

## THE SIEGE OF BERGEN-OP-ZOOM.

THE bravery displayed by Lord John Murray's Highlanders at Fontenoy opened the eyes of government to the importance of securing the military services of the clans. It was, therefore, determined to repair, in part, the loss sustained in that well-fought action, by raising a second regiment in the Highlands; and authority to that effect was granted to the Earl of Loudon. By the influence of the noblemen, chiefs, and gentlemen of the country, whose sons and connexions were to be appointed officers, a body of 1,250 men was raised, of whom 750 assembled at Inverness, and the remainder at Perth. The whole were formed into twelve companies, under the colonelcy of the Earl of Loudon, the lieutenant-colonelcy of the Duke of Argyle, and the subordinate officership of gentlemen who were connected with some of the most distinguished families in the Highlands, and who received their commissions under date of 8th June, 1745.

The regiment embarked on the 30th of May 1747 for Flanders; but it did not join the Duke of Cumberland's army till after the battle of Lafeldt, on the 2d of July. Though disappointed of the opportunity which this battle would have given them of distinguishing themselves, another soon offered for the display of their gallantry. Marshal Saxe having determined to attack the strong fortress of Bergen-op-Zoom, with an army of 25,000 men under General Count Lowendahl, all the disposable forces in Brabant, including London's Highlanders, were sent to defend the lines, which were strongly fortified. To relieve the garrison, consisting of six battalions, and to preserve a communication with the

country, eighteen battalions occupied the lines. The fortress, which was considered impregnable, was defended by 250 pieces of cannon. The siege was carried on unremittingly from the 15th of July till the 17th of September, during which interval many sorties were made. In the Hague Gazette, an account is given of one of these, which took place on the 25th of July, in which it is stated "that the Highlanders, who were posted in Fort Rôuro, which covers the lines of Bergen-op-Zoom, made a sally, sword in hand, in which they were so successful as to destroy the enemy's grand battery, and to kill so many of their men, that Count Lowendahl beat a parley, in order to bury the dead. To this it was answered, that had he attacked the place agreeably to the rules of war, his demand would certainly have been granted; but as he had begun the siege, like an incendiary, by setting fire to the city with red-hot balls, a resolution had been taken neither to ask nor grant any suspension of arms."

Having made breaches in a ravelin and two bastions, the besiegers made an unexpected assault on the night of the 16th of September, and throwing themselves into the fosse, mounted the breaches, forced open a sally port, and, entering the place, ranged themselves along the ramparts, almost before the garrison had assembled. Cronstrun, the old governor, and many of his officers were asleep, and so sudden and unexpected was the attack, that several of them flew to ranks in their shirts. Though the possession of the ramparts sealed the fate of the town, the Scottish troops were not disposed to surrender it without a struggle. The French were opposed by two regiments of the Scottish brigade, in the pay of the States-general, who, by their firmness, checked the progress of the enemy, and enabled the governor and garrison to recover from their surprise. The Scots assembled in the market-place, and attacked the French with such vigour that they drove them from street to street, till, fresh reinforce-

ments pouring in, they were compelled to retreat in their turn,—disputing every inch as they retired, and fighting till two-thirds of their number fell on the spot, killed or severely wounded,—when the remains brought off the old governor, and joined the troops in the lines.

The troops in the lines, most unaccountably, retreated immediately, and the enemy thus became masters of the whole navigation of the Scheldt. “Two battalions,” says an account of the assault published in the *Hague Gazette*, “of the Scottish brigade have, as usual, done honour to their country,—which is all we have to comfort us for the loss of such brave men, who, from 1,450, are now reduced to 330 men,—and those have valiantly brought their colours with them, which the grenadiers twice recovered from the midst of the French at the point of the bayonet. The Swiss have also suffered, while others took a more speedy way to escape danger.” In a history of this memorable siege, the brave conduct of the Scots is also thus noticed: “It appears that more than 300 of the Scottish brigade fought their way through the enemy, and that they have had 19 officers killed and 18 wounded. Lieutenants Francis and Allan Maclean of the brigade were taken prisoners, and carried before General Lowendahl, who thus addressed them, ‘Gentlemen, consider yourselves on parole. If all had conducted themselves as you and your brave corps have done, I should not now be master of Bergen-op-Zoom.’”

The loss of a fortress hitherto deemed impregnable was deeply felt by the allies. The eyes of all Europe had been fixed upon this important siege; and when the place fell strong suspicions were entertained of treachery in the garrison. Every thing had been done by the people of the United Provinces to enable the soldiers to hold out: they were allowed additional provisions of the best quality, and cordials were furnished for the sick and dying. Large sums of money were collected to be presented to the soldiers, if they made a

brave defence; and £17,000 were collected in one day in Amsterdam, to be applied in the same way, if the soldiers compelled the enemy to raise the siege. Every soldier who carried away a gabion from the enemy was paid a crown, and such was the activity of the Scots, that some of them gained ten crowns a-day in this kind of service. Those who ventured to take the burning fuse out of the bombs of the enemy, (and there were several who did so) received ten or twelve ducats. In this remarkable siege the French sustained an enormous loss, exceeding 22,000 men; that of the garrison did not exceed 4,000.

The following anecdote of faithful attachment is told by Mrs. Grant, in her 'Superstitions of the Highlanders.' Captain Fraser of Culduthel, an officer of the Black Watch, was a volunteer at this celebrated siege, as was likewise his colonel, Lord John Murray. Captain Fraser was accompanied by his servant, who was also his foster-brother. A party from the lines was ordered to attack and destroy a battery raised by the enemy. Captain Fraser accompanied this party, directing his servant to remain in the garrison. "The night was pitch dark, and the party had such difficulty in proceeding that they were forced to halt for a short time. As they moved forward, Captain Fraser felt his path impeded, and putting down his hand to discover the cause, he caught hold of a plaid, and seized the owner, who seemed to grovel on the ground. He held the caitiff with one hand, and drew his dirk with the other, when he heard the imploring voice of his foster-brother. 'What the devil brought you here?' 'Just love of you and care of your person.' 'Why so, when your love can do me no good; and why encumber yourself with a plaid?' 'Alas! how could I ever see my mother had you been killed or wounded, and I not been there to carry you to the surgeon, or to Christian burial? and how could I do either without any plaid to wrap you in?' Upon inquiry it was found that the poor man had

crawled out on his knees and hands between the sentinels, then followed the party to some distance, till he thought they were approaching the place of assault, and then again crept in the same manner on the ground, beside his master, that he might be near him unobserved." Captain Fraser was unfortunately killed a few days thereafter, by a random shot, while looking over the ramparts.

After the loss of Bergen op Zoom, Loudon's Highlanders joined the Duke of Cumberland's army; and at the peace of 1748, they returned to Scotland, and were reduced at Perth in June of the same year.