

The Battle of Edgehill

Sir Richard Bulstrode, Prince of Wales' Regiment of Horse

October 1642

...The King came to Nottingham some Days before his Standard was set and hearing some Regiments, by Order from the Earl of Essex, were marching to Coventry, the King hastened thither with some Troops of Horse, well armed, and got thither the Day before the Parliament's Forces. However, the Gates were shut against him, and some of his Servants Kill'd from the Walls. The King had no Remedy for this Affront, but lodged that Night at Stonely Abbey, at Sir Thomas Lee's. The next Day the King's Body of Horse, being near the Enemy at Southam [23 August], who were not above Twelve Hundred Foot, with one Troop of Horse, in a free Campagne, yet they retired without being charged. Commissary Wilmot then commanded the King's Horse, and several Reflections were made upon his not charging them. About this time I was with the Earl of Northampton at Warwick, having left Coventry some Months before, where I resided with my Father, being then very young, and went with two Horses and one of his Men, to the Earl of Northampton, who was Lord Lieutenant of Warwickshire, with whom I was when he first put the Commission of Array in Execution at Coleshill, eight Miles from Coventry towards Bermingham. From thence we went to Warwick, in Hopes to have surprized that Castle; but Sir Edward Peito was gotten into it before, and had Orders to keep it for the Lord Brook, whose Castle it was, and his Lordship was then employed by the Parliament, to settle the Militia in Warwickshire. The Castle was strong, and well scituated, the River Avon running by it. Our Endeavours for taking it, were to little Purpose, for we had only two small Pieces of Cannon, which were brought from Compton House, belonging to the Earl of Northampton, and those were drawn up to the Top of the Church Steeple, and were discharged at the Castle, to which they could do no Hurt, but only frightened them within the Castle, who shot into the Street, and killed several of our Men. The King (as I said before) being repulsed from Coventry, hastened back towards Nottingham, and the Earl of Essex drawing near us with his Army, being then at Southam, my Lord of Northampton, with his Troop of Gentlemen, which were numerous, marched towards Worcester, where we met Prince Rupert with some Troops of Horse, with whom we joined and drew up in the Fields, not far from Powyck Bridge, upon the Severn, where we stood very quietly for some time, being informed that the Earl of Essex was marching after us. We had not been long in this Posture, before some Troops of Horse, commanded by Collonel Nathaniel Fiennes, who lay on the other Side Powyck Bridge, expecting to meet the Vanguard of Essex's Army, passed the Bridge, and having passed the Defiles, he drew up his Troops not far from ours, which the Prince gave him Time to do; but then the Prince charged and routed them, and sent them back over the Bridge, in great Confusion and Disorder. In this Action we took several Prisoners, amongst whom was one Colonel Sandys, who was mortally wounded, and died some Hours after. Major Douglass, and several others, were killed upon the Place. This was the first Action I was ever in, and being upon an unruly Horse, he ran away with me amongst

the Enemy, while we pursued them to the Bridge, in which Hurly I lost my Hat; by my Horse's Courage being somewhat abated, I stopp'd him before we came to the Bridge, and so returned with our own Troops. We retired that Evening into the City of Worcester, where being refreshed, we marched that Night towards Ludlow, where we stayed some time; and from thence we went to Shrewsbury, where we stay'd till the King came thither with his Army, which much increased in those Quarters, by several Regiments newly raised in those Parts for the King. The next Day after our leaving Worcester, the Earl of Essex came thither with his Army, and made that City his Headquarters for some time. The King stay'd at Shrewsbury till his Army was well recruited, and then Resolutions were taken to march towards London, in Hopes to get thither before the Earl of Essex, who was then, with the Parliament Army, about Worcester and Warwick.

While the King stay'd about Shrewsbury, his Army was modelled into several Regiments of Horse, Foot, and Dragoons, which, in all, made a considerable Body: The Horse were put into several Brigades, the Foot into Tertia's (as they were then called) and we had Three or Four Regiments of Dragoons: Our chief Want was Arms; for most of the Regiments, which were raised in Wales, were very ill armed. However, they were brave and resolute to serve their King, with such Arms as they had, or could get in their March, and our Army increased daily, by many coming to us from all Parts, as we marched. From Shrewsbury we marched thro' Part of Staffordshire and Warwickshire:

We marched thro' a great Part of Warwickshire, and came under Wormington Hills, on Saturday in the Evening, the Twenty Second Day of October, 1642. The King lodged that Night, at Sir William Chancie's, at Rattot Bridge, and Prince Rupert at the Lord Spencer's, at Wormleighton. The Prince of Wales's Regiment in which we were, was quartered in two or three Villages under Wormington Hills, When it was dark, we saw several Fires not far from us, and sending out a Party to see, we were soon informed, that the Earl of Essex was there with his whole Army, and quartered at Keinton, a Market-Town. Whereupon our whole Regiment drew into the Fields, and had Provisions brought to us from the Villages, and we forthwith gave Notice to the King and Prince Rupert, and soon after we received Orders to be upon our Guard all Night, and to be the next Morning by Eight, at the Rendezvous upon Wormington Hills. The King, with the Prince of Wales, and Duke of York, came soon after, and Prince Rupert, who called a general Council of War, where it was debated, whether to march towards London, or to march back, and fight the Enemy, who we saw from the Hill, embattelling their Army in the Bottom near Keinton. To march from them was thought dishonourable, as if we feared them, and they would be sure to follow, and give us continual Trouble in our March, when we should not, perhaps find so good Occasion to fight them; and so it was resolved, that we should go down the Hill and attack them. Whereupon great Preparations were made, and Precautions taken, for descending the Hill, which was very steep and long, and had been impracticable, if the Enemy had drawn nearer to the Bottom of it; but we saw by the Ranging their Army, that they intended to stay there for us, having a good Market Town by them, and not far from Warwick. In the first Place, it was resolved, that Colonel Washington, with his Regiment of Dragoons, should descend the Hill, and possess some Inclosures and Briars on the right Hand of our Army, and a forlorn Hope of Six Hundred Horse were ordered likewise to descend before the Army, and the Carriage Horses of the

Cannon were put behind the Carriages, excepting a Horse or two before, and the Foot were ordered to descend as well as they could. The King was that Day in a black Velvet Coat lin'd with Ermin, and a Steel Cap covered with Velvet. He rode to every Brigade of Horse, and to all the Tertia's of Foot, to encourage them to their Duty, being accompanied by the great Officers of the Army; His Majesty spoke to them with great Courage and Chearfulness, which caused Huzza's thro' the whole Army. I take the Liberty here to remember one Passage which was remarkable. It seems, that the very Morning, before the Army descended the Hill, the Duke of Lenox (being returned from his Travels) waited then upon the King, by whom his Grace was very well received and caressed. He brought with him one Mr Scroop, who had accompanied him. After this Gentleman had kissed the King's Hand, as also that of the Prince of Wales and Duke of York, the Duke of Lenox told the King, that the Gentleman's Father was Sir Gervase Scroop, who had a good Estate, had raised a Foot Regiment in Lincolnshire, to serve his Majesty, and was then in the Army, but very angry with his Son, and would not see him, or be reconciled to him, because he went with the Duke of Lenox, without his Father's Consent, and had spent much more Money than he allowed him. The Duke of Lenox therefore prayed the King to make them Friends. Whereupon the King sent for the Father, and told him, it was his Pleasure he should be reconciled to his Son, who being then present, demanded upon his Knees his Father's Blessing; whereupon the Father gave it him, and said thus to his Son: I am now going down the Hill to serve the King, and if I be killed, I have left you, my Son, enough to Spend: And the Son presently answered; And if I be killed, I shall leave you enough to pay for me. And so the Father and Son went down the Hill together; and it so happened, that the Son saved the Father's Life, who having received many Wounds, was stript, and left for dead, and was brought off the next Morning by his Son, in one of the King's Coaches, who lived some Years after, always very kind to his Son, and left him a very good Estate. I have presumed to add this Particular, because I have had great Obligations to that Family; and upon King Charles II's Restoration, he was made Knight of the Bath, by the Name of Sir Adrian Scroop: And I was then one of the Gentlemen that brought him to the King, when his Majesty put the Red Ribband about him. But, leaving this Digression, let us turn again to the King's Army, which, about Ten in the Morning, began to descend the Hill, the Foot getting down several Ways which the Horse could not do, by reason of the Hill's Steepness. When the whole Army was down, and drawn into Order, the King desired the Earl of Lindsey, who was his Lieutenant General, that he would permit General Ruthen, an old Scotch Officer, and who had long served under Gustavus Adolphus, the late King of Sweden, and had been a Lieutenant General in his Army, to draw up his Majesty's Army that Day, and to command it, being an old experienced General; to which the Earl of Lindsey (being wholly made of Obedience) willingly complied, and said he would serve the King that Day, as Collonel of the King's Royal Regiment of Foot Guards, which he did, accompanied by his Son, the Lord Willoughby of Eresby. The Enemy had all the Morning to draw up their Army, in a great plain Field, which they did to their best Advantage, by putting several Bodies of Foot with Retrenchments and Cannon before them, and all their Foot were lined with Horse behind them, with Intervals betwixt each Body, for their Horse to enter, if need required and upon their right Wing were some Briars covered with Dragoons, and a little behind, on their left Wing, was the Town of Keinton, which supplied them with Provisions, and where their Baggage and Carriages were.

Our whole Army was drawn up in a Body, the Horse Three deep in each Wing, and the Foot in the Center Six deep. The Prince of Wales's Regiment was on the right Wing, which was commanded by Prince Rupert, and Collonel Washington was with his Dragoons upon our Right. In the Center was the Infantry, commanded in chief by General Ruthen, and under him, by Sir Jacob Astley. The Earl of Lindsey marched on Foot, in the Head of the Regiment of the Royal Foot Guards, with his Son, the Lord Willoughby, and Sir Edmond Verney carried the Royal Standard. The left Wing of our Horse was commanded by Commissary General Wilmot, with Colonel Fielding and some other principal Officers; and Colonel George Lisle, with Lieutenant Collonel Ennis were in the left Wing, with a Regiment of Dragoons, to defend the Briars on that Side, and we had a Body of Reserve, of Six Hundred Horse, commanded by the Earl of Carnarvon. When our Army was drawn up at the Foot of the Hill, and ready to march, all the Generals went to the King (who intended to march with the Army) and desired he would retire to a rising Ground, some Distance from thence, on the Right, with the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York (having his Guard of Pensioners on Horseback with him) from whence he might see the Issue of the Battle, and be out of Danger, and that otherwise the Army would not advance towards the Enemy: To which the King (very unwillingly) was at last perswaded.

Just before we began our March, Prince Rupert passed from one Wing to the other, giving positive Orders to the Horse, to march as close as was possible, keeping their Ranks with Sword in Hand, to receive the Enemy's Shot, without firing either Carbin or Pistol, till we broke in amongst the Enemy, and then to make use of our Fire-Arms as need should require: which Order was punctually observed. The Enemy stayed to receive us, in the same Posture as was formerly declared; and when we came within Cannon Shot of the Enemy, they discharged at us three Pieces of Cannon from their left Wing, commanded by Sir James Ramsey; which Cannon mounted over our Troops, without doing any Hurt, except that their second Shot killed a Quarter-Master in the Rear of the Duke of York's Troop. We soon after engaged each other, and our Dragoons on our Right beat the Enemy from the Briars, and Prince Rupert led on our right Wing so furiously, that, after a small Resistance, we forced their left Wing, and were Masters of their Cannon; and the Prince being extremely eager of this Advantage (which he better knew how to take, than to keep) was not content with their Cannon, and keeping their Ground, but eagerly pursued the Enemy, who fled on the other side of Keinton towards Warwick: And we of the Prince of Wales's Regiment, (who were all scattered) pursued also, till we met with two Foot Regiments of Hambden and Hollis, and with a Regiment of Horse coming from Warwick to their Army, which made us hasten as fast back as we had pursued. In this Pursuit I was wounded in the Head by a Person who turned upon me, and struck me with his Pole-axe, and was seconding his Blow, when Sir Thomas Byron being near, he shot him dead with his Pistol, by which Means I came back. In fine, by meeting these three Regiments, we were obliged to return back to our Army, and then found our great Error, in leaving our Foot naked who were rudely handled by the Enemy's Horse and Foot together, in our Absence, who fell principally upon the King's Royal Regiment of Foot Guards, who lost Eleven of Thirteen Colours, the King's Standard-Bearer, Sir Edmond Verney, killed, and the Royal Standard taken, which was presently retaken by Captain John Smith, who was Knighted for it that Night by the King, under the Standard

Royal, and made a Baronet with the usual Ceremonies; and had afterwards a large Medal of Gold given him, with the King's Picture on the one Side, and the Banner on the other, which he always wore to his dying Day, in a large green watered Ribband, cross his Shoulders. He was afterwards killed at the Battle of Alresford in Hampshire, in the Year 1644, which was called Cheriton Fight, with the Lord Bernard Stewart, Brother to the Duke of Richmond, and several others. Sir Robert Walsh, an Irishman; who also pretended that he was very instrumental in regaining the Standard, did also in the same Manner wear a green Ribband with a Medal; but whether it was given him by Order, or how he came by it, I do not know, tho' I have often seen him wear it. In this Battle of Edgehill (as it was always called) during our Pursuit of the Enemy, the Earl of Lindsey was mortally wounded, and taken Prisoner, with his Son the Lord Willoughby, who killed the Man that wounded his Father, who died in the Earl of Essex's Coach, as he was carrying to Warwick. Now, when we returned from following the Enemy, the Night came soon upon us, whereas, in all Probability, we had gained the Victory, and made an End of the War, if we had only kept our Ground, after we had beaten the Enemy, and not left our Foot naked to their Horse and Foot: And, to add to our Misfortune, a careless Soldier, in fetching Powder (where a Magazin was) clapt his Hand carelessly into a Barrel of Powder, with his Match lighted betwixt his Fingers, whereby much Powder was blown up, and many kill'd. The Night then soon parted both Armies, and both Sides pretended to the Victory; but since we retired up the Hill, from whence we came down, and left the Champ de Battaile to the Enemy, I think we had no great Reason to brag of a Victory; For the King, with a great Part of the Army marched that Night up to Wormington Hills, it being a hard Frost, and very cold. But that which made us think we had the Victory, was that whereas the Earl of Essex was commanded to hinder our getting to London before him, by this Battle we were nearest London, and might have been there much before the Earl of Essex, if we had taken right Measures: So that it may be said of this Battle, *Victus uterque fuit, Victor uterque fuit*. There is always great Difference in Relation of Battles, which do usually according to the Interest of the Relators; when it is certain, that, in a Battle, the next Man can hardly make a true Relation of the Actions of him that is next him; for in such a Hurry and Smoke as in a set Field, a Man takes Notice of nothing but what relates to his own Safety: So that no Man give a clear Account of particular Passages.

On Monday Morning, being next after the Battle, several Parties were sent down to view the Dead, the greatest Part of the Enemy, having retired in the Night to the Town of Keinton, which was near them; and Mr Adrian Scroop having seen his Father fall (being much wounded) desired the Duke of Lenox to speak to the King, that one of his Coaches might go with him, to bring up his Father's Body; which being granted, he found his Father stript, with several very dangerous Wounds, and that he was alive; Whereupon he lapt him up in his Cloak, and brought him in the Coach, where he was presently dressed by the King's Chirurgeons, and by their Care and Skill was cured, and lived many Years after, tho' he had seventeen Wounds, and had died upon the Place, but that the Coldness of the Weather stopp'd the Bleeding of his Wounds, which saved also several other Mens Lives that were wounded. We rested all Monday upon the Hill, to put our Army in Order; and seeing the Enemy (as we thought) were preparing to retire, Prince Rupert was resolved, that Monday Night, to go down the Hill, at a Place called Sun-Rising, a Mile on

our left Hand, and to fall upon the Enemy in their Retreat; and on Tuesday Morning very early, the Prince, with a strong Detachment of Horse and Dragoons, fell into Keinton, where he found all Houses full of wounded and sick Men, with divers Officers, and several Waggons loaded with Muskets and Pikes, and all Sorts of Ammunition, preparing to follow the Army, which was marched towards Warwick. These Arms were extremely wanting in our Army, and were a very good Supply for some Hundreds of Welchmen were so brave, that they had no Arms but Pitchforks, and such like Tools, and many only with good Cudgels, yet they went down the Hill as eagerly to fight, as the best armed Men among them. And indeed most of the Gentry in North Wales most willingly engaged for the King, and raised what Men they possibly could for his Service, while the King stayed in Shropshire; and the Gentry of that Country did in a most particular Manner shew their Zeal for his Majesty's Service, there being scarce a Family of any Consideration, in any of those Counties, that was not engaged for the King; as the Salisburys, the Mostyns, the Trevors, the Thelwells, and several others whose Families I have forgotten: But this I certainly knew, that none served the King with grater Loyalty and Affection, than all the Gentry of North Wales, wherein the Family of Bulkeley must not be forgotten, who were always very eminent for the King's Service.

After this Battle of Edgehill, it was resolved the King should hasten to London, and that if he could get thither before the Earl of Essex, with his Army, the King would be certainly well received, and, in all Probability, make an End of the War, of which the Parliament was in such Fear, that several Expresses were sent to the Earl of Essex, to make all possible Haste with Army to London, and prevent the King's Coming before him: But our King trifled away his Time in taking Banbury and Broughton House, which belonged to the Lord Say, Places of very little Consideration and so marched very slowly towards London, where the Earl of Essex with his Army arrived before him, tho' the King's Army was much nearer London, after the Battle of Edgehill, if right Use had been made of it. By Judgment of most, the Victory in this Battle was the King's, because he gain'd his Point, a clear Passage for his Way to London; of which the Parliament was so sensible, that not only reiterated Orders were sent to hasten the Earl of Essex's March, but all the Shops, both in London and Westminster, were shut up the next Day after the Battle, that the People might be in a better Readiness to defend themselves and the Parliament.

But alas! the King retarded his March, of which the Earl of Essex taking hold, got between the King and London; and in this our March towards London, the Parliament sent a Petition to the King, in a much humbler Strain than their former Messages to the King used to be; which Petition the King liked well, and resolved to reside at his Castle of Windsor, there to receive the Parliament's Propositions: But News being then brought to the King, that Essex was advanced towards him, and had possessed the Passes of Windsor, Kingston, and Acton, and that if Essex should also take Brentford, the King would be wholly surrounded, and deprived either of moving or subsisting: Whereupon a Council of War was called, and Resolutions taken, that the King's Army should advance to Brentford, where, at the first, we found considerable Opposition. The Prince of Wales's Regiment of Horse, where I was, being drawn up behind a great Hedge, where the Enemy had planted some Cannon, which we saw not, till they played so fast upon us, that we lost

some Men, and were obliged to draw off and retire for our better Security; and upon our Foot's coming up, we beat the Regiments of Hambden and Hollis out of the Town, took several Prisoners and Arms, and sunk two great Barks in the River of Thames, with many Soldiers: And as two other Regiments came up to their Succour, they were also beaten, and we took some Colours and Cannon, and were intire Masters of Brentford, until the Night; but then finding the Earl of Essex, with his Army, was drawn out upon Turnham Green, with the Trained Bands of the City, and that the Enemy's Army was double to the King's, and that most of our Ammunition was spent; it was therefore thought fit by the Council, that the King should retreat. Whereupon the King retired that Night to the Lord Cottington's House, near Hounslow, and we marched the next Day by Colebrook, towards Reading and Oxford, the first of which Places was garrisoned, and Oxford was the King's Head Quarters, where he made his Residence. I can give this Relation with Certainty, being present in all that March, and in the Actions at Brentford, till the King's return to Oxford, and then the Earl of Northampton was commanded to Banbury, which was given him for Winter Quarters, with Orders to raise a Regiment of Horse.

Sir Richard Bulstrode. *Memoirs and Reflections*. (1721).