

# The Defense of Gibraltar

Matthew Bishop

---

1704

The morning we got thither, the Spaniards were discovered that came up the back of the hill. Then there was a command for twenty of our men to go on shore with firearms. I was glad to hear that I was pitched upon for one and the sailors, hearing that I was to go, were all eager for going. They knew me to be well versed in the affair, as I had been upon a like expedition before. When the officers had determined who should go on shore, we got into our boat, and made all the haste we could; for we had them continually in our eyes. We were all in high spirits and fit to do execution, not being at all daunted at their numbers; for they were like swarms of bees upon the hill, and in great confusion, and we like lions in the valley seeking whom we might devour, as our duty required. At it we went, loading and firing as fast as we could. Our men had a great advantage of the Spaniards in firing up hill, and it was a very great advantage they were not obliged to wade; for the water often overflows that part where we were obliged to engage them. We were happy enough in missing that tide; had it been otherwise, we had been but in a bad situation. The Spaniards rolled pieces of rocks down the hill and wounded a great many of our men, our advantage in firing was more than all they could do. When they found they could do no good they laid down their firearms.

Col. Bor was a man that had great compassion on a soldier, and would see that they were rightly dealt with upon all occasions; and exerted himself as far as in his power in his Queen and Country's cause. I am sensible he behaved valiantly and loved to see his soldiers courageous and bold in their duty. We stayed ashore all night, and in the morning returned to our ship. They found the duty was too hard for the soldiers, and then there were orders sent for ten men of a ship to go on shore again. Wehn we went over we found that the works were very much demolished, for there was not a gun that we could fire one day without its being unfit for service the next; for the Spaniards would dismount them. At Will's Battery I have seen the very muzzles of our guns broke with their cannon balls: the Round Tower was demolished, and the North Bastion, the curtain that is between the bridge and the North Bastion, they battered to such a degree that a coach and horses might have gone through in several places. We found the duty extremely hard, for what they beat down by day we were obliged to clear away by night. We went to work again, and made a trench under the wall lest they should storm us. Then we made a large breastwork under the bridge in the two arches. They sent us a great many bombs, once I thought they had sent us one too many; for I was at work just in the Bastion, and there came one swift as lightning. I had much ado to get out of its way, for as soon as it fell, I fell by it; and found it was better to do so, than to step over it, for it blew up in a moment, which made the ground tremble. I was not above a yard from it when it fell, and had I been so unwise as to have stood up when it fell, I should have been lifted up by its wings. I was hardened in that employment, and a great many of our men ran in a terrible fright,

thinking that I was blown up. They said, when they saw me we are glad to see you alive. I thanked them for their regard for me, and told them I never minded a bomb at all only to observe its falling and step out of the way, and fall with my face to the ground, which I would advise you to do if ever they should drop near you; for it will prevent their effect. They said they were surprised that it did not hurt me, as I was so near it, and it killed a man a furlong off. I told them the reason was this, that when a bomb falls, it rises in a moment again and ascends perpendicular, breaks and spreads to a vast distance; and when the pieces of steel fall they do great damage and destroy men at a great distance. Wherefore I would have you always observe the rule I have given you. They returned me a thousand thanks, and we continued making our works by night, and in the day time we were employed in drawing guns from the New Mole to Will's Battery.

We had very indifferent ground some part of the way, therefore we were obliged to draw in gears, in the same manner as horses do. But when we came among the rocks we were obliged to lay deal spars, and parbuckle them up with hausers; and by these means we haled them up to the Battery. When we had drawn all the cannon up, and provided for our safeguard, we divided the prisoners equally, so that each ship might have its share. When we had done we went merrily along, and every party went to its boat, to make for their ships; we had a signal to be as expeditious as possible, so we rowed away for life, as it was our duty to do. When we came to the ship there was nothing extraordinary to be done only orders to take the prisoners to Lisbon.

---

*Life and Adventures of Matthew Bishop, 1744.*