanks, and particularly in the village of Blenheim, where ultimately, twenty seven infantry battalions would be employed.⁵³ This, of course, followed Marlborough's plan perfectly, for his two main attacks on the flanks were designed to weaken the French center. Although Marlborough may appear to violate the principle of mass while conducting two main attacks instead of one, he did this intentionally. For at the decisive moment, he would mass eighty-one cavalry squadrons, supported by nineteen infantry battalions to crush the French center, while the two flank attacks would merge upon a common objective.

Marlborough used the terrain to his full advantage. He sent Eugene through the dense wooded area with a heavy infantry force for his main attack. This negated the French from organizing a heavy cavalry force for a counterattack role, since the trees did not permit massed charges. In the south, the assaulting infantry were followed by mobile artillery pieces which considerably increased their firepower. In addition, sizeable cavalry units were in support, and primarily utilized to blunt counterattacks by the French cavalry.

⁵³Author unknown., A System of Camp Discipline, Military Honours, Garrison Duty, and other Regulations for Land Forces (London, 1757), 111 and Churchill, Marlborough, 408.

Marlborough's artillery was massed, while Tallard's was spread along the entire line.⁵⁴ Thus fire direction by the Allies was far superior, and of particular significance, when massed artillery was necessary to prevent reserve units from reaching the front lines. The significance of the flank attacks have been emphasized, and to insure a relentless pressure was maintained, Marlborough directed Eugene to the right flank, and the majority of English battalions under his brother, General Churchill, supported by General Wood on the left flank. Prince Eugene, in his memoirs, supports the conclusion by this writer that Tallard's mistakes which Marlborough took full advantage of, led to the French defeat. He asks three questions while evaluating the battle:

Why were the French separated from the Bavarians?

Why did they encamp so far from the marsh?

Why did they put 27 battalions and ten squadrons in Blenheim?⁵⁵

One interesting historical correlation is that at Hastings, King Harold concentrated his troops to such an extent that any maneuverability was negated, and a similar situation prevailed around the village of Blenheim.⁵⁶

⁵⁴Marlborough's massed artillery was in a central position where the pieces could be directed almost immediately to any position along the battle line or to strike the enemy rear area. The artillery attached to the infantry did not detract from the massed fire.

⁵⁵Prince Eugene, Memoirs of Prince Eugene of Savoy, Translated by William Munford (New York, 1811), 272.

⁵⁶Parker, Memoirs, 231.

Marlborough's personal role during the battle was most significant to the outcome of the battle. Major Elm Burns adequately defines this role by writing that "No general ever behaved with more serenity of temper and presence of mind than did the Duke on this occasion. He was in all places where his presence was required without fear of danger or in the least hurry, giving his orders with all imaginable calmness".⁵⁷

The most significant role in determining the final outcome of the battle of Blenheim was played by Marlborough. There were no modern staffs to provide vital planning and assist in the rapid decisions required. During this period of land warfare, the entire battle had to be directed by a single commander, stationed in a position where he had full view of the battlefield; (often within the enemy's artillery range) and made the decisions accordingly. In this author's opinion, Marlborough's genius was clearly demonstrated throughout this battle. His planning was detailed and precise and the French reaction was as expected. The fact that he could rapidly take advantage of the tactical error committed by Tallard upon weakening the French center is indicative of a capable commander being able to adjust to the rapidly changing tactical situation and take positive action

⁵⁷Major Elm Burns, "Recurring Problems in British Wars", The Army Quarterly, Vol. XXIV (London, 1932), 61.

to exploit these developments. In analyzing the three decisive battles after Blenheim, Marlborough's detailed planning and personal leadership in each will be clearly illustrated.

CHAPTER VII
LINEAR TACTICS AND WEAPONS

This abbreviated chapter is designed to provide an update on the tactics and weapons employed during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. In particular, the innovations and techniques of Marlborough will be illustrated to show how he was instrumental in changing (or improving) traditional battlefield tactics.

As a result of the introduction of two new weapons in the latter half of the seventeenth century, battles became far bloodier than ever before. In 1670 the French infantry began to use the flintlock muskets, which could achieve a rate of two rounds per minute, about twice the firing rate of the matchlock. A second innovation was the socket bayonet. Previous to this model, infantrymen carried the plug bayonet and ring bayonet.¹ Neither was effective because the plug model fit inside the barrel, and the ring bayonet was only slipped over the barrel, and more than often, would drop off in the heat of battle.² The socket bayonet was clamped onto the barrel and

¹Grote, Military Antiquities, 313. See also Clausewitz, On War, especially Chapter 7, "The Attack", 507, 512.

²Fuller, Decisive Battles, 130.

snubbed into place. Now the infantryman was equipped with a "reliable" weapon offering considerable fire power as well as a shock effect weapon for hand-to-hand combat. By 1703, all French battalions were armed with the flintlock and socket bayonet,³ soon to be followed by all the major armies in Europe.

The tremendous increase in the firepower of an infantry battalion led to a reduced depth of the standard formations. In the early 1700's, the French infantry battalion consisted of 500 soldiers, divided into 13 companies of approximately 40 men each. The normal deployment was a five rank formation covering approximately a 100 yard frontage.⁴ The French tactics were similar to most armies in that they would close to within 50-75 yards of the enemy and deliver a withering fire at almost point blank range. This would be followed by a furious bayonet assault in an attempt to breach the opponent's position. There was a major discrepancy in the French system, and one that Marlborough would change when aligning his infantry battalions. The major flaw with the French system was that the ranks were too deep to allow maximum firepower,⁵ thus each rank fired separately, with a kneeling position initiated into the firing sequence since the back two ranks could not fire. This was a cumbersome sequence, and in particular, during the heat of battle when commands and action must remain

³Lewis, The Splendid Century, 209.

⁴Clode, The Military Forces of the Crown, 226.

⁵Burton, The Captain General, 25.

simple if the common soldier is to follow them.⁶

Marlborough organized his battalions into three ranks (see Sketch) with a volleying system by platoons. This was far more effective, since all files could simultaneously volley. The English battalion was organized into 18 platoons of approximately 30 soldiers each.⁷ The primary significance was that there was a tremendous firepower advantage by the English infantry. Marlborough also adopted the one ounce musket ball which was slightly heavier than the standard French ball. While this may seem insignificant, at the close ranges that the infantrymen fire, the heavier ball produced more casualties.⁸

In the linear tactics used by most European armies, it was apparent that the side delivering the most accurate or withering fire power held the initial advantage, for once a unit began to move rearwards, a bayonet attack usually followed.

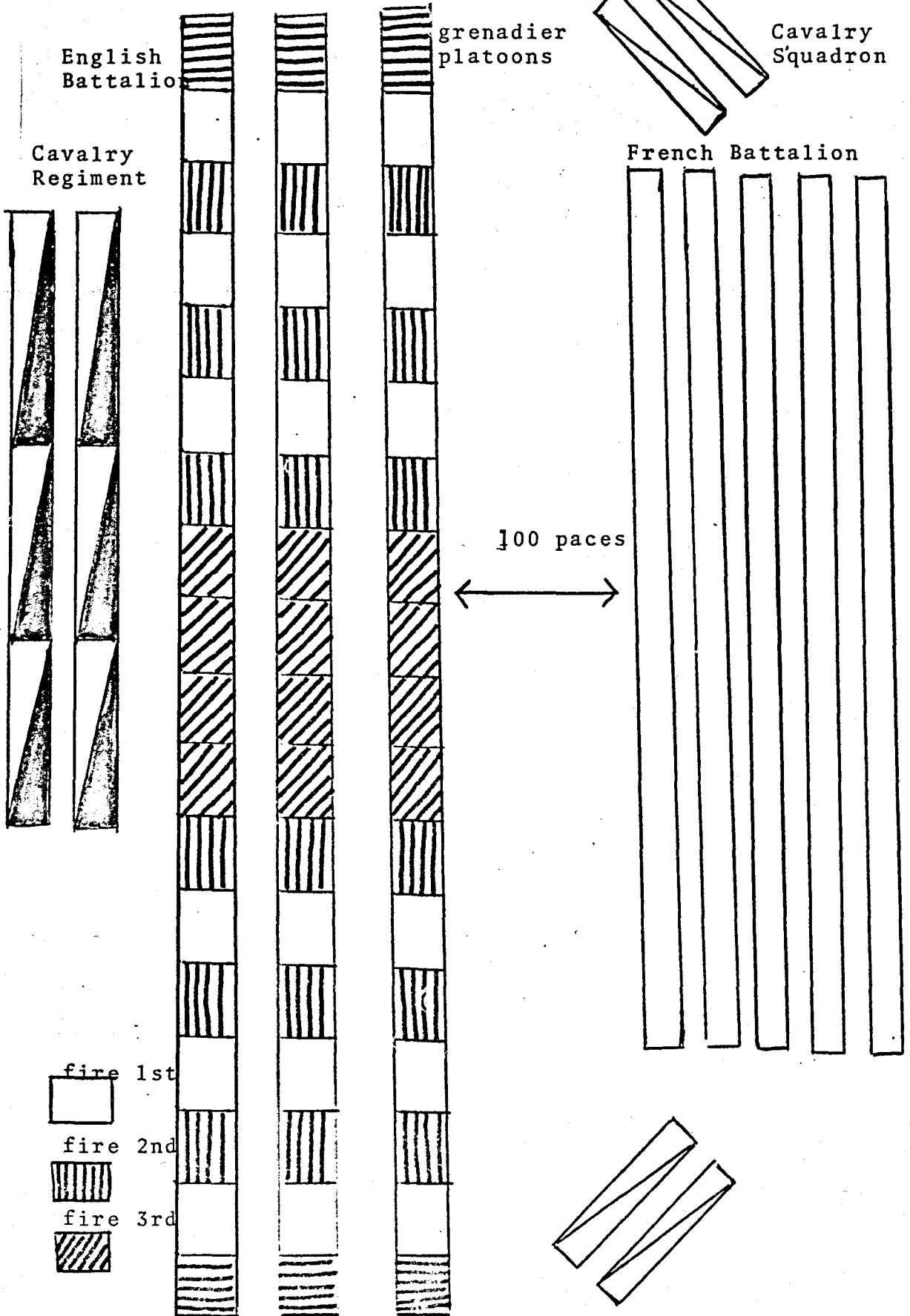
To this writer, Marlborough's alteration of the cavalry was one of his greatest battlefield innovations. In comparing the English cavalry to the French, we find that the French cavalry was used primarily in the role of reconnaissance, picket duty, messenger service,

⁶Ibid., 24.

⁷Ibid., 25.

⁸This opinion belongs to the author. It is based upon extensive research of early 1700 tactics for a Military History course taught in the Department of History, Virginia Military Institute, 1972-75. Primary sources include Clausewitz, On War and Fuller, Decisive Battles.

English/French Battlefield Tactics



or flank security, and when employed in the attack role, would slowly move to a close proximity of the enemy, halt, deliver pistol fire, and then charge, using the saber as the primary weapon. Marlborough's cavalry was his "shock force". While the French employed their cavalry in squadrons, the English cavalry fought as regiments. The cavalry was Marlborough's decisive arm, and he realized that the infantry moved too slow to create the desired shock action in a determined penetration, thus in each of his major battles, we find a large cavalry reserve held back for the final charge to penetrate, divide the forces, and strike any reserves that may be committed in an attempt to restore the battle lines.⁹ It is interesting to note that General Robert E. Lee also used the Confederate cavalry as a tactical arm during the American Civil War, and in 1863 the Union generals began to follow suit.

To increase the potency of the infantry, Marlborough would often attach three lightweight artillery pieces to each battalion. While this may appear to violate the principle of mass by separating the artillery, it considerably added to the effectiveness of the infantry; particularly in the attack, since the artillery moved right behind the advancing troops.

Although Marlborough was not credited as being as innovative, for example, as Gustavus Adolphus, he had the unusual ability to gain

⁹Andrew Crichton, The Life and Diary of Lieutenant Colonel John Blackader, who served with distinction in the wars under the Duke of Marlborough (Edinburg, 1824), 289.

maximum benefits from the soldiers and equipment available in his forces. While it can be stated that at Blenheim, Tallard's mistakes made Marlborough's victory possible, however what is significant, is that Marlborough created a battlefield situation that forced Tallard into making tactical mistakes. By maximizing the limited mobility of his infantry on terrain which hindered enemy cavalry opposition, he developed various situations which enabled his forces to gain certain advantages. Simultaneously, his reduced ranks in the infantry battalions provided an increased flexibility over the more cumbersome five to six ranks in the French infantry battalions.

In analyzing Marlborough's tactics and weapons used during his four major battles, one principle is significant during each battle. He maximized to the fullest extent, a total combined arms effort. Thus at Blenheim, Ramillies, Oudenarde, and Malpaquet, we see infantry, artillery and cavalry forces employed, each in mutual support of the other, always seeking to develop a favorable tactical situation whereby the infantry could penetrate the defensive lines, supported by the artillery, and an exploitation by the cavalry. These offensive tactics were new on the battlefield, and would not be seen again in such magnitude until Napoleon's armies took the field one hundred years later.

CHAPTER VIII

Ramillies, Oudenarde and Malplaquet

This abbreviated chapter will deal solely with the battlefield tactics and strategy surrounding Marlborough's final three great campaigns. The political intrigue, personal affairs, relations with Allied generals, and diplomatic events during this period are not discussed, unless involving a direct connection to the three engagements.

Marlborough's outlook on the conduct of war was far different from that of the military tacticians of the past. He was relentless in his campaigns, always striving for the decisive battle. He viewed other operations as necessary only as stepping stones leading to ending the enemy's will to fight, which could only be achieved by defeating the enemy's army in the field. Marlborough saw no reason to halt operations during the winter months as was customary, but in fact, he saw this as an opportune time to strike, achieving surprise. Following his final battle, never again would land warfare revert to the old methods of chess-like moves about the battlefield while never engaging in the decisive battle.

The Battle of Ramillies

The spring of 1706 found the French on the offensive with three reinforced field armies (see Sketch R). In the north, Marshal Villars with 58 battalions and 90 squadrons was moving towards the Rhine. On the Moselle, General Marsin, with 30 battalions and 40 squadrons, was menacing a smaller allied army. Opposing the main allied army was Marshal Villeroy with 76 battalions, 132 squadrons, 62 guns and 12 mortars. Moving to meet Villeroy we find Marlborough with 74 battalions, 123 squadrons, 70 guns, and 20 howitzers. The two great armies were on a collision course.¹

Marlborough was somewhat familiar with the terrain to his front, as he had operated in the general area during the preceding years. To engage a force as strong as Villeroy's he preferred fighting on ground of his choosing, thus his initial designs were to occupy the high ground in the vicinity of the small village of Ramillies, on the Mont-Sant-Andre plateau.² Unfortunately for the allied armies, Villeroy gained the initiative by entrenching his forces on the elevated positions. A commander less resolute than Marlborough probably would have called off an offensive against such a strong position which was defended by a similar size force, however, as we have discovered previously,

¹Hare, Marlborough, 161 and Fuller, British Infantry in the 18th Century, 111-114.

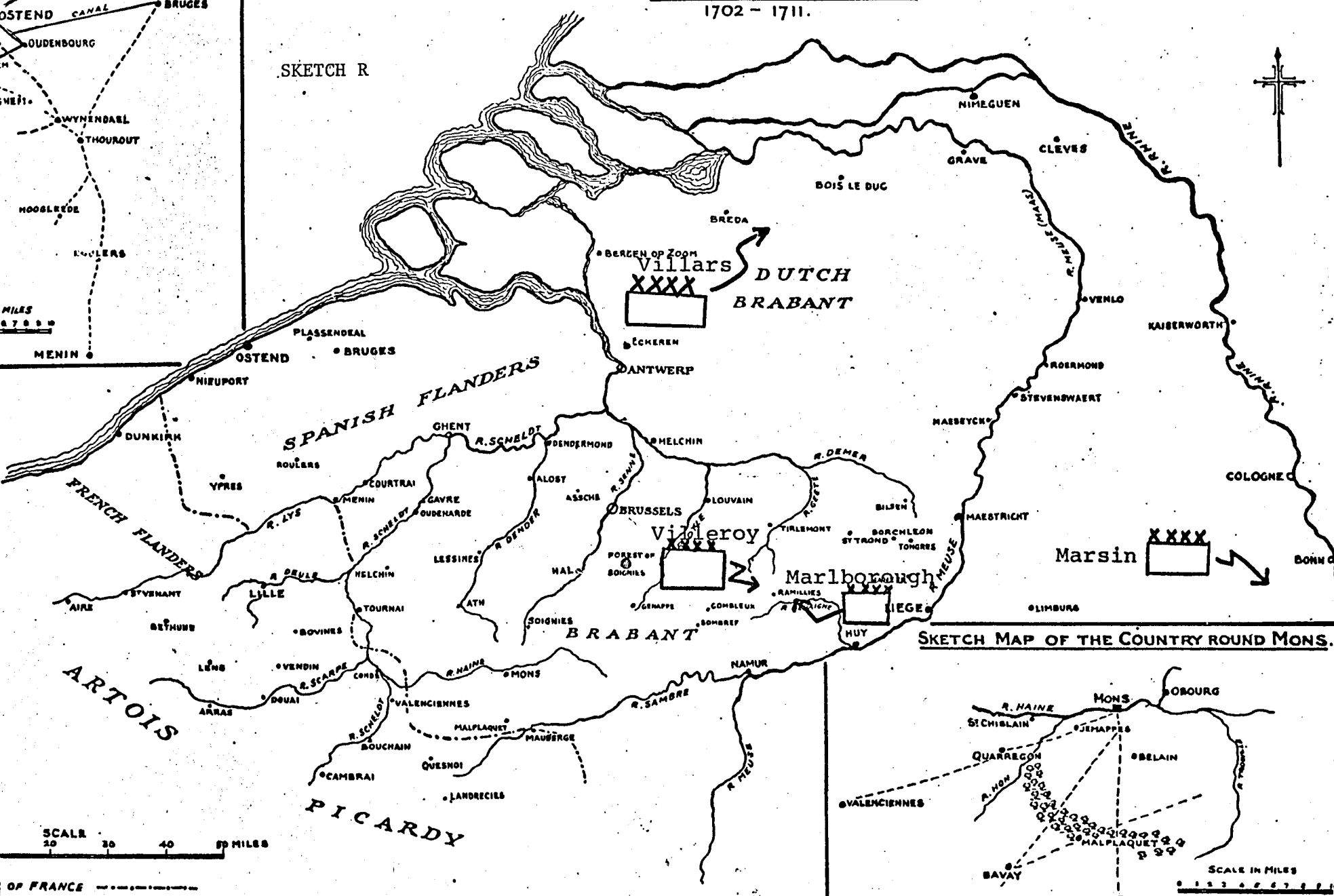
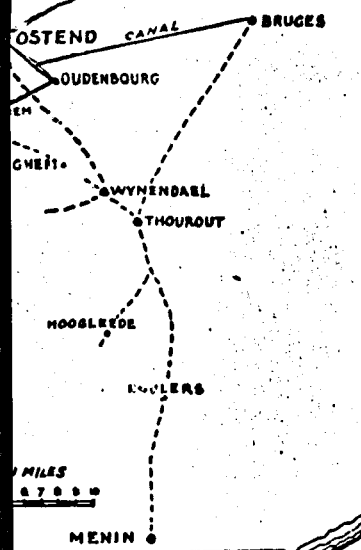
²Ibid., 165.

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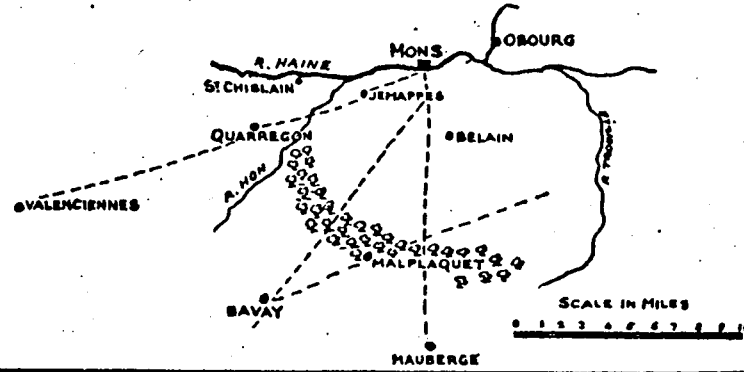
IN THE NETHERLANDS

1702 - 1711.

SKETCH R



SKETCH MAP OF THE COUNTRY ROUND MONS.



SCALE 20 30 40 50 MILES

SCALE IN MILES 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

OF FRANCE

avoiding a battle was never part of his grand design. Since the French were in position, the twenty second of May was spent by the Allies observing the French positions and planning the attack.

Villeroi had developed a strong position. His right flank was anchored on the unfordable Mehaigne River; his left flank at the village of Autreguise, with a dense woodline connecting to the village. The French center occupied the high ground between Ramillies and Offus, and was further bolstered by the Little Greet River, 1000 yards to the front. Approximately one mile of open ground lay between the French center and the river.³

Villeroi, who was determined not to make the mistakes of Tallard at Blenheim, strengthened the French center with a force comprised of mainly infantrymen. On his right flank, the French cavalry was massed, including the famous Maison du Roi, which contained much of the young French nobility. A second infantry heavy force anchored the left flank, supported by 50 cavalry squadrons, and artillery was placed primarily in the center to protect Ramillies. Villeroi maintained command over the entire force, and took special precautions not to violate unity of command.⁴

³Henderson, Prince Eugen of Savoy, 200.

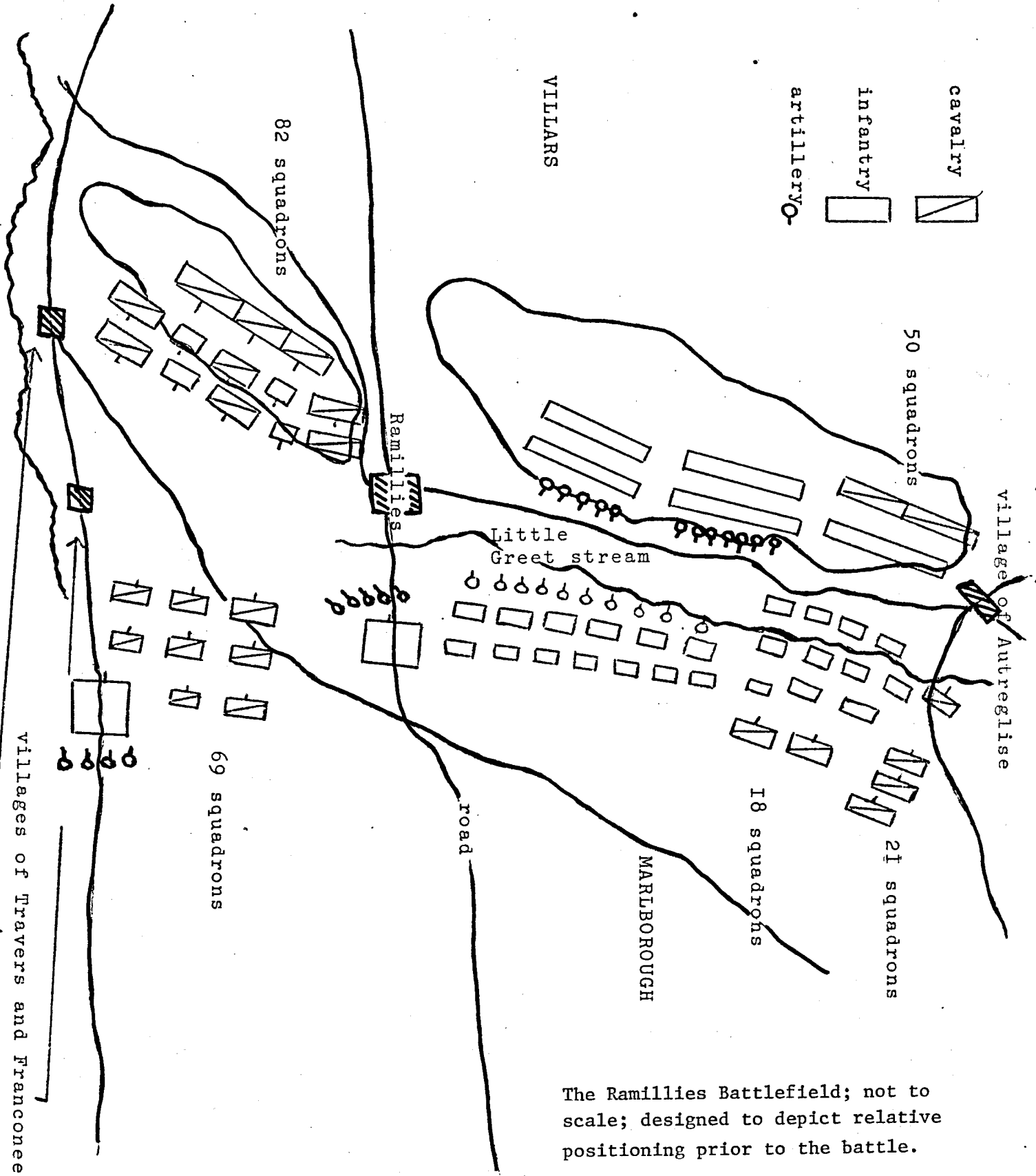
⁴R. de Montecuccoli, Memoires; ou Principes de l'art Militaire (Paris, 1712), 308. Although de Montecuccoli's book was in French, the tactical maps portrayed an excellent account of emplacements by both forces prior to and during the battle.

During Marlborough's reconnaissance, he analyzed the situation and developed plans for the assault. He saw several faults in the seemingly impenetrable position, and would capitalize on each. There was a lack of artillery cross fire, and the preponderance of French artillery supported the center; too many troops were committed to holding the center, when the Great River and open terrain required far less to hold the ground. The French left flank appeared sound, however, there were several glaring weaknesses on the right. A serious misplacement of artillery precluded any major fire support; the French lines formed an arc southward to Travers (see Sketch S), yet did not occupy in strength, the high speed approach through Franconee; the cavalry heavy force anchoring the right flank had far insufficient infantry support, and throughout the lines, the cavalry ranks were too dispersed.⁵

Taking advantage of the French positions, Marlborough, as depicted by the sketch map, moved the Allies into position as follows; an infantry heavy force under General Orkney was moved to the extreme right flank.⁶ Marlborough next divided his strong cavalry force equally on both flanks. (It would appear that he violated the principle of mass.) General Argoyle, with an infantry heavy force, was moved into the center of the Allied line, while General Overkirk, with a nearly

⁵George Macaulay Trevelyan, England Under Queen Anne; Ramillies and the Union with Scotland (London, 1930), 209. Also see Fletcher Pratt's The Battles that Changed History, especially 297-298.

⁶CPT George Carleton, Memoirs of CPT George Carleton, an English Officer, died 1778 (Edinburg. 1807). 241.



The Ramillies Battlefield; not to scale; designed to depict relative positioning prior to the battle.

SKETCH S

equal force of infantry and cavalry, supported by "long range" artillery was positioned on the extreme left.⁷ Marlborough's division of his cavalry force was intentional, because it caused Villeroi to take similar action. By moving fifty cavalry squadrons to the French extreme left, he accomplished his objective of forcing Villeroi to also move, even though the marshy and heavily wooded area was adverse for cavalry operations.⁸

In retrospect, the genius of Marlborough's tactical ability can be clearly illustrated while following his planning for the impending battle. He was faced with virtually a complete absence of accurate map information; faced at least a numerically equal enemy force occupying excellent defensive positions; possessed no modern means of communications, tactical air support, or hardly any of the benefits that today's commander enjoys and has at his instant disposal-- yet he unhesitatingly developed a plan of attack following a brief reconnaissance, and carried it out to perfection. His handwritten instructions to his commanders were clear, concise, and very basic. Marlborough's actions, once the battle had begun, were so direct and decisive, that from following the scenario as it unfolded, the battle's outcome was exactly as he had predicted. Basically, the Allies would conduct a deceptive feint across the Little Greet with the objective

⁷J. Collyer, The History of the Remarkable Siege of Toulon (London, 1746), 177.

⁸David Chandler, ed., A Guide to the Battlefields of Europe (Philadelphia, 1965), 23.

of causing the French to prematurely commit forces to their left flank. Subsequently, the Allied cavalry would be swiftly transferred to their left flank and conduct the main attack.⁹

Shortly after noon, the French artillery firing up and down the line, was quickly answered by the Allies. This time, much to Villeroi's surprise, the response was vastly different, for at Blenheim the French artillery was decidedly superior; at Ramillies, the decisive advantage belonged to Marlborough, in particular as a result of the Allied twenty-four pounders.¹⁰ Marlborough's insistence on retaining the waterways and canals for logistical purposes while moving into the Spanish Netherlands proved a blessing, for the bulky artillery pieces could not be moved overland except for short distances. A cursory glance at the impending attack gives the impression that it was uncoordinated. As the center moved slowly towards the French center, it was preceded by attacks on each flank. The Dutch infantry struck the French left supported by twenty-four cavalry squadrons.¹¹ As the infantry attacked through the marsh towards Autreglise, it must have appeared to Villeroi that the familiar "scarlet caterpillar" was, in all probability, the main Allied attack. Sir George Murray briefly mentions Villeroi's excitement over this move by Marlborough and how his frantic

⁹Ibid., 24.

¹⁰Julia Pardoe, Louis XIV and the Court of France (New York, 1848), 552-553.

¹¹J.P.H. Belloc, "The Tactics and Strategy of the Great Duke of Marlborough", The Army Quarterly, XIV (January 1933), 240-241.

orders to move a major infantry unit to the left would seriously weaken the French center.¹² This premature move by Villeroi, possibly compounded by his fears of another Blenheim, would result in his conclusion that this was the main attack, and that it must be crushed at the river bank where the attacker was most vulnerable. Subsequently additional French cavalry units were withdrawn from reserve positions and moved into position for what Villeroi would plan as the decisive counterattack.¹³

Unfortunately for the French, their movements were not undetected by Marlborough. His masterstroke unfolded as follows; taking advantage of the rolling terrain which masked the Allied center, thirty-nine cavalry squadrons began moving laterally across the battlefield towards the Allied left. Simultaneously, a strong infantry assault was made against the fortress villages of Travers and Franconee, both of which were lightly defended. The Allied attacks, supported by artillery, were successful, and the objectives secured. Marlborough quickly followed this success by moving numerous artillery pieces to Travers which were positioned to cover the open terrain north to the village of Ramillies.¹⁴ Villeroi, realizing his mistake of not anchoring

¹²Murray, The Letters and Dispatches of John Churchill, Vol. IV, 118.

¹³In defense of Villeroi, one must recall the criticism by Louis XIV of his predecessors when engaging Marlborough. Several authors indicated how Louis berated the French commanders by not "getting all of the troops into the Battle"; this may have been in Villeroi's mind while he was developing his own battle plans.

¹⁴Parker, Memoirs, 301.

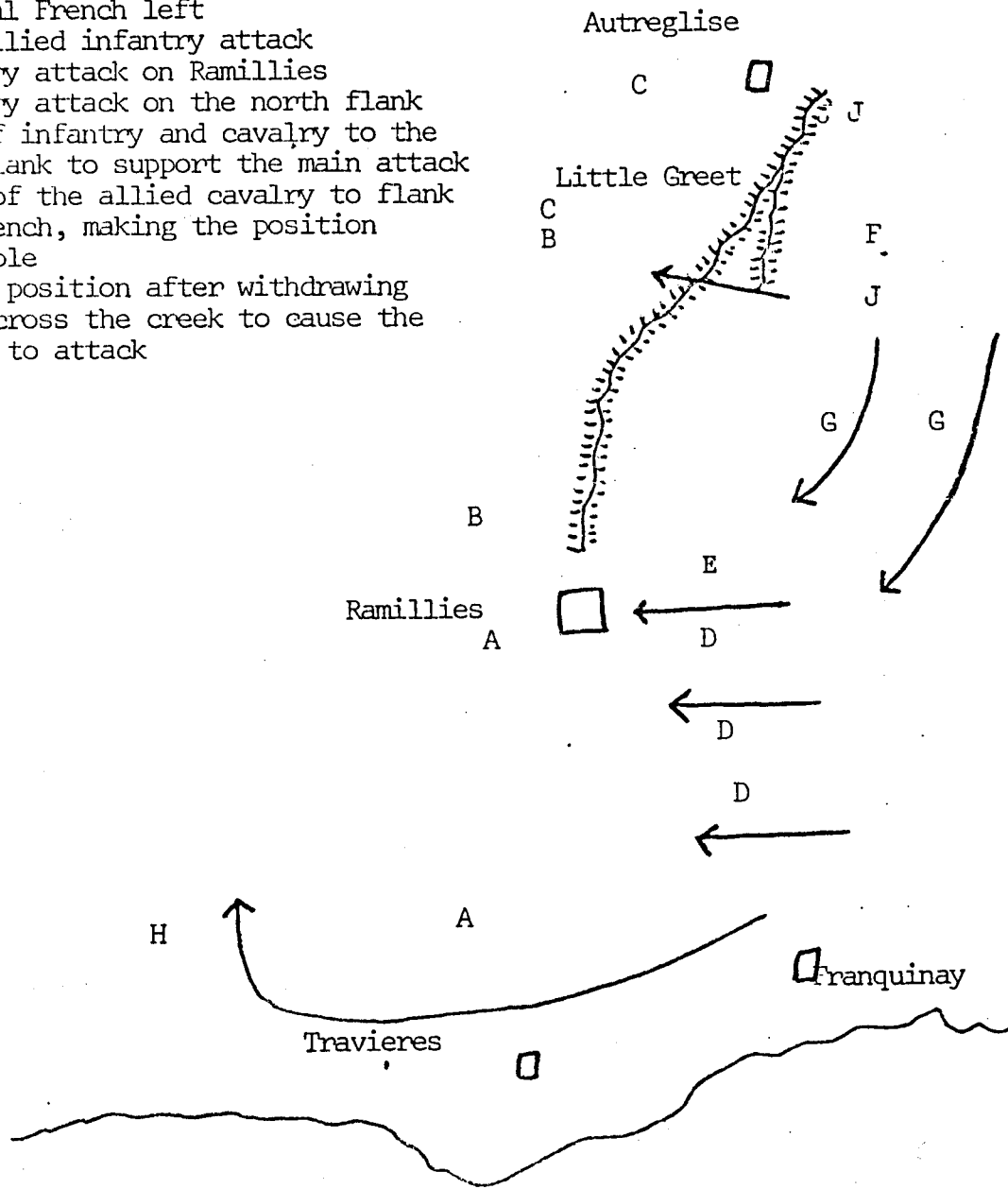
the French right at Franconee, dispatched fourteen squadrons of dragoons to retake the village.¹⁵ Even though Villeroi recognized the threat to his right flank, he still was convinced that the main Allied attack was against his left. The dragoons dismounted and began a weak counter-attack and were virtually destroyed by the Allied artillery. Although fourteen squadrons may appear to be a rather insignificant number, what is significant was that they were withdrawn from the back ranks of a weakening center of the French line.

Overkirk's advance on the French right was made with twenty-one cavalry squadrons (against sixty French squadrons). Forty thousand Allied infantry moved towards Ramillies in the center. The French left, as previously mentioned, was already decisively engaged soon followed by the center, thus freedom of action was lost up and down the line. At this time, Marlborough committed all the cavalry forces he could muster along the high speed approach on the French right flank, led by the Scots Greys and 5th Lancers.¹⁶ As indicated on the sketch, the flank was penetrated, and even to the inexperienced eye, it becomes apparent that at least the entire French right was untenable. The assaulting infantry, taking advantage of the cavalry penetration, widened the gap, turning the withdrawal into a route. The vast supply

¹⁵Author unknown, The Lives of the Two Illustrious Generals, 401.

¹⁶Lediard, Marlborough, 407. For an excellent account of Ramillies, see Corelli Barnett's The First Churchill; Marlborough, Soldier and Statesman (New York, 1974), 167-168.

- A original French right; cavalry
- B original French center
- C original French left
- D main Allied infantry attack
- E infantry attack on Ramillies
- F infantry attack on the north flank
- G move of infantry and cavalry to the left flank to support the main attack
- H route of the allied cavalry to flank the French, making the position untenable
- J Allied position after withdrawing back across the creek to cause the French to attack



trains hindered the French withdrawal, and thousands were slaughtered by the attacking cavalry. The victory was decisive and the French army nearly shattered. To preclude escape, Marlborough ordered a pursuit for distances up to eighty miles, and only the scattered French fortresses along the escape route offered protection to Villeroy's fleeing army and prevented its total destruction. Ramillies was second only to Blenheim in strategic consequences.¹⁷ Belgium was free from French soldiers for the first time in thirty years.¹⁸ As the French withdrew, cities and towns throughout Spanish Flanders and Brabant disavowed their allegiance to France. This resounding defeat should have resulted in a total disaster for France, however the cautious Dutch continued to refute Marlborough's plans to capitalize on the deteriorating French tactical situation. Sir John Fortescue writes that "jealousy, timidity, ignorance, treachery and plain inability seemed to be the motives that inspired these men".¹⁹

The great fortress of Louvain fell, quickly followed by Brussels. Ghent was evacuated, as were most of the smaller fortresses between Ostend and Brussels. The surrender of Oudenarde without a fight was a major loss for the French, as it was not only the strongest

¹⁷General William Kane, A System of Camp Discipline, Military Honors and Garrison Duty and other Regulations for the Land Forces (London, 1751), 206.

¹⁸Coxe, Memoirs of John, Duke of Marlborough, 401.

¹⁹Fortescue, History of the British Army, Vol. 4, 301.

fortress in Brabant, it controlled vast water transportation routes and the interior lines of communications that were so vital to the French Army while maintaining such a large force in the field. When Ostend surrendered, it was followed by Ypres, Menin, Tournai, Mons, Chaleroi and Namur. Antwerp was invested and capitulated. By September, all of Brabant and most of Flanders had been cleared. Strategically, Marlborough in a single campaign, advanced the Allied position from the Meuse River to the sea²⁰ (see Sketch Map T).

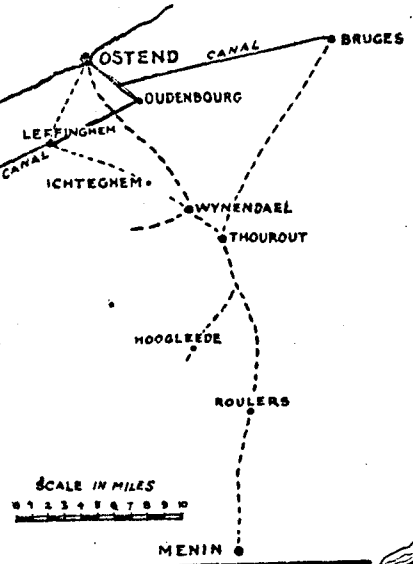
In Germany, the results of Ramillies were equally disastrous for France. Villars was forced to rapidly withdraw from Bavaria to reinforce the vulnerable French border and thus ended forever, domination by Louis XIV in Germany. Added to this misfortune, Eugene administered a sound defeat to the French forces in Northern Italy.

When Marlborough was asked by Bishop Burnet to explain the difference between the battles of Blenheim and Ramillies, he answered that "the first battle lasted between seven and eight hours, and we lost above 12,000 men in it; whereas the second lasted not above two hours, and we lost not above 2,500 men."²¹

²⁰In the opinion of this author, Ramillies was a greater strategic victory than Blenheim. Had the Allies followed the victory by an immediate threat against the French border, it would have been difficult for Louis to successfully engage with his scattered forces.

²¹Burnet, History of My Own Time, Vol. V, 269.

**BETWEEN
OSTEND AND MENIN.**

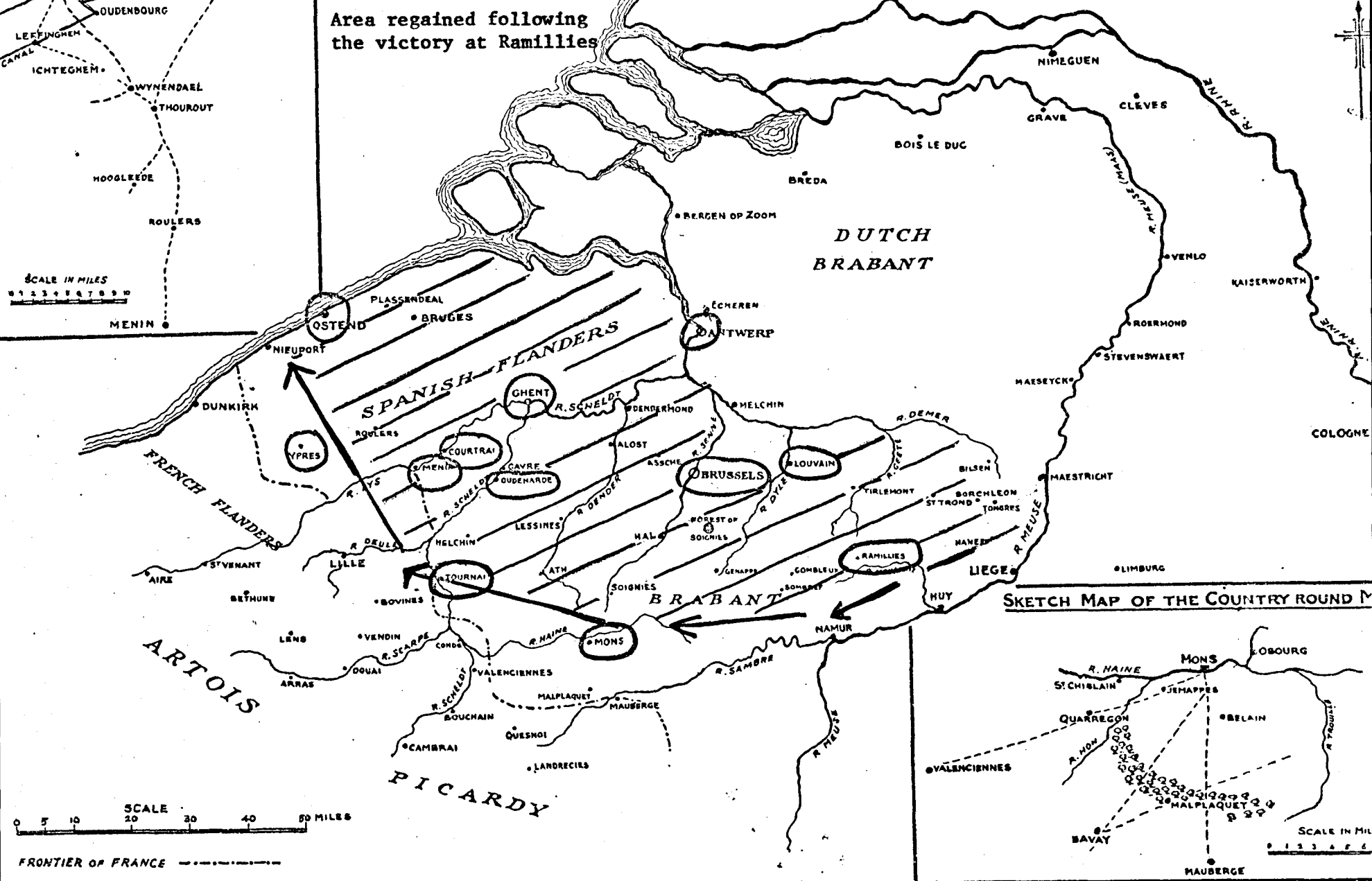


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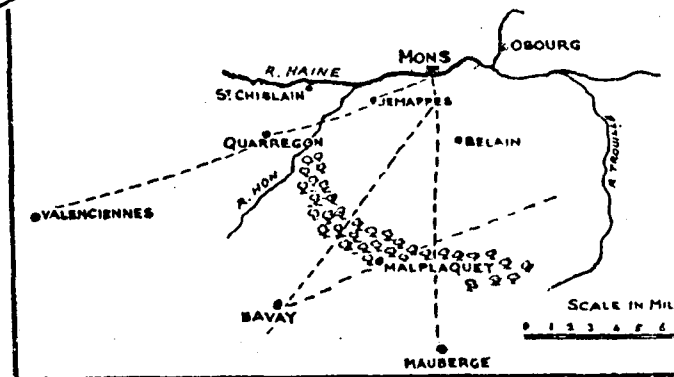
**SKETCH MAP OF THE THEATRE OF OPERATIONS
IN THE
NETHERLANDS
1702 - 1711.**

MAP T

Area regained following
the victory at Ramillies



SKETCH MAP OF THE COUNTRY ROUND M



Marlborough's brilliant victory at Ramillies was followed by several years of crisis for the Allies. Marlborough was distressed over the lack of support and increasing inactivity by the Dutch. There seemed to be a growing disunity of purpose among the various Allied governments; there was a period of considerable turmoil in the English Parliament; the Emperor began secret negotiations with Louis XIV; recruiting became increasingly difficult. These signs of weakness were not unnoticed by Louis, who rapidly sought to widen the rift among the Allies.²² Marlborough was well aware of the deteriorating Allied situation and predicted that it would not take the French army very long to again take the offensive.²³

First, Louis had to recreate a field army, and this was quickly done as only the French could do.²⁴ Louis fielded an army of 100,000 soldiers under the leadership of Vendome. He did this by stripping all other fronts and withdrawing all but the most essential garrison soldiers to man the most strategic forts. Unfortunately, disharmony among the Allies considerably aided France, and would result in the French regaining most of the territory lost by 1708.

The French army was on the move in 1708, taking full advantage .

²²Henderson, Prince Eugen, 291.

²³Churchill, Marlborough, 411.

²⁴Deane, Journal of a Campaign in Flanders, 206.

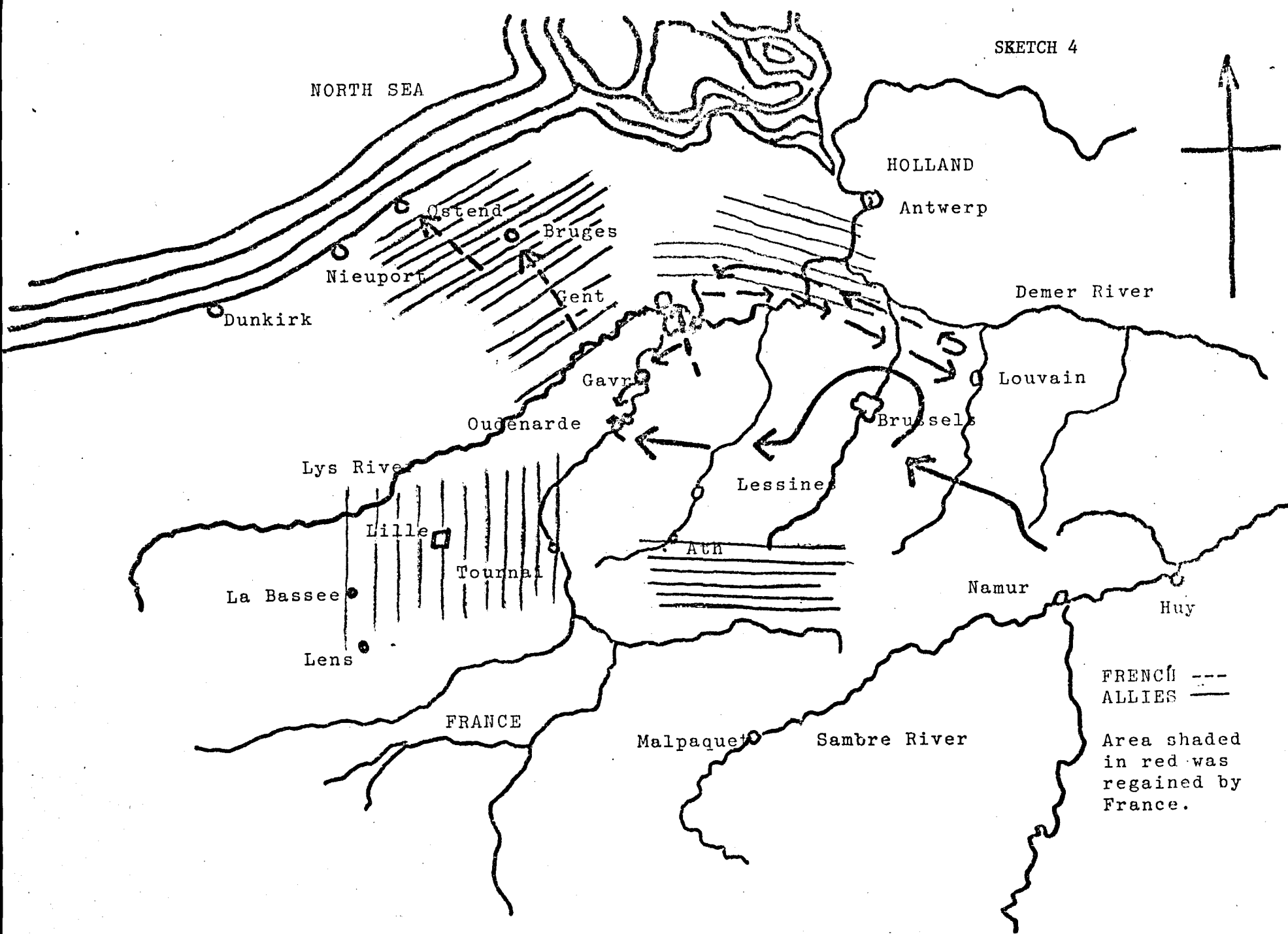
of the increasing rift between Marlborough and the Dutch. In a daring move that Marlborough was too weak to prevent, Vendome severed the Allied lines of communications in Brabant; Ostende was recaptured as well as the Sheldt and water ways in Spanish Flanders. Antwerp, Namur, Ghent and Bruges fell to the French without any bloodshed and it appeared that unless the situation rapidly changed, even Dutch Brabant would be susceptible to the growing French Army ²⁵ (see Sketch 4).

From a detailed evaluation of the major French field army's movement, it is apparent that the French would move against either Brussels or the great fortress at Oudenarde. Marlborough was also aware of this and he positioned his forces strategically to defend either place.

Although in a depressed mood when Eugene arrived with his twenty battalions, Marlborough was overjoyed to see his heroic comrade. Eugene writes that "he was astounded to see such despondency in a General like Marlborough". ²⁶ Timed with Eugene's arrival was General Cadogan, with thirty battalions of English infantry. Cadogan's arrival was doubly significant to Marlborough because he was not only his Quartermaster

²⁵Although Marlborough was unable to halt the successful French advance as a result of an almost total disunity among the Allies, it must also be emphasized that Eugene had not returned north. He would rejoin Marlborough during the defense of Brussels, and soon, the Allies would again take the field.

²⁶Mumford, Memoirs of Prince Eugene (London, 1811), 271. Also see Henderson, Prince Eugen, 301.



NORTH SEA

HOLLAND

Antwerp

Demer River

Nieupoort

Ostend

Bruges

Gent

Dunkirk

Gavr

Louvain

Oudenarde

Brussels

Lys River

Lessine

Lille

Ath

Tournai

Namur

La Bassee

Lens

Huy

FRANCE

Malpaquet

Sambre River

FRENCH ---
ALLIES ———

Area shaded in red was regained by France.

General, but his Chief Intelligence Officer as well.²⁷

Following a lengthy discussion with Eugene, the decision was made to reinforce the strategic fortress at Oudenarde,²⁸ and simultaneously, sever French lines of communications west of Vendome's strong Army (see Sketch V). Unknown to Marlborough, Vendome had made the decision to conduct a siege of Oudenarde, following the successful French exploits against Bruges, Ghent, and north towards Antwerp, and west along the Lys River. Thus, as this impending battle developed, two great field armies were poised on a converging axis, initially unaware of the other's presence.

OUDENARDE

Once Marlborough made the decision to move, the Allied army moved swiftly. Cadogan's advance party with sixteen infantry battalions, twenty cavalry squadrons and thirty-two guns, was dispatched with orders to reach Oudenarde and secure crossing sites over the Scheldt.²⁹ This entailed a more than 30 mile night march over unfamiliar terrain,³⁰ yet by day-break the pontoon bridges were being

²⁷ Coxe, Memoirs of John, Duke of Marlborough, Vol. IV, 117-118.

²⁸ Oudenarde had fallen to the allies following Marlborough's victory at Ramillies. Strategically located, it protected against a northern advance towards Ghent and an eastward advance against Brussels. It also provided the allies with a "jump off" service area into French Flanders.

²⁹ Blackader, John, Life and Diary, 307.

³⁰ Ibid., 309.

SKETCH MAP OF THE THEATRE OF OPERATIONS

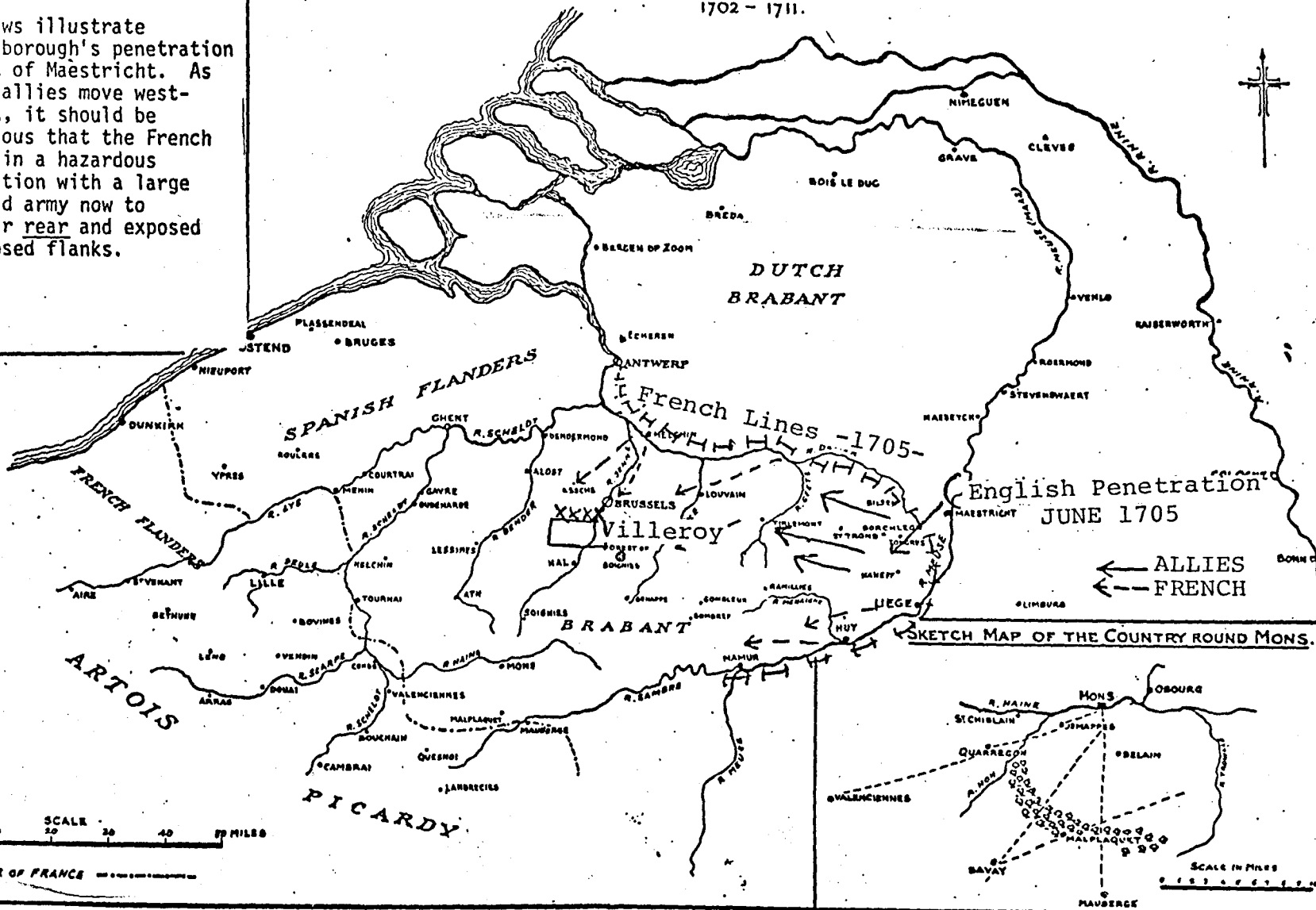
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IN THE NETHERLANDS

1702 - 1711.

SKETCH 5

Arrows illustrate Marlborough's penetration west of Maastricht. As the allies move westward, it should be obvious that the French are in a hazardous position with a large field army now to their rear and exposed exposed flanks.



placed across the Scheldt for the main force.³¹ In order to further secure the crossing sites, Cadogan immediately dispatched a combined infantry - cavalry force to the high ground east of the fortress (see Sketch X-1). This action would prove decisive, for possession of this high terrain not only guaranteed security of the crossing sites but also masked the arrival of the main force until Marlborough could position the bulk of his troops across the river.³²

Meanwhile, the French Army, completely unaware that Marlborough had gained a nights march on them or that the Allied army was even in the area, moved in a leisurely fashion towards the Scheldt crossing at Gavre.

Some military analysts call Oudenarde a twentieth century battle³³--a meeting engagement between forces of unknown strength; similar to early clashes between the U.S. and Chinese troops during the Korean War. Following the initial clash, lines broadened as additional forces joined the battle, characterized by loose formations and delegation of responsibility to subordinate commanders down to battalion

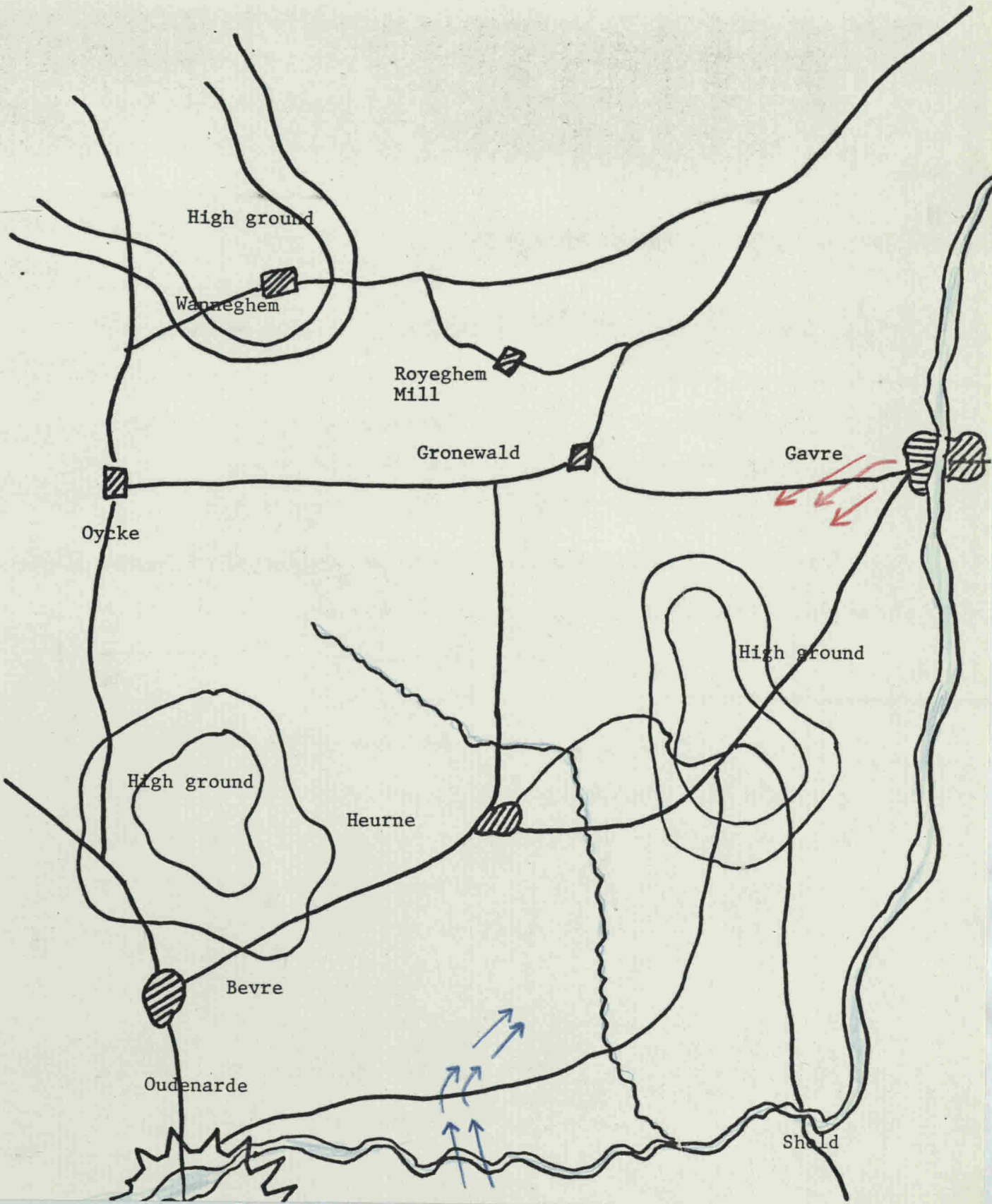
³¹Chandler, Battlefields of Europe, 19.

³²This opinion belongs solely to the author following a detailed foot reconnaissance of Marlborough's route from the River Scheldt crossing to the high ground overlooking the site. Occupation of the high ground prevented any enemy force from obtaining any visual sighting of the river for a distance of an estimated 5-10 kilometers.

³³Chandler, Battlefields, 20.

BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

one inch = approximately one thousand yards



levels until a point was reached whereby the senior commander could stabilize the forward edge of the battlefield (FEBA) and subsequently direct the campaign. Oudenarde definitely fell into this category, and it was a battle that could have been won by either side; one where hesitancy on one side would lead to defeat and where absence of a tactical blunder could have resulted in a decisive victory for the defeated army. Numerous accounts of Oudenarde were analyzed in an attempt to pinpoint how the battle developed, how it was fought, the roles played by the opposing commanders, and how the battle should have ended. A schematic development of the battle follows a general discussion in order to clearly illustrate how the forces were committed.

Marlborough followed Cadogan with the main force by eight hours, remaining well south of the last known French positions. When word reached him that the French were crossing at Gavre, he immediately realized the precarious position he was in and dispatched the bulk of the Allied cavalry force for Oudenarde. The Allied mounted dragoons were positioned along the north flank of the infantry to protect the flank and provide early warning if the French suddenly moved south. The infantry was ordered to move at the utmost speed, and William Coxe writes that it was at a double time march. Over sixty miles were covered in fifty hours.³⁴ Vendome, when hearing that Marlborough's

³⁴This unbelievable march could easily equal those by General "Stonewall" Jackson's troops during similar forced marches throughout the Shenandoah Valley some 150 years later.

troops were at Oudenarde, refused to believe the courier, and personally went to see if it was true.³⁵

The first skirmish was fought on the high ground east of Heurne when the advancing French cavalry launched an attack against what they surmised was a small Allied raiding party. What a shock it must have been for the French as they closed upon a brigade of redcoats! English infantry with Dutch cavalry easily broke up the French attack and forced a retreat (see Sketch X-2). An even greater surprise greeted the French upon seeing the bridges over the Scheldt, and endless columns of infantry and cavalry crossing the river.³⁶ The dust cloud, visible for miles indicated an even greater force was approaching.³⁷

Vendome immediately ordered an all out attack with all forces available. This attack did not occur, which proved a disaster for the French army. Burgundy moved to the high ground north east of Royeghen Mill and positioned his forces following a short reconnaissance to the south (note Sketch X-3). The attack by French cavalry was not conducted

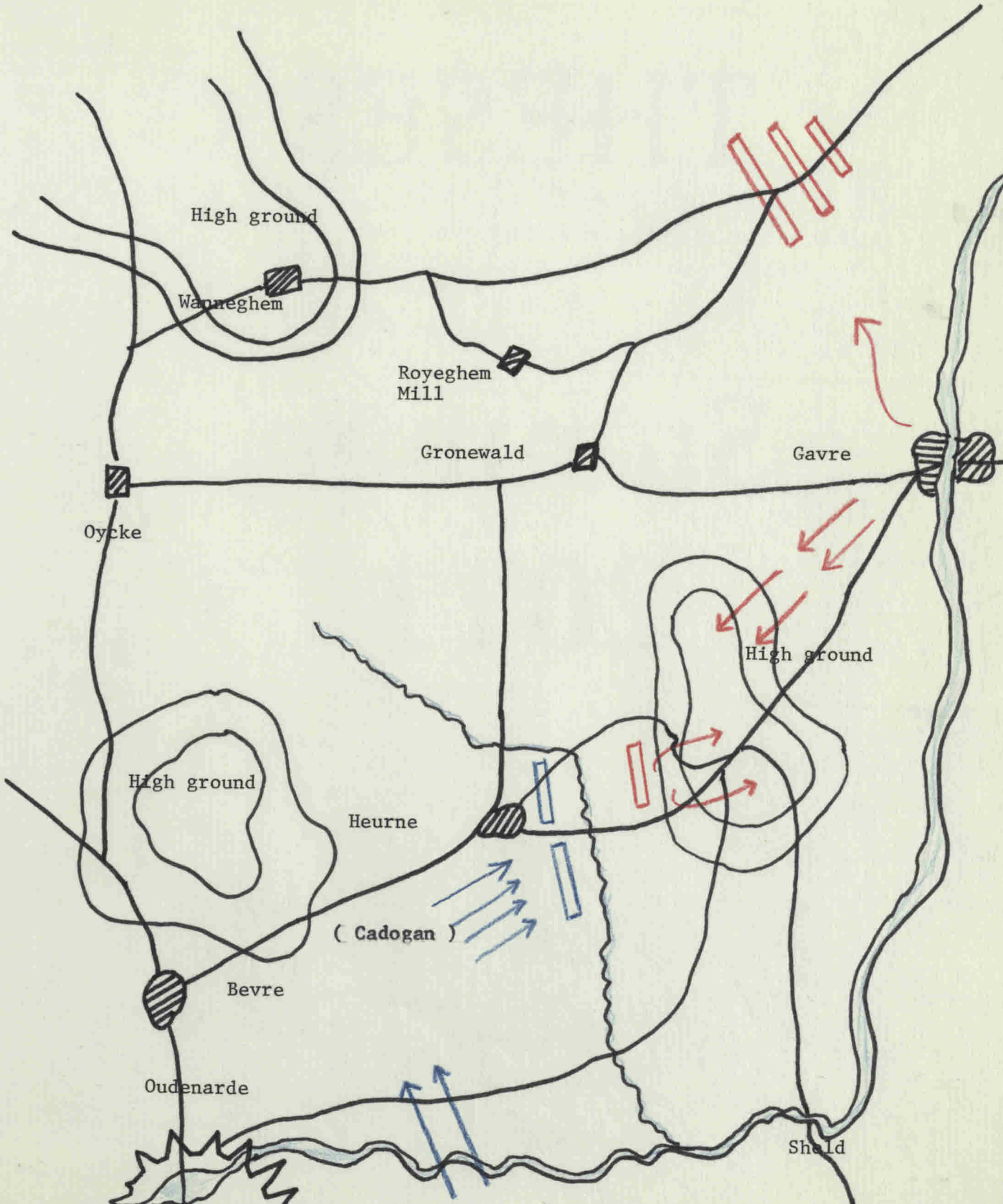
³⁵C.T. Atkinson, "Oudenarde, The Missing Order of Battle", Fighting Forces (London, 1924), Vol. IX, 166.

³⁶Francis Hare, The Conduct of the Duke of Marlborough During the Present War (London, 1712), 191.

³⁷Ibid.

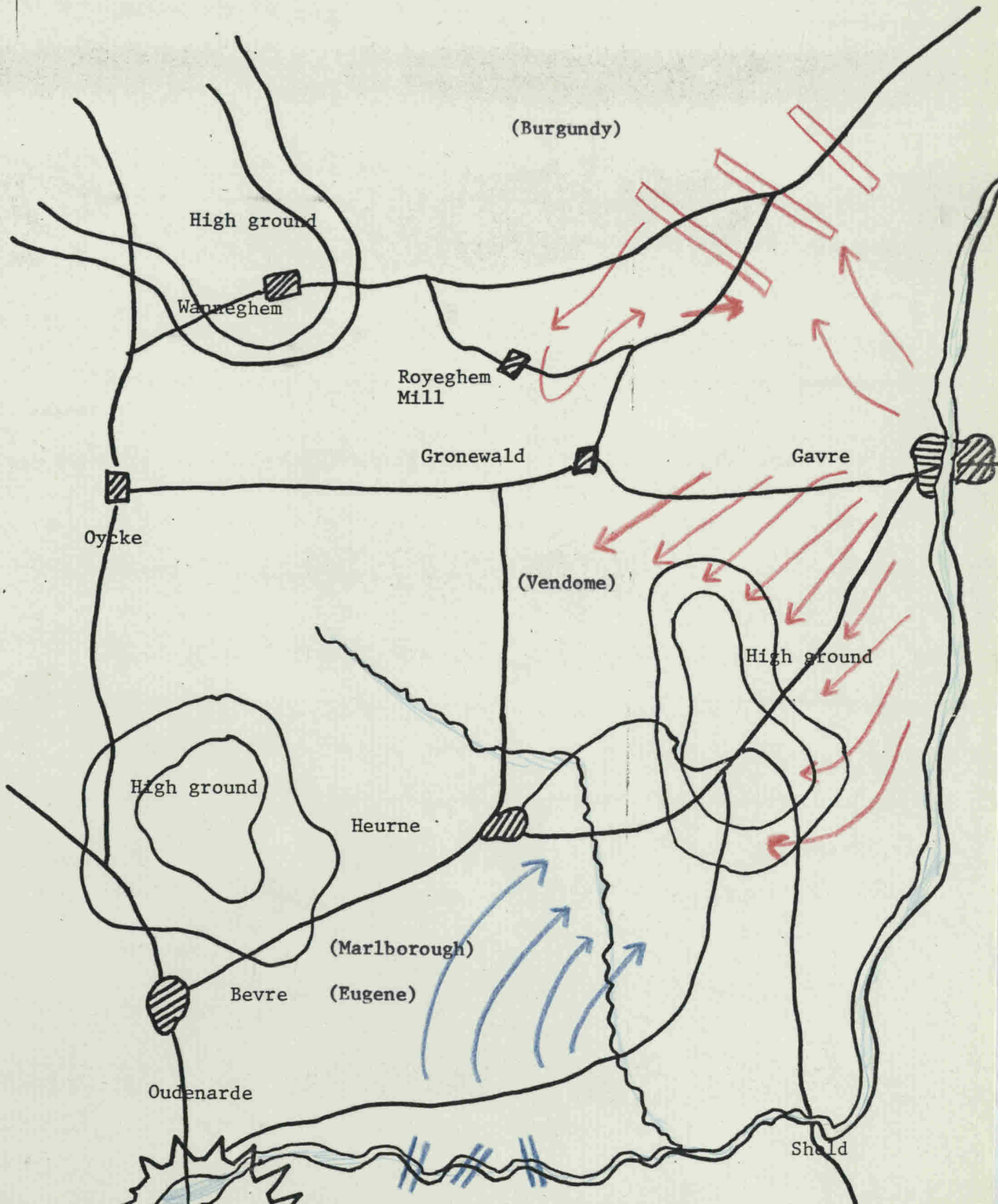
BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

one inch = approximately one thousand yards



BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

one inch = approximately one thousand yards



because of a hesitant commander believing the ground was too marshy for horses! Once Vendome reached Gavre, he personally led the French attack (Sketch X-4). The French army of one hundred twenty-four battalions and one hundred ninety-seven squadrons was far superior to the Allied army of one hundred twelve battalions and one hundred eighty squadrons.³⁸ Additionally, since the French were moving over a shorter distance, the bulk of their forces crossed the river prior to the Allies. In the opinion of this writer, had the French attack been carried out when ordered, the Allies would have been engulfed, with forces on two sides of an unfordable waterway, and completely unsupportive of each other.

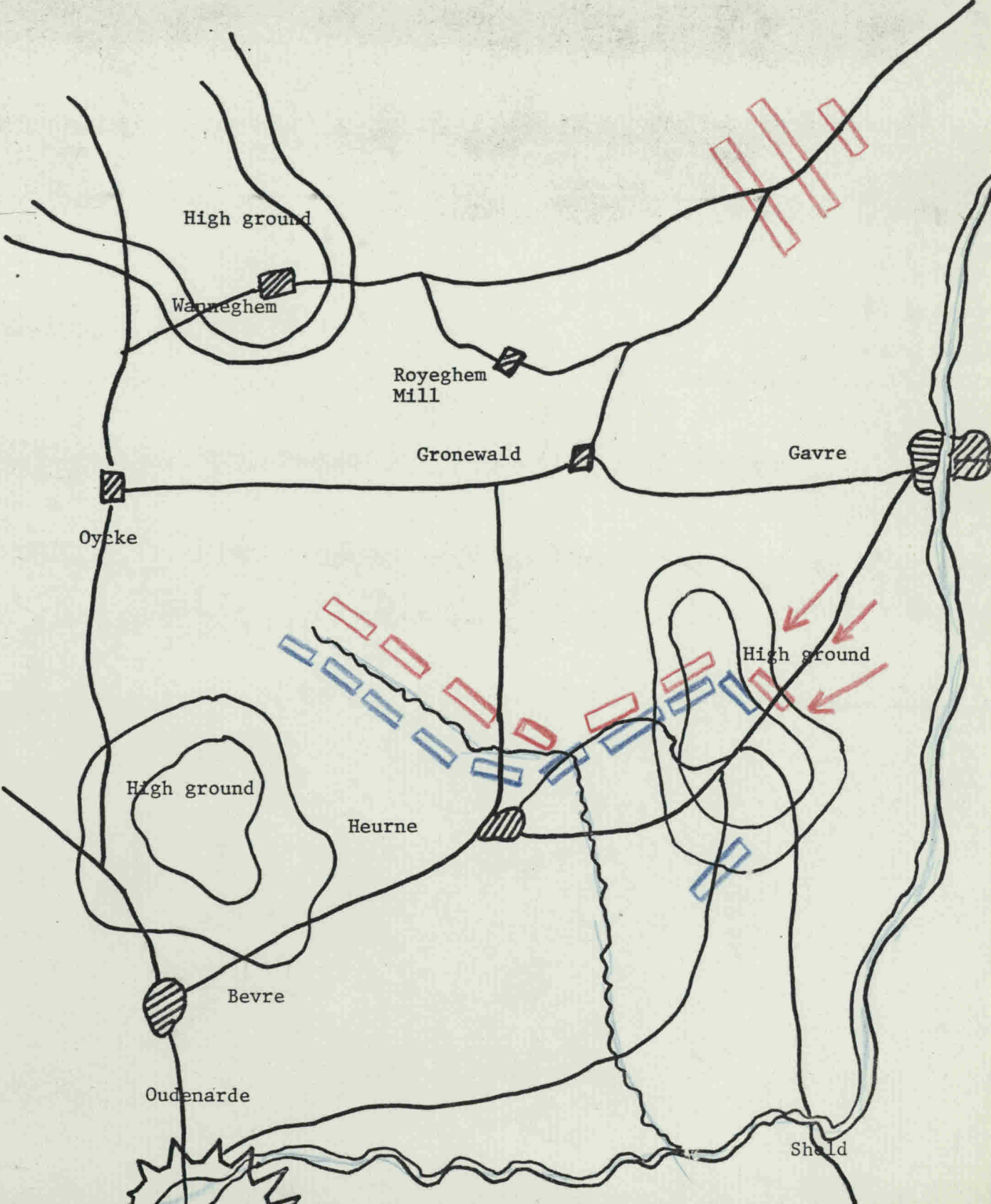
The French attacks initially resulted in forcing the Allies to the rear (Sketch X-5). Marlborough committed battalions into the wavering line as they reached the battlefield; first, two battalions; then twelve; then thirty, to reinforce the dangerous right flank.³⁹ As they began to steadily fall back, he committed twenty battalions from the left flank to counterattack and restore the lines (see Sketch X-6). Oudenarde was an infantryman's fight; a fight where battalions fought battalions. Masses of hedgerows dominated the terrain, hindering cavalry operations. The countryside closely resembled that in Normandy

³⁸J.F.C. Fuller, Generalship; It's Diseases and Their Cure (Harrisburg, 1936), 300.

³⁹Chandler, Battlefields of Europe, 24.

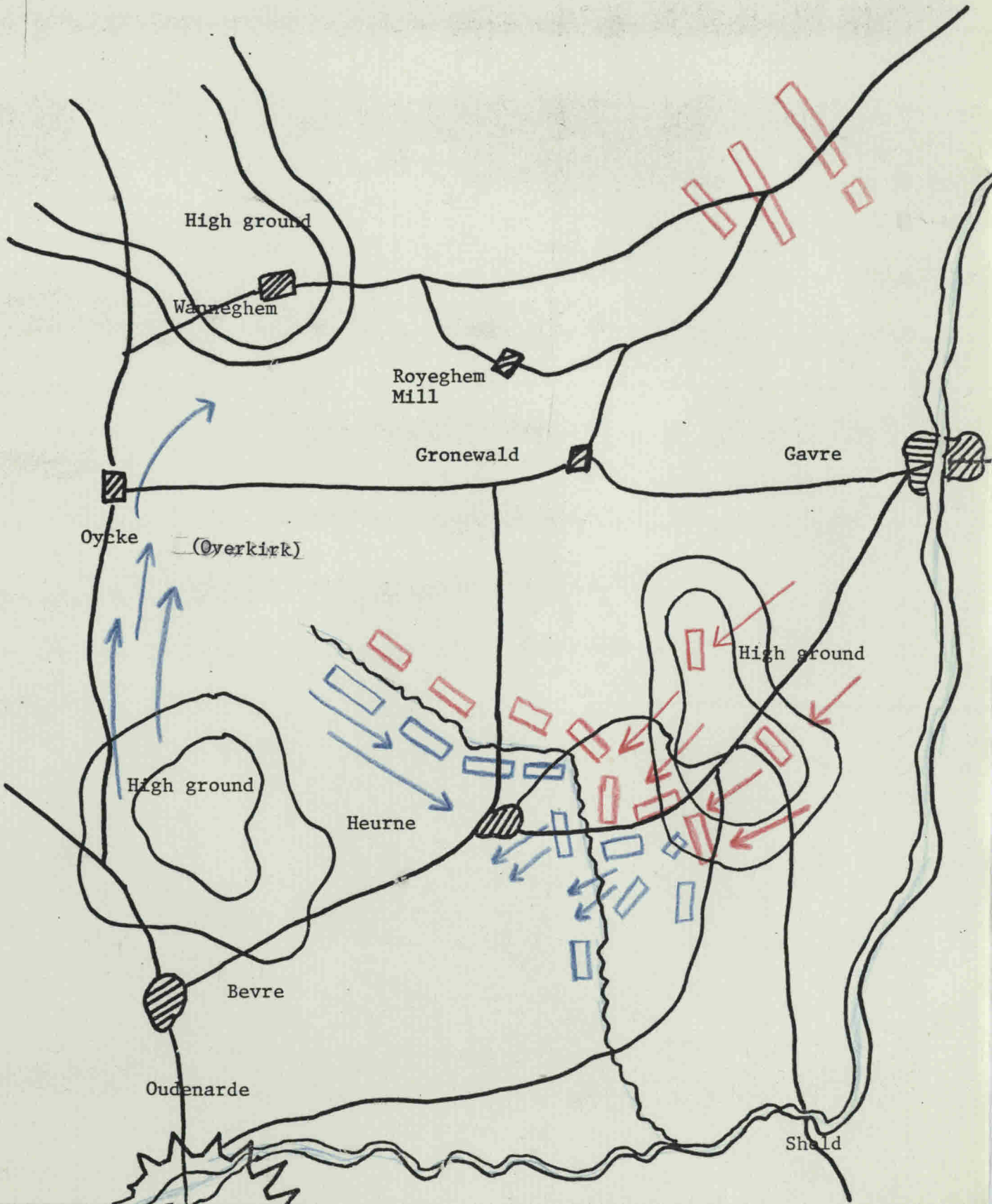
BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

one inch = approximately one thousand yards



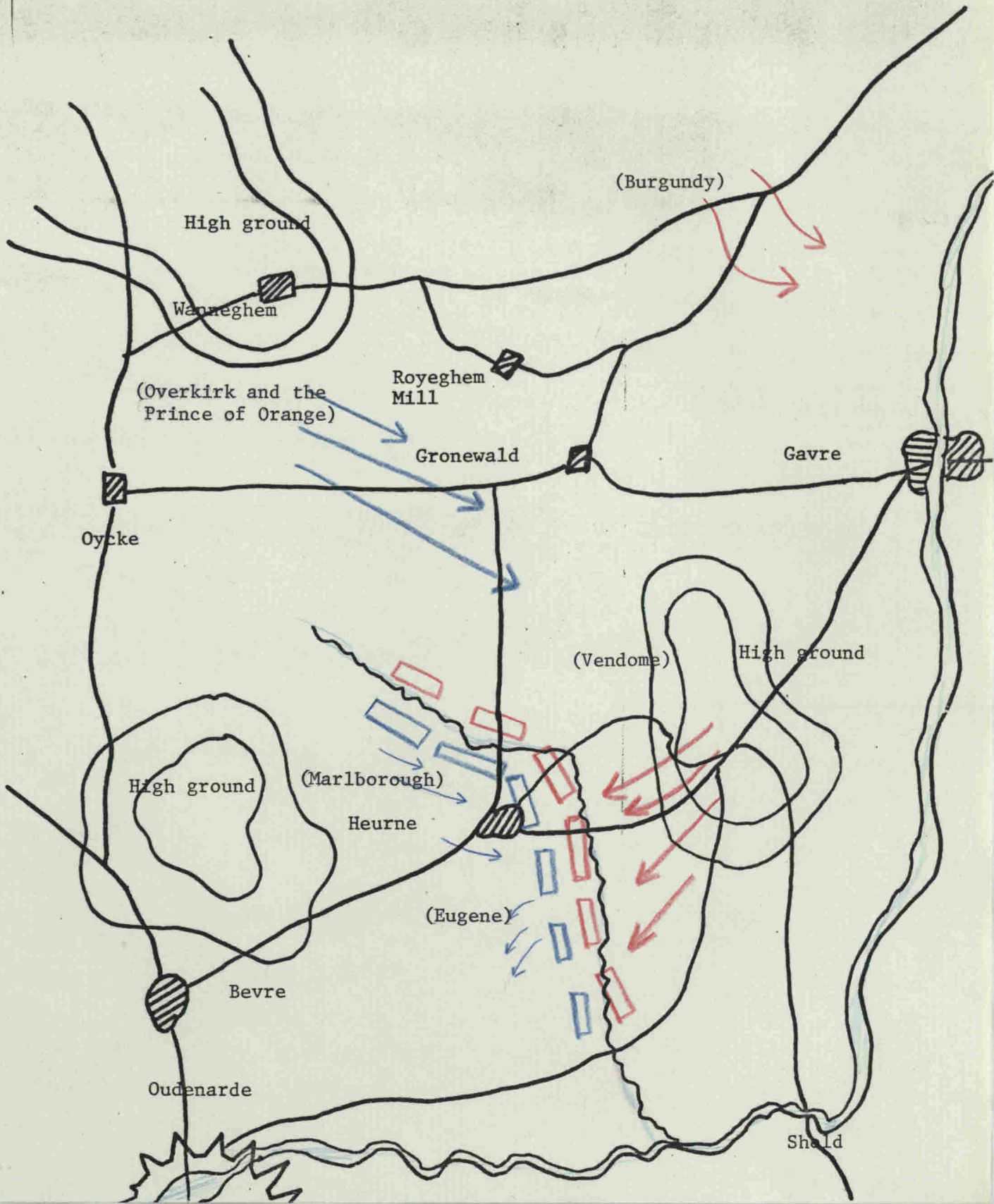
BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

one inch = approximately one thousand yards



BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

one inch = approximately one thousand yards



where Allied soldiers would experience similar problems over two hundred years later.⁴⁰ Vendôme's orders to Burgundy to attack the Allied left flank went unheeded. At four o'clock, Eugene was placed in command of the right flank while Marlborough rushed to the rear to direct additional troops across the river.⁴¹

Eugene, in his Memoirs, writes "I will give proof of our perfect harmony - my affairs were going badly on the right, which I commanded. Marlborough, who perceived it, sent me a reinforcement of 18 battalions - But for that, I should hardly have been able to keep my position".⁴²

It was obvious to Marlborough that the Allied left flank was the key to victory. The French right was far too strong, and in fact, it was doubtful whether he could successfully defend against the tremendous numerical superiority of the French. When Dutch scouts reported that the high ground around Oycke was not occupied by the French, he rapidly developed a plan of action. Overkirk, with two infantry brigades (sixteen battalions) and twenty cavalry squadrons was sent due north up the main highway to Oycke. (Note on the accompanying sketches how the

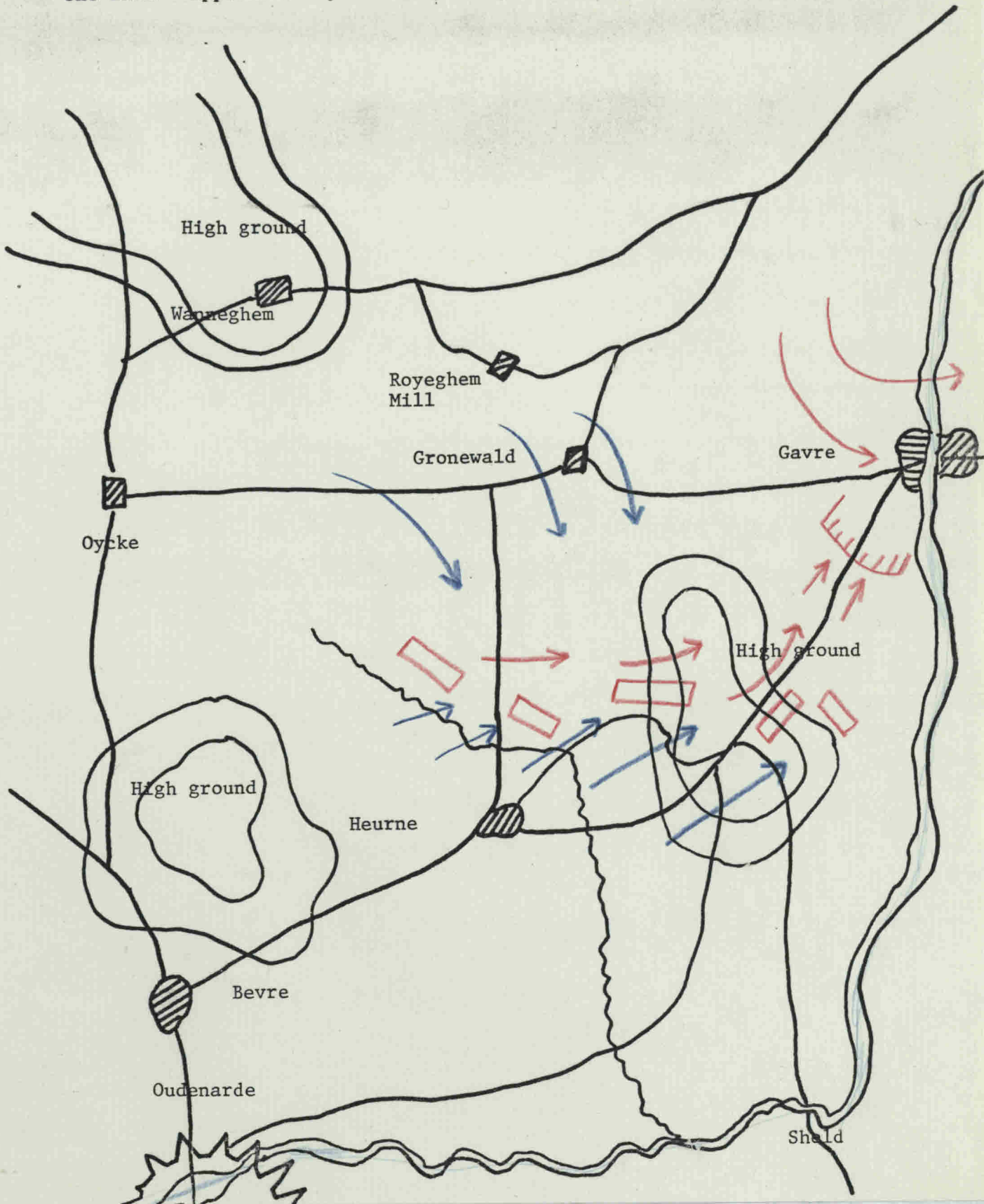
⁴⁰J.D.P. Keegan, M.A., "Analyzing the Oudenarde Battlefield", contained in the US Army Europe Research Library, Heidelberg Germany. Professor Keegan, the senior lecturer, Department of Military History, Sandhurst, Presented this lecture to the USAREUR staff in June 1954.

⁴¹Henderson, Eugen, 351.

⁴²Mumford, Memoirs of Prince Eugene, 300.

BATTLE OF OUDENARDE

one inch = approximately one thousand yards



high ground would mask this movement.) Four brigades of Dutch infantry quickly followed, immediately upon crossing the river. This was a bold plan, for the battle was in doubt when Marlborough made this decision. There were over fifty thousand French soldiers either attacking or joining in the attack on the center, and a man less capable than Eugene would have had great difficulty in preventing a retreat.⁴³

Overkirk's flank assault proved decisive for the Allies. As the French right flank braced to meet the attack, they were swept aside creating confusion and fear in the rear ranks. Leading the cavalry attack was the young Prince of Orange, only nineteen years old and in his first combat action.⁴⁴ This action proved a disaster for Vendome as it turned into a rout! Only a successful rear guard action by Vendome saved an even more decisive defeat. By their own admission, the French lost over ten thousand men during this battle,⁴⁵ while the Allied losses were just over one thousand.

⁴³ Author unknown, The Lives of the Two Illustrious Generals (London, 1713), 278. The role of Prince Eugene during this battle has been substantiated by most recent historians as being significant in regards to the Allied victory.

⁴⁴ Author unknown, The History of John, Duke of Marlborough, By the Author of the History of Prince Eugene. (London, 1755), 261.

⁴⁵ Lediard, Marlborough, Vol. II, 290.

Following the disaster at Oudenarde, Vendome withdrew the scattered French army behind the unfordable canal running between Ghent and Bruges. Although the canal provided some degree of protection, the army was in a precarious position as there was a formidable Allied army between them and the French border.⁴⁶

Marlborough and Eugene wasted little time in reducing the French fortresses and influence throughout Brabant. The two commanders separated their forces with the mission of conducting raids, destroying French lines of communication and regaining use of the vast waterway system for transporting logistical supplies including heavy artillery pieces.⁴⁷ The large caliber guns were essential in conducting siege operations, and water transport was by far the most feasible means of delivery. In one daring move, Marlborough brought up 94 guns, 60 mortars, and 3,000 ammunition wagons over one hundred miles through hostile territory with only 15,000 escorts, while a combined army of 100,000 men was unable to halt the move.⁴⁸ Marlborough insured that the two main Allied armies were continually astride the main approach routes indirectly posing as a blocking force between the supply boats and wagons, and the main French Army. Using the mounted cavalry to screen

⁴⁶Henderson, Prince Eugen, 348.

⁴⁷Peter Verney, Blenheim (London, 1976), 161.

⁴⁸J. Collyer, The History of the Remarkable Siege of Toulon (London, 1746), 297.

both flanks during the move, any large French movement could be detected and defensive positions rapidly occupied if threatened by a major force. This brilliant strategical move must certainly be included with the decisive tactical victories as a further demonstration of Marlborough's genius as a military leader.

During the ongoing siege operations, the Allied army grew more numerous on an almost daily basis.⁴⁹ English, Irish, Scot, Prussian, Dutch, Hanoverian, Hessian, Palatine and Saxon⁵⁰ forces were provided to Marlborough resulting in over one hundred thousand soldiers in strength. Prior to continuing with the tactical developments leading to Malpaquet, two significant events must be brought to the reader's attention. One, which will not be discussed involved the intriguing peace negotiations during this period. Following Oudenarde, Louis XIV in a series of secret liaison meetings with the various Allied governments made several proposals which could have led to peace except for the obstinate Dutch Officials. (Marlborough would be implicated in negotiations several years later.) The second event is presented to further illustrate Marlborough's boldness as a tactical commander. During a nightly council with his generals, Marlborough unfolded his masterstroke; the invasion of France! While the astounded Allied generals

⁴⁹Churchill, Marlborough, 701.

⁵⁰Francis Hare, The Conduct of the Duke of Marlborough During the Present War, with Original Papers (London, 1712), 308. Also A. Boyer, The History of the Reign of Queen Ann (London, 1708), 209-211.

listened thunderstruck, Marlborough calmly outlined his invasion plan. He would bring over six thousand British soldiers from the Isle of Wight to capture the port of Abbeville, thus securing a base of operations and logistical support. Then, the Allied army would strike straight for Paris.⁵¹ With the French army on the wrong side of the French border, he would leave a screening force to block and delay while the main forces swiftly moved into France. Complete English command of the sea guaranteed the security of Abbeville, and additionally offered an evacuation port if necessary. Tactically, the plan appears sound and ample forces were available. Strategically, this might have brought the long war to a swift end. Unfortunately for Marlborough, the Allied generals unanimously opposed the grand design and the plan was dropped in favor of continuing siege operations.⁵²

The great fortress at Lille would be the Allies first major siege, and a more formidable target could not have been selected. Lille was the great capital of French Flanders; a beautiful city and second to Paris in splendor. It was a heavily fortified city, and had been constructed by the great engineer, Vauban. Lille was commanded by Marshal

⁵¹Coxe, Memoirs of John, Duke of Marlborough (London, 1818) Vol. III. 109. J.F.C. Fuller and Winston Churchill amplify William Coxe's account of Marlborough's master plan for the invasion of France, but present no major differences or new data from that illustrated by Coxe.

⁵²Colonel Charles Walton, History of the British Standing Army, 1660-1710 (London, 1894), 306.

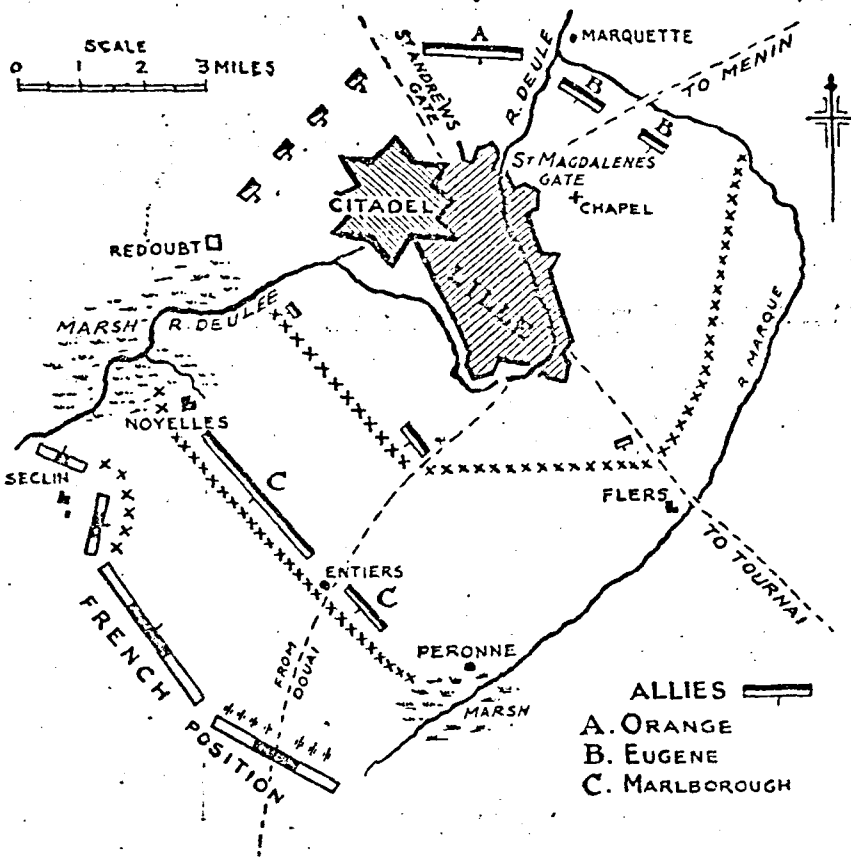
Boufflers, the Senior officer in the French Army who had been a colleague of Marlborough at the Battle of Enzheim many years earlier.

Marlborough and Eugene wasted little time in investing the fortress. The bad weather months were approaching and, if at all possible, the fort must fall by mid-November. Marlborough designated Eugene as commander of siege operations while he positioned the bulk of the Allied Army in a strategic position to deal with either Villars or Berwick should they move against Eugene.⁵³ The four month siege operation was possibly the greatest operation of this nature since the invention of gun powder. Casualties on both sides were numerous. It was a struggle where sappers played a significant role; where mine warfare was instrumental in opening breaches in the walls; it was an underground struggle, where men often clashed far beneath the surface of the fortress. As word of the deteriorating situation at Lille reached Louis, he ordered Villars to attack the Allies immediately.⁵⁴ Villars and Berwick joined forces in the vicinity of Waynendael, approximately twenty miles south of Lille. Marlborough permitted this juncture for he still desired a final decisive battle to end the war. A short but indecisive battle was fought, however, and the French withdrew without becoming

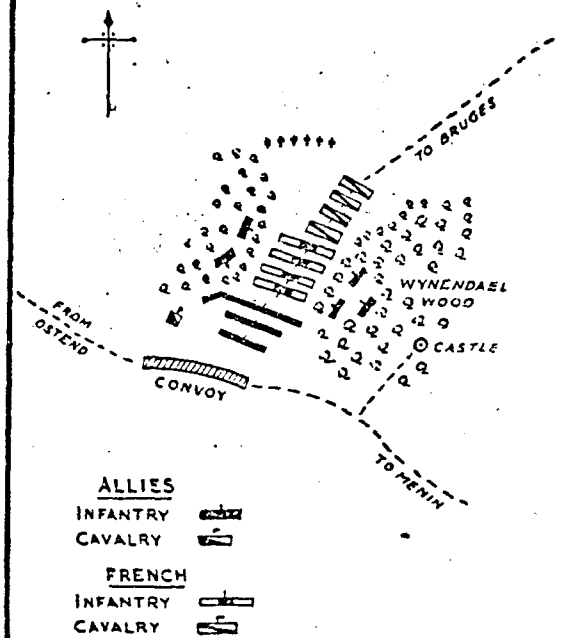
⁵³This was no simple task since both army's were superior to Marlborough's in size (also note accompanying sketch of the siege of Lille and action at Wynendael).

⁵⁴Lediard, Life of Marlborough, 401.

THE SIEGE OF LILLE
 AND
THE POSITION OF THE COVERING FORCE AUG.-SEP. 1708.



SKETCH PLAN OF THE ACTION
 AT
WYNENDAEL
 28TH SEPT. 1708



Note how Marlborough placed his forces between the two rivers south of Lille in order to protect the sieged Fortress. The sketch of Wynendael is shown in order to illustrate how Marlborough strategically placed forces to protect Allied convoys from French attacks.

Reproduced from Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough.

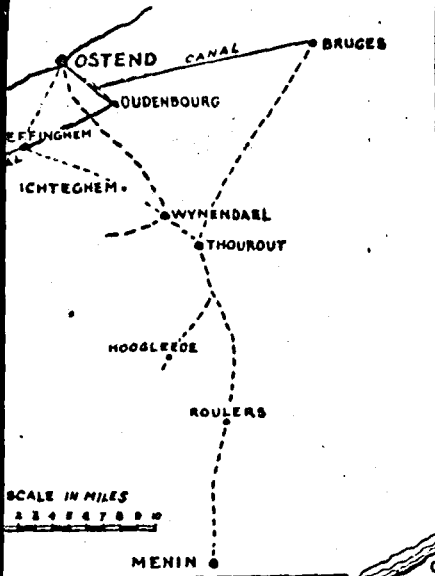
fully engaged.⁵⁵ With the withdrawal of the French Army, Lille was doomed, and on 11 December, the French soldiers filed by Marlborough and Eugene with lowered standards. Now that Eugene's army was free, he and Marlborough assaulted Ghent and Bruges which quickly fell to the overwhelming onslaught. Tournai was the next to fall, and during this operation Marlborough conducted the siege with 60 battalions, while Eugene commanded the covering forces. (See accompanying sketch of major siege operations following Oudenarde.)

A daring night march by Marlborough to Mons set the stage for the final great battle of the long and bloody war with France. The forced march which completely surprised Villars, resulted in the Mons fortress surrendering without a fight. Louis was infuriated over the recent losses, and the caution which had prevailed throughout the French Court following Oudenarde was removed. Both sides approached the impending battle with what Frances Grote called an "access of mental rage; a complete discarding of sensible calculations...a thirsting by the soldiers to be at each others throats",⁵⁶ and as we shall see, this attitude would result in the largest and bloodiest battle of the eighteenth century.

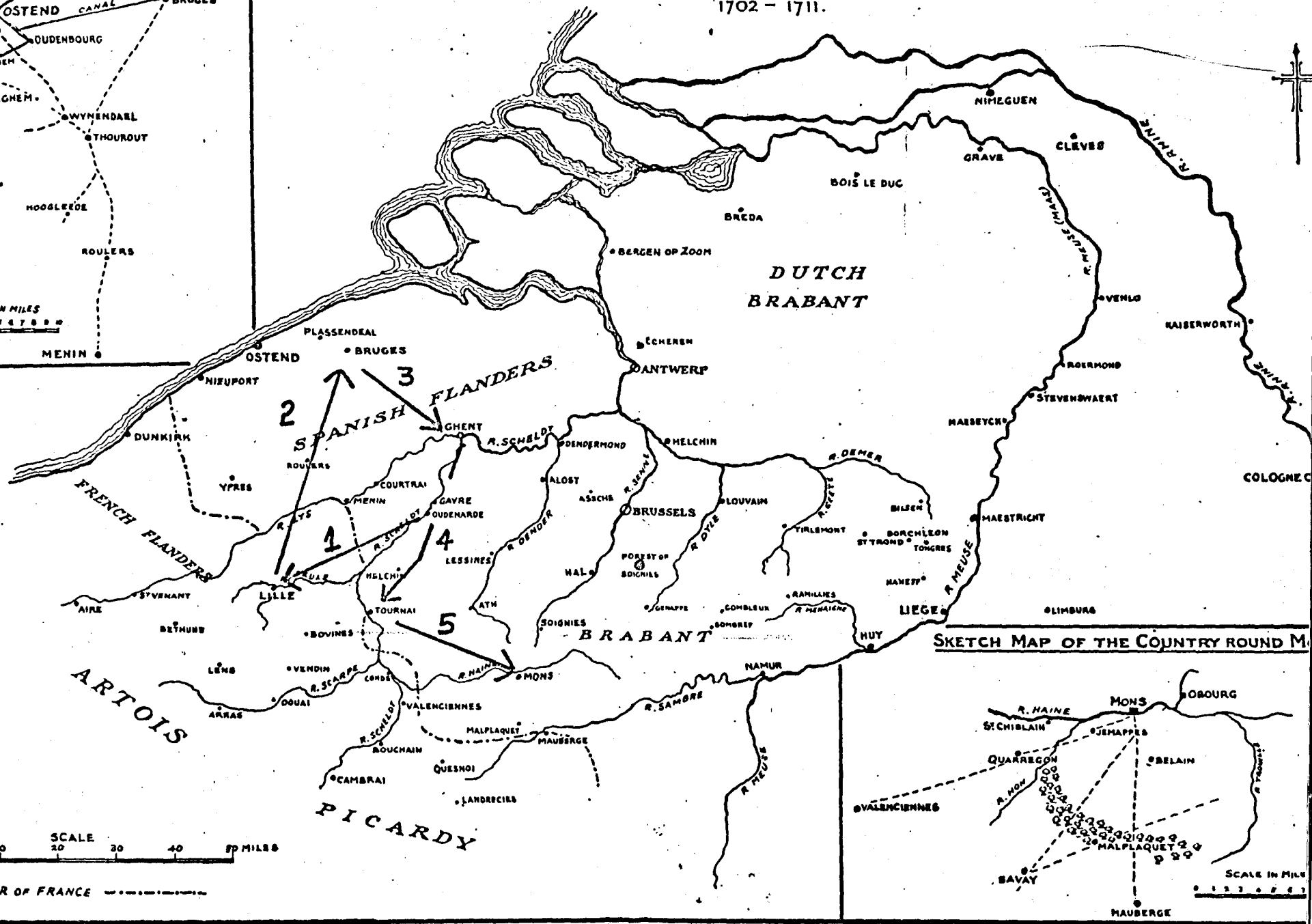
⁵⁵It must be pointed out that this would have been a defensive fight by Marlborough. His selection of terrain saw his flanks secured and would require a frontal attack by the French in a narrow area where 10,000 soldiers could easily defend against 30,000. It could be that when Villars saw the "trap" he was about to fall into, he decided to call the attack off.

⁵⁶Grote, Memoirs, 410.

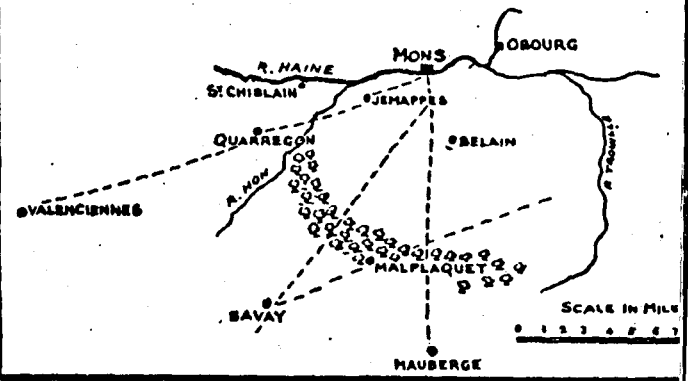
OSTEND AND MENIN.



IN THE NETHERLANDS 1702 - 1711.



SKETCH MAP OF THE COUNTRY ROUND M.



SCALE IN MILES 5 10 20 30 40 50

FRONTIER OF FRANCE - - - - -

In the opinion of this writer, Malpaquet was the most ill-planned battle fought by Marlborough during the entire war. Victory, though achieved, was at a terrible cost, and again, in this writer's opinion, could have been gained with far fewer casualties.

The battle's prelude actually began with a move by Villars into the strategic Malpaquet gap. This gap was most significant, for it not only controlled the north-south access from Mons, it was the key terrain in the area⁵⁷ as a result of the high ridge line overlooking both approaches. An exhaustive search was made in attempting to learn why Marlborough and Eugene permitted Villars and Boufflers to join forces and move unopposed into such a strategic position. No author conclusively explains Marlborough's reasoning, however, Eugene's Memoirs indicate both he and Marlborough believed Villars would continue through the gap and attack the Allies in the vicinity of Mons. As a result, when Villars halted in the gap, the Allied Army was scattered over a twenty mile area and not prepared for battle. In retrospect, it is obvious that Villars was "too sly" to take the bait, and instead selected the area best suited for his forces to fight the battle.

News of Villars occupation of the Malpaquet gap reached the Allied camp on the eighth of September, and Marlborough and Eugene conducted a personal reconnaissance immediately upon receiving this alarming

⁵⁷As indicated previously, key terrain is that terrain providing a distinct advantage to the side that occupies or holds it.

message. Upon arriving at a position where the French could be observed, columns stretching for miles were seen by the two commanders.⁵⁸ Because the Allied army was somewhat scattered, Marlborough elected not to attack at that time, and dispatched messengers to quickly bring the forces together. Of particular importance was General Withers and his eighteen English battalions who were just south of Mons. Villars was left unopposed throughout the afternoon of 8 September except for cavalry raids and an exchange of artillery fire. On the morning of the ninth of September, the two Allied Commanders conducted a second reconnaissance of the French positions and were unpleasantly surprised to note the progress made by Villars in less than twenty-four hours. General Schulenburg writes that it was obvious that a terrible price would be paid when attacking the positions. There were three layers of trenches; felled trees in front of each providing cover and concealment, and artillery was being emplaced to cover every possible approach into the gap.⁵⁹

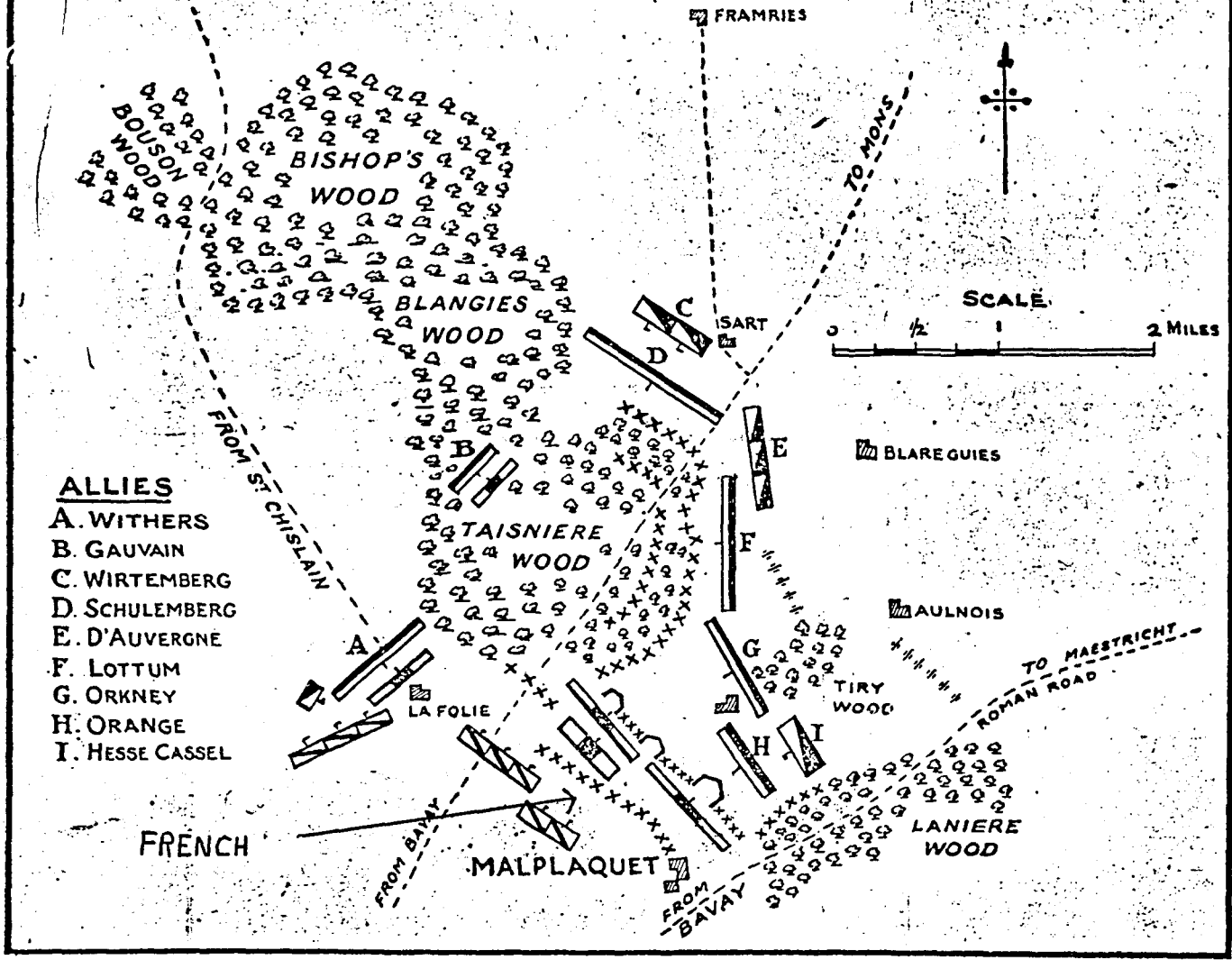
In analyzing the French positions as depicted on sketch map A, it is apparent that Villars was defending an extremely strong position, yet there were also several weaknesses in the line. The villages of

⁵⁸Murray, The Letters and Dispatches of John Churchill, Vol. IV, III.

⁵⁹Lt.Col. R.W.Wust, "Malpaquet; An Unnecessary Rick?" (a monograph written at the U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 1927).

MALPLAQUET

11TH SEPTEMBER 1709.



- ALLIES**
- A. WITHERS
 - B. GAUVAIN
 - C. WIRTEMBERG
 - D. SCHULEMBERG
 - E. D'AUVERGNE
 - F. LOTTUM
 - G. ORKNEY
 - H. ORANGE
 - I. HESSE CASSEL

A

This old sketch of Malpaquet is shown primarily to illustrate the strong French positions astride the Malpaquet gap. The fact that Marlborough allowed Villars to occupy this position and improve it's defenses for two days without interference, was, in the opinion of this writer, a serious error.

Malpaquet and LaFolie mark the southern entrance to the plains, while the high ground (occupied by Villars) dominated the eastward approaches and was approximately 3,000 meters in width. The forest of Taisnieres anchored the left flank while the right flank connected with the forest of Laignieres. Three lines of emplacements were positioned in the center and heavy artillery batteries were positioned on both flanks which also could cover the center if necessary. To the rear of the center positions stood the entire French cavalry which could counterattack wherever required.⁶⁰

A cursory glance at the sketch map discloses two serious weaknesses in the French positions. On the French left, the woods masked the Allied movement until forces could close within 500 meters of the French left flank. An even more serious flaw was the salient paralleling the woods in a northerly direction, which, if outflanked or penetrated, would create a serious problem for the entire left flank. The second weakness involved a counterattack plan in the center of the gap, which was far too narrow to allow for a 30,000 man cavalry force to maneuver.⁶¹

Marlborough "drew up" the battle plan on the tenth of September, and generally, it closely resembled the formations used at Blenheim. Basically, both flanks would be assaulted to force Villars to weaken his center. Then, supported by a massive artillery preparation, the British

⁶⁰Barnett, The First Churchill, 238.

⁶¹Had Villars moved the entire line back 1,000 meters, and concentrated the bulk of the artillery to cover the gap, Marlborough's problem would have been considerably more difficult.

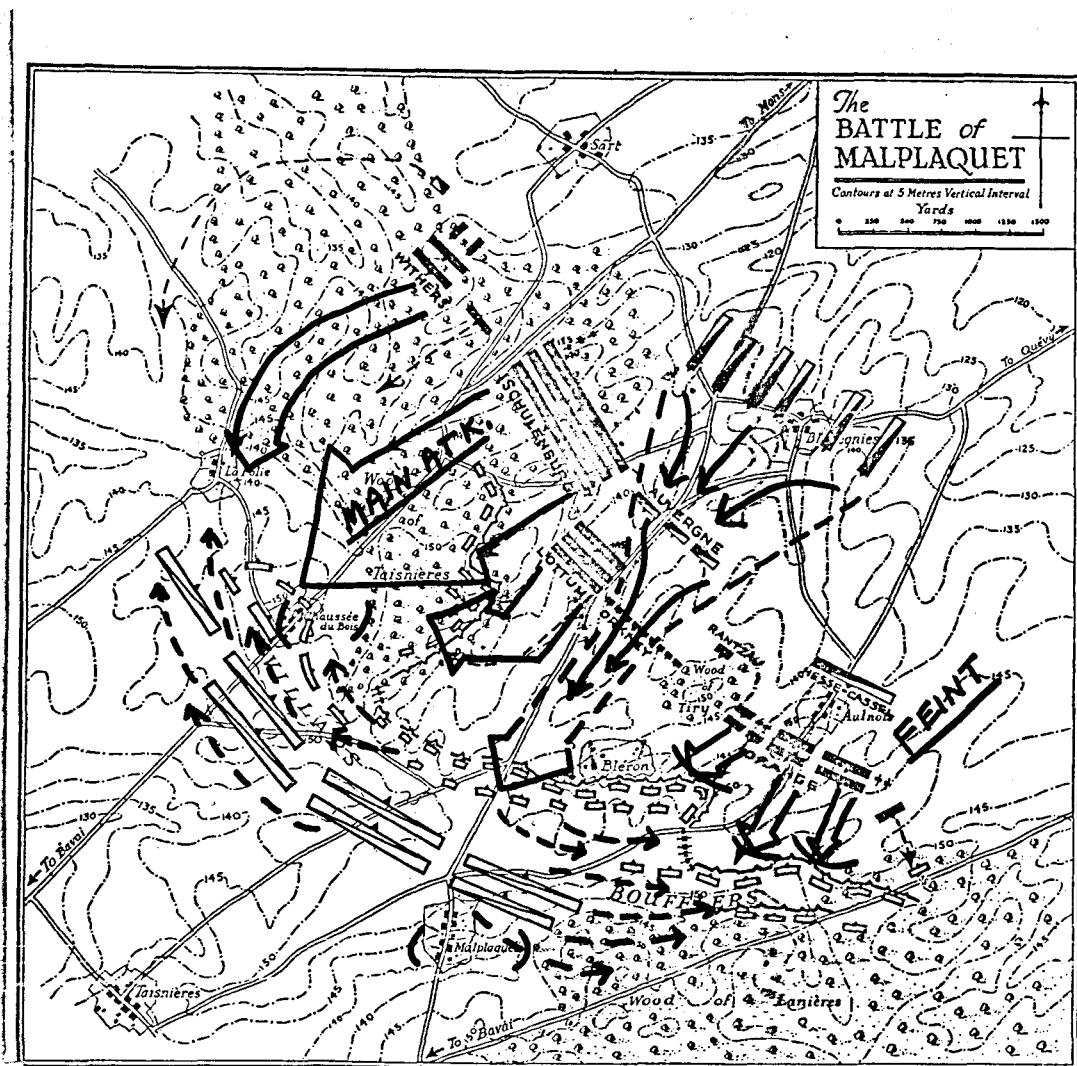
infantry would pierce the center. Once this had been achieved, the Allied cavalry of 30,000 would pass through the infantry and destroy the French cavalry or be directed to either flank as appropriate. The two flank attacks were critical to the success of the entire operation, particularly the attack against the French left.⁶² (Note how the woodline created a salient in the first echelon positions.) As a result, Eugene was placed in command of the Allied right flank supported by forty guns. The young Prince of Orange commanded the Allied left flank and would direct the supporting attack against the French right. Orange's mission was critical! He was directed to move his force into positions, just out of range of the French small arms and wait in place for one hour following the attack on the right, and then conduct a feint, which was designed to confuse the enemy as to the actual intentions.⁶³

Eugene, with 60 battalions moved towards the French right and achieved some surprise as a result of an early morning ground fog. Under Eugene, General Schulenburg with 35 battalions moved directly towards the woodline, while General Lottum with 25 battalions began a parallel march in front of the woodline, then turned abruptly to the north.⁶⁴

⁶²Scouller, The Armies of Queen Anne, 274.

⁶³Edwards, A Short Life of Marlborough, 253.

⁶⁴Burton, The Captain General, 155.



Marlborough planned to conduct two flank assaults against the strong French defensive positions. The primary attack would be made by Schulenburg's German infantry supported by Lottum to eliminate the salient in the Taisnières Woods. A supporting attack against the French right would be conducted by the Prince of Orange. This would be a feint only! The feint, or demonstration would prevent Villars from moving troops from the right flank. The objective of both attacks (indicated by broken arrows) was to denude the French center for the final assault.

Reproduced from Edwards, A Short Life Of Marlborough.

Marlborough's goal was to achieve a four to one numerical superiority against the French left, thus the 60 battalions were concentrated into an area of just over fifteen hundred meters. Upon General Withers' arrival with 18 battalions, he was directed to move immediately through the woods to turn the French left flank.

A terrible struggle ensued on the French left. Schulenburg's infantry conducted three consecutive attacks and each time was forced to withdraw. The French would allow the advancing columns to reach the parapets, then fire a devastating volley followed by a furious counter-attack with fixed bayonets.⁶⁵ Lottum's advance against the woodline following a march directly towards the center reduced some pressure against Schulenburg, however, the French lines remained unbreached. A second assault by Lottum caused the defenders to withdraw to the second lines of defense. This advance, though appearing insignificant, created problems along the front lines since Lottum's infantry could fire laterally into the French positions.⁶⁶ Villars, realizing the Allied advance was beginning to achieve some success, sent a request to Boufflers to dispatch

⁶⁵Numerous accounts of Malpaquet were examined in attempting to ascertain exactly how this battle was fought. Although most general descriptions were similar, William Coxe and J.F.C. Fuller appear to present a more detailed scenario from the British viewpoint, while General Planches' description of the battle gave an excellent overview from personal accounts by many of the French commanders. General Delessai Planches, De Fortification et D'Allaque et Defense (Berlin) 116. Translator unknown; no publisher or date indicated.

⁶⁶Blakader, Life and Diary, 352.

reserves from the right flank.

Had the battle progressed according to plan, the reserves would have been readily available. However, as a result of premature action by the Prince of Orange, the French right was locked in combat. Orange completely disregarded his instructions and launched a full scale assault against the French right flank.⁶⁷ It was at this precise movement that Villars sent word to Boufflers for additional troops which the Marshal refused to heed.

The concentrated assault by the Dutch against the strong right flank was a disaster for the Prince of Orange. The Dutch were slaughtered as they followed their highly respected leader into the withering fire of the dug in French soldiers.⁶⁸ In addition to the rifles, the French artillery, positioned midway along the right flank, poured such a devastating fire into the Dutch Blue Guards that they never had the remotest chance of penetrating the lines. They were not only outnumbered 60 battalions to 30, but were facing several of France's finest infantry regiments.

⁶⁷Chandler, Battlefields of Europe, 14.

⁶⁸William Coxe writes that the young Prince was most unhappy when relegated to only a supporting role during the initial assault, and upon reaching the battle area, was cheered by the Dutch soldiers to such an extent that he disregarded Marlborough's orders and attacked. Colonel Blakader, in his diary, wrote that "in all my life I have not seen the dead bodies lie so thick as they were in some places about the revetments particularly at the battery where the Dutch Guards attacked". Blakader, Life and Diary, 353-354.

In the heat of the battle, Orange led three separate attacks against the French and was saved from complete destruction by the arrival of Hesse-Cassel's cavalry just as the French were preparing to counter-attack. During the course of this action, Dutch losses were five thousand killed and thousands more wounded.⁶⁹ This foolish venture by Orange was a critical factor in the battle. Had Boufflers ordered an all-out counterattack, Marlborough's entire left flank would have been turned and the Allies forced to withdraw. Boufflers did not conduct this movement even though his subordinate commanders strongly urged him to do so. His reasoning was that he was not in command, thus could not order the attack.⁷⁰

Meanwhile, on the French left, steady Allied pressure had continued to gradually force the French back. Villars, upon receiving no troops from Boufflers, quickly moved twelve battalions from the center to bolster the left. This caused the first reduction of the center defenses. As word of General Withers advance through the woods towards La Folie reached Villars, he pulled more troops from the center,⁷¹ following

⁶⁹Broderick Thomas, A Complete History of the Campaign of 1708, 317.

⁷⁰Coxe, Memoirs, Vol. 3, 140.

⁷¹It must be explained that Marlborough personally urged Withers (18 Battalions) to move with the utmost speed to reach the French left flank. Frances Grote writes that Marlborough left no doubt in General Withers' mind that the outcome of the battle rested with his reaching La Folie prior to French reserves counterattacking against Schulenburg and Lottum. Withers' troops must have been exhausted after their long forced march, however, they pressed on at a double time when word from Marlborough reached them of the urgency of their mission.

a second unsuccessful appeal to Boufflers for troops. During the height of the battle on the French left, Marlborough and Eugene were often in extremely dangerous places while urging the troops forward. Eugene mentions several times in his Memoirs that Marlborough's presence at the front was a tremendous inspiration to the Allied soldiers. By four o'clock, the French left had been forced back until the woods were cleared. Timed with this was the arrival of Withers' infantrymen who were rapidly placed on line next to Schulenburg and Lottum under Eugene's command.⁷² Both sides were now drawn up for the final battle--30,000 soldiers on each side faced each other approximately three hundred yards apart on a line running almost two miles. The advantage was with the French, however, for in addition to their infantry, the French cavalry had the Allied infantry in a most unfavorable position--in the open!⁷³

When Marlborough realized the stage was being set for the decisive battle on the flank, he ordered Orkney's British infantry corps, supported by a Prussian brigade, to assault the center. The cavalry was directed to follow the infantry and be prepared to immediately pass through the lines when breached.⁷⁴ Hesse-Cassel's twenty-one cavalry squadrons were moved to the center to reinforce the English cavalry and the Dutch were ordered to regroup and attack the French right.⁷⁵

⁷²Campbell, The History of Eugene and Marlborough, Vol. III, 88.

⁷³Fuller, Decisive Battles, 398-399.

⁷⁴Lediard, Life of Marlborough, 411.

⁷⁵Ibid.

As Villars moved forward on the left to destroy the opposing Allies, a "dreadful message" of the Allied assault in the center reached his staff. His only recourse now was to hold the Allies at bay on the French left and attack the center with all of the available French cavalry. Villars personally led the desperate cavalry charges against the Allied cavalry pouring through the center,⁷⁶ and on each occasion, the Allies were forced back through the lines. However, each French attack was brought to a halt by the British infantry firing from well constructed positions, which the French had earlier constructed. The artillery that Marlborough personally directed to the center also significantly contributed to the increasing French casualties. During the third charge, Villars was wounded and carried from the field. Noting the sudden confusion in the French ranks, Marlborough ordered a final cavalry charge which created havoc all along the French lines, forcing a withdrawal.⁷⁷ Thus Marlborough once again emerged the victor and once again the French army met defeat at the hands of the seemingly unbeatable opponent. However, at the conclusion of this battle, there was no pursuit by the Allies, and the French army retired in good order. Although the Allies remained on the battlefield, the price of victory had been costly. Close to

⁷⁶Burton, The Captain General, 291.

⁷⁷Ibid., 293.

twenty-five thousand Allied soldiers had been killed or wounded while the French casualties were less than one half that number. Marlborough was shocked at the carnage left on the field⁷⁸ as was all of Europe. It was, as indicated, an Allied victory, but certainly not a French defeat. In plainer terms, what might be said is that the Allies gained the terrain, but lost the battle. It is necessary to briefly analyze this battle in an attempt to see how it might have occurred under different circumstances. Of primary significance is the reasoning behind Marlborough conducting an attack against such a strong position--one that was fortified even stronger than those at Blenheim. Secondly, why did the Allies delay attacking for two days, thus allowing the French time to strengthen their defenses and consolidate their forces? As mentioned previously, some historians indicate that Marlborough did not attack as a result of the scattered Allied army. However, a search of various accounts of Malpaquet indicate most of Schulenburg's and Lottum's forces were available as were the bulk of Orange's cavalry. The French possession of the vital gap could have been contested by employing these forces when it became apparent that Villars was halting and organizing for the defense. The resultant battle would see two opposing forces of approximately equal strength clashing and adding fresh units as they arrived in the battle area. Although a piecemeal attack is not the most desired method, it would have prevented Villars from organizing such a

⁷⁸Clode, The Military Forces of the Crown: Their Administration and Government, 301.

strong defensive position. A possible reason for the delay, and one that historians tend to overlook, concerns the absence of General Churchill, Marlborough's brother, who was commanding an English/Dutch force some fifty miles away when word arrived to move to Mons. It may be that Marlborough believed any delay was worth the wait just to have this experienced commander present for the battle.⁷⁹

Frontal attacks are a hazardous undertaking, particularly against a well defended position. It also appears that he might have directed an immediate cavalry assault against the French flanks or rear, while moving against the high ground with a superior infantry force supported by Allied artillery before the bulk of Villars forces arrived. In retrospect, Marlborough's two-day delay nearly proved fatal for the Allies, however, William Coxe writes that Marlborough was fully aware of the critical situation to the front; that he calmly bided his time while the Allies gathered for the attack, and that he was confident of fighting a battle so decisive that the French army would be destroyed.⁸⁰

⁷⁹In this writer's opinion, there is no doubt that General Churchill would have commanded the Allied left flank instead of the Prince of Orange. This command change alone would have resulted in the same results without the 5,000 Dutch killed in action due to Orange's reckless attacks. Churchill did not arrive and Marlborough could not delay any longer than 11 September. Corelli Barnett writes that at Blenheim, Marlborough was confident of beating Tallard with inferior numbers, however at Malpaquet, he would wait for Churchill's 20 battalions even if it meant giving Villars another 24 hours to strengthen his positions. Barnett, The First Churchill, 196.

⁸⁰Coxe, Memoirs, Vol. III, 147.

Marlborough's plan of assaulting the enemy flanks in order to denude the center cannot be faulted from a tactical viewpoint and he avoided a frontal attack against the strongest defensive positions. Once the center had been reduced, he would strike with infantry, supported by all available artillery, and pass the cavalry through to strike the enemy rear area.⁸¹ The weakening of the French center, though costly, was successful, and the ultimate results were exactly as planned.

Lediard indicates that Marlborough was shocked to learn of the disaster on his left flank caused by Orange's foolish direct assaults. He was aware that the left was not achieving the desired results, but it was not until midway through the battle that the unfortunate results were brought to his attention.⁸² These casualties cannot be directly attributed to Marlborough's planning since Orange committed a direct violation of his orders. It is interesting to note that the Dutch never criticized Marlborough for their excessive casualties.

⁸¹Ibid, 148. These tactics are similar to those employed by US/Allied formations today. Infantry (mechanized) forces assault, supported by all available fire power, with armor passing through the breach to exploit. An interesting difference in combined arms tactics used by the Soviets is the massive armor penetration rather than by infantry/mechanized forces. These same tactics were used by the Israeli Army during the early 1960's, and while enjoying relative success in 1967, they were rudely shocked during the most recent war when tanks, without infantry, were used in several disastrous attempts to penetrate well defended positions, resulting in approximately 1000 tanks destroyed.

⁸²Lediard, Life of Marlborough, 413.

Although the Allies suffered the heaviest casualties of any of Marlborough's battles, he initially believed that Malpaquet had achieved the desired objective. This was a serious error in judgment. The French were not beaten and this battle raised their morale; Villars was cheered throughout France.⁸³ On the Allied side, however, the terrible losses strengthened the position of those who were arguing for an immediate peace.⁸⁴

Following Malpaquet, and prior to Marlborough's fall into disgrace, the Allies would conduct additional brilliant strategical moves throughout Brabant on a continuing effort to reduce French fortresses and influence throughout the area. The great decisive battle following Malpaquet that Marlborough desired was not fought. During the next year, though outnumbered by 30,000 troops, he continually out maneuvered Villars on every occasion to the point where the French marshal would not accept an engagement.

The political squabbles in England would soon find Tory pressure resulting in the Queen dismissing Marlborough. The false accusations against him and Godolphin convinced Anne that his presence was not in her best interests. Thus, in a letter written in her own hand, he was removed from command of the English forces on the continent.

⁸³Burton, The Captain General, 303.

⁸⁴Ibid., 304.

CHAPTER XI EPILOGUE

In introducing the thesis, it was stated that Marlborough's role as a military tactician and strategist has been, for the most part, overlooked by most historians when listing their favorite "Great Captains" of military history. One eminent British military historian wrote that:

Marlborough will always rank among the great captains of history - the greatest military genius our nation has produced. That he is today almost unknown to the man in the street may be due to the British public's curious characteristic of admiring its army most in defense. Wellington, for example, is better known than Marlborough, who always attacked. But Marlborough's greatness is unquestionable. Despite enormous difficulties, political and military, both at home and abroad, he broke the long reign of French ascendancy and raised the prestige of the British Army to be the highest in Europe. He could always take the great line and see the war as a whole - and in the midst of his work in Flanders, could find time to advise on operations in the Peninsula and the Mediterranean. He guided not only England but Europe, safely through the War of the Spanish Succession. He possessed all the qualities of a great military leader, including tact, vision, and perhaps more than any other man, he thoroughly understood the British soldier--feeding him well, giving him the best equipment--working him hard and always adhering to strict discipline. By looking after his soldiers, he developed a strong bond between himself and his men. In the practice of the art of war, he beat Jackson by some 150 years--to mystify, mislead and surprise your enemy.¹

¹Liddell Hart, "Our Foremost Commanders", Army Ordnance, Vol. XV, (Washington, 1935) 70-72. Although Hart states that Marlborough was a pioneer in developing fire power and was instrumental in the use of maneuver to gain strategic points, Hart does not claim that Marlborough was the ultimate commander. This honor is bestowed upon Cromwell, and in particular, his campaign at Dunbar.

Marlborough has never achieved the status of Wellington or Montgomery, yet commanded the armies of the Allied coalition while the two latter commanded basically British units. Additionally, Marlborough directed the overall Allied strategy in all theaters while neither Wellington or Montgomery were in this position. Although he was not an innovator like Gustavus Adolphus, he possessed an uncanny ability to improve existing tactics and equipment to near perfection on the early eighteenth century battlefield. To compare Marlborough with Napoleon is virtually impossible as Napoleon commanded from a position of far greater power than Marlborough, although on the battlefield, this writer supports Marlborough's generalship. As an allied commander faced with continual turmoil and frustrations, his performance stands far in front of any English field commander. Second to this was his administrative and logistics management on the battlefield during a period where movement of unwieldy field armies often resulted in disasters for any commander so bold to attempt such a daring move. Yet Marlborough's forces were well fed, well equipped and continually conducted lengthy forced marches and arrived ready to fight regardless of the tactical situation. He was the first English general to command a multi-national force and direct a combined army effort at such a distance from England. Marlborough insisted that his soldiers look like professionals and he placed great emphasis upon their appearance.²

²Parker, Memoirs, 397.

He realized the tactical significance of artillery and engineers and insisted that only the most qualified officers were placed into these branches of service.³ Marlborough reorganized the army staff and established boards to determine officers' qualifications.⁴ He placed great emphasis upon the discipline and morale of the soldier, and insisted his officers display proper leadership qualities. He did not hesitate to write the Queen on matters where he felt political interference or opposition in selecting senior officers.⁵ In dealing with the local populace, Marlborough took great care to insure no partisan uprising would cause a rear area security problem.⁶ Throughout his long marches his dispatches are filled with injunctions, demands for investigations and promises for recompensation as a result of problems occurring along the route of march.⁷ Marlborough established a political staff to deal direct with local government officials which greatly facilitated his long march to the Danube.⁸

It is unquestionable that Marlborough had a sympathetic government rather firmly behind him during his initial campaigns. It is also

³Julian S. Corbett "Queen Anne's Defense Committee" Monthly Review (London, 1904), Vol. VI, 43.

⁴Clode, Military Forces of the Crown, 309.

⁵Trevelyan, England Under Queen Anne Appendix to Chapter II, Vol. III.

⁶Clode, Military Forces of the Crown, 326.

⁷Ibid., 327.

⁸Murray, Letters and Dispatches of John Churchill, Vol. III, 93.

significant that Godolphin served as Anne's Lord Treasurer during the first eight years of Anne's reign, thus Marlborough had a strong ally and supporter in a highly sensitive position. However, when examining the serious difficulties Marlborough faced while bringing together multiple Allied forces into a cohesive fighting force, it is unquestionable that his personal ability and leadership were unparalleled. Finally, in defense of his generalship, it must be emphasized that he was victorious in every major engagement while in command of the Allied forces.

Possibly the greatest tribute paid to Marlborough (other than by Napoleon who directed his biographer to record the history of Marlborough's campaigns) came some years later when a French general wrote that:

"The battle of Salamanca is the most skillful, the most considerable in regard to the number of troops engaged, the most important in its results which the English have gained in these recent times. It classes Lord Wellington almost on the level of Marlborough".

General Foy - able French
Officer employed on the
Peninsula.⁹

⁹Christopher T. Atkinson, Marlborough and the Rise of the British Army (New York and London, 1921), 409.

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MAP APPENDIX

1. Map A; Campaign of Sedgemoor, 1685. Map reproduced from Churchill's Marlborough, Vol. 1. Arrows depicting Marlborough's moves added by this author from a detailed analysis of troop movements and engagements of written accounts of the campaign.
2. Map B; Allied Army's movement against the French in 1689. Map reproduced from Burton's The Captain General. Arrows depicting three major army routes of attack added by this author. Primary source used was Lediard's Life of Marlborough.
3. Sketch C; Marlborough's first independent command during an actual battle drawn by this author to illustrate his early ability to deploy infantry, cavalry and artillery in a combined arms engagement.
4. Map D; Marlborough's amphibious operations in Ireland. Schematic of the engagements drawn by this author following numerous investigations of the Cork and Kinsale battles. Primary sources included Coxe's Memoirs of John, Duke of Marlborough and Parker's Memoirs.
5. Map E; reproduced from Edwards A Short Life of Marlborough. French gains at the war's outset indicated by solid line; the United Provinces retention of the Maestricht fortress and terrain between Bonn and Rheinberg is indicated by this author by a broken line.
6. Map F; arrows by this author added to clearly illustrate the tactical situation facing Boufflers when Marlborough pushed south on the west side of the Muese River.
7. Map G; all military symbols added to depict Marlborough's master plan to engage the French Army in a decisive battle. Movements and counter-movements extracted from both Allied and French maps.
8. Map H; illustrated to portray Marlborough's tactical genius in a broader perspective than that facing him on the battlefield. Routes of movement, including the deception plan, added by this author.

9. Map I; extracted from Burton's The Captain General to show exact locations of the three French Armies during Marlborough's march to the Danube.
10. Map J; reproduced from Burton's The Captain General to show the strategic significance of an Allied force on the south side of the Neckar River.
11. Map M; illustrates general line of defense and attack prior to Blenheim.
12. Map n; identical map as (M), however this author has drawn in a large arrow indicating the main attack route by Marlborough. French and Allied maps were extensively evaluated to determine how the battle at Blenheim developed. There were no major discrepancies from the details provided by Burton's The Captain General.
13. Sketch of English/French battlefield tactics illustrated by this writer from reviewing numerous tactical illustrations by military and civilian authors.
14. Sketch R; all tactical symbols added by this author in order to illustrate how Marlborough penetrated the French lines and moved in between Marsin and Villeroy with the Meuse River protecting his flank.
15. Sketch S; illustrated by this author following an extensive search through old maps and early historian's accounts of the Ramillies battle.
16. Map T; depicts a simplified illustration to show how Marlborough shifted infantry and cavalry from the right to the left flank. This writer followed this same route (on-foot) and the low hills prevented the French from watching this critical movement prior to the main attack.
17. Sketch T; reproduced from Burton's The Captain General with additions by this writer to clearly illustrate the tactical gains made by the Allies following Ramillies.
18. Sketch 4; scaled reproduction following an examination of numerous accounts in order to depict French gains as a result of Allied inactivity following Ramillies.

19. Sketch 5; arrows by this writer in order to show the strategic significance of Marlborough's penetration of the French lines in 1705.
20. Sketches X-1 through X-7; depict a schematic analysis of the key events during the battle of Oudenarde. These sketches were drawn following a meticulous study of the battle including a detailed walk over the battlefield.
21. Siege of Lille; reproduced from Edwards A Short Life of Marlborough to illustrate Marlborough's brilliant economy of force movements during the Siege and while protecting convoy movements from French attacks.
22. Sketch U; arrows added by this writer to clearly illustrate Marlborough's victorious campaigns following Oudenarde.
23. Map A; reproduced from William Coxe's Memoirs and depicts an excellent picture of where the major forces of both sides were located prior to Malpaquet. An analysis of numerous accounts of the battlefield support its authenticity.
24. Malpaquet; this author has superimposed various diagrams and arrows over the map from Burton's A Short Life of Marlborough. Burton has arranged a detailed and accurate picture of the battlefield, and it was an excellent map in which to draw-in an overview of how Marlborough expected the battle to progress. Marlborough's plans were obtained from several sources, but primarily from Eugene's Memoirs and Murray's Letters and Dispatches.

AUTHOR'S VITA

The author is a native Virginian. He graduated from the Virginia Military Institute in 1959 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History. During his cadetship, he was President of the History Club, Glee Club, a cadet officer, active in the Religious Council, a Distinguished Military Student, and defrayed college expenses as a table waiter and working in the cadet canteen for three years.

He was commissioned in the Regular Army following graduation from VMI, completed the US Army Infantry School Basic Officers Course, Airborne and Ranger Schools, and was assigned to the 82d Airborne Division, where he served as a platoon leader and company executive officer. In 1962, he attended the US Army Aviation School and joined the Army's first counter insurgency unit. In 1963, he served with the 7th Infantry Division in Korea as an aviation battalion operations officer. In 1964, he returned to the United States and joined the newly formed 11th Air Assault Division which was conducting intensive air mobile tests in preparation for deployment to Vietnam. During this assignment, he served as assistant battalion operations officer and intelligence officer.

In 1965, he was assigned to Vietnam with the 1st Cavalry Division and flew over 500 combat missions while serving as an aviation operations officer and platoon leader. Additionally, he was assigned as assistant S-3 (operations) in the 2d Brigade. Upon returning to the United States in 1966, he attended the Infantry Officers Advanced Course and then rotated to Europe where he was assigned as Aviation Officer, US Army

Communications Zone, in Worms, Germany. In 1969, he was again re-assigned to Vietnam and served as a battalion S-3 (operations) and commanded an attack helicopter company in the 101st Airborne Division, located in the Hue-Quang Tri areas.

On Christmas Day, 1969, he returned to Fort Benning, Georgia and was assigned as executive officer, 5th Battalion for seven months. In August that same year, he was reassigned to the United States Command and General Staff College as a student for one year. In 1971, he attended graduate school at the University of Richmond and completed all course work except for the thesis. He was reassigned to the Army ROTC Department at the Virginia Military Institute, where in addition to his military duties, was selected to teach sophomore US Military History with the Department of History for three years.

In 1975, he was reassigned to Europe and served for 18 months in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations in Heidelberg, Germany. In April 1977, he was selected for battalion command, and commanded the 11th Aviation Battalion (Corps) and presently commands the 503d Combat Aviation Battalion, 3d US Armored Division. As the commander, he is directly responsible for a 1000 man battalion, 116 helicopters, 220 vehicles, \$200,000,000 in equipment and manages a \$3,000,000 annual budget. The author is scheduled for reassignment to the Pentagon, Washington, DC in June 1979.

The author has written two articles which were published in the June, 1971 Aviation Digest and the VMI Alumni Review, 1974. One additional

article entitled "Attack Helicopter Employment in the European Environment" is scheduled for publication in the Aviation Digest in July 1979. Since graduation from VMI in 1959, he has taken evening college courses in Korea, at Fort Benning, Georgia, and at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas preparing for graduate school.

His military awards include the combat infantryman's badge, three distinguished flying crosses, two bronze stars, the meritorious service medal, the air medal for heroism with 17 awards, the commendation medal for heroism with four awards and the Vietnamese cross of gallantry. The author is married and has three sons: 13, 9 and 7. Following a two year assignment at the Pentagon, he is considering retirement from active military service and teaching history somewhere in southwestern Virginia.