

XXXIX.

*The Cavaliers defeated at Ellesmere by Col. Mytton,
January 12th.*

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XXXIX.
A.D. 1644.

In the first place, I shall inform you that the cons[cient]ious and well-affected gentry in Shropshire, seeing the illegal proceedings of the Commissioners of Array, and daily feeling the grand oppressions that ensued therefrom, and being too sensible of the dangers which, like a deluge had overflowed not only the most part of that county, but a great part of the Kingdom, some good patriots of them applied themselves to the honourable Houses of Parliament, propounding some remedies of redress, and obtained an order, intrusting some principal of the best affected gentry to be a Committee for the public good of that county,¹ to contribute, contrive, act, and do their best endeavours, as well for the clearing of the said county from their great oppressions, as also (as they saw need and convenient occasion) to assist Sir William Brereton, or any others, their good friends and fellow-sufferers, burdened with like grievances. To which purpose, and in pursuance of the relieving of their poor oppressed countrymen, they made choice of

¹ This Committee was appointed by an Ordinance of Parliament for the association of the Counties of Warwick, Stafford, and Salop, on the 10th April, 1643. The Shropshire Committee, therein nominated, comprised the following :—William Pierpoint, Sir John Corbet, Bart., Sir Gilbert Cornwall, Kt., Sir Morton Briggs, Bart., Richard Moore, Thomas Mytton (the above Col.), Robert Corbet, of Stanwardine in the Wood, Andrew Lloyd (the Master Lloyd mentioned above), Thomas Nichols, Humphrey Mackworth (the Master Mackworth above-named), John Corbet, of Aulston, Launcelot Lee, and Robert Talbot, Esquires, and Samuel Moore, Thomas Hunt (also above-named), Hercules Kinnersley, William Rowley, Thomas Knight, John Proud, and John Lloyd, gentlemen. Of these the Earl of Essex was recommended by the Ordinance to appoint Sir John Corbet to be Col.-General of the Shropshire forces. (K. P. 118—7.) I have not discovered whether he was so appointed or not. Col. Mytton's name figures hereafter as the chief mover for the Parliament in this county.

Wem, a town not far from Shrewsbury, which the enemy was possessed of. This town they began to fortify and garrison, but before they could complete their works, and had not scarce three hundred soldiers, and only Colonel Mytton, a gentleman of quality in that county and of approved courage and fidelity, now chosen high sheriff for that county. He, with Master Mackworth, Master Hunt, and Master Lloyd, three of the best-affected of that committee, and most zealous patriots, did valiantly, courageously, and resolutely defend this town, not then fully fortified against two days' several furious assaults of the Lord Capel and the malignant gentry of several counties, having at least 4,000 soldiers; and with an undaunted fortitude repulsed them, having slain or wounded most of the commanders and officers that led up their men to the assaults, as the enemy themselves then confessed.¹ But you shall see how God blesseth small beginnings that are laid upon good foundations. I will not repeat former actions of this valiant Colonel and garrison (exceeding worthy of a lasting memory); I shall only come to the present narration.

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Lately a ship was sent from Bristol, with arms and ammunition, to furnish the rebels at Chester, and their adherents, the besiegers of Nantwich; but such was the loyalty and faithfulness of the fore-mast men to the good of the King and the Parliament (to their good be it spoken), that they forced the corrupt master and officers to tack about for Liverpool instead of Chester, and furnished the honest Lancashire men instead of the rebels at Chester.

Now, the rebels being thus disappointed and disfurnished, and the inhuman upstart, L. Byron, having besieged Nantwich, sent a strong convoy to Shrewsbury for arms and ammunition, both to supply themselves and Chester. The most vigilant and valiant commander, Col. Mytton, had by his espials secret knowledge thereof, but prudently and providently made neither motion, nor took any seeming notice of it until they had been at Shrewsbury, where the rebels furnished themselves with eight large barrels of powder, seven hundred weight of match, and other ammunition. In their return they quartered the first night at Ellesmere, eight miles

¹ This was on the 17th and 18th of the preceding October. See Document xxv. ante, p. 86.

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from the garrison of Wem; and within fourteen miles of that garrison four thousand more of the rebels were quartered, which I conceive made the convoy over-confident that the noble Colonel durst not peep beyond his works. But he that very night, being the 12th of this instant [January], with a party of horse and foot, in much silence, marched to Ellesmere, and undescried fell upon the enemy in his quarters, where besides what were slain, took prisoners Sir Nicholas Byron, Governor of Chester, Sir Richard Willis, Sergeant-Major-General of the horse (who once at Winchester, contrary to his engaged faith, made an escape to the Lord Grandison when they were taken by the Parliament's forces), together with his brother Major Willis, Capt. Offley, Capt. Hatton, Capt. Rixam [Dixon in another account], and one other captain, besides a hundred inferior officers and troopers, and two hundred and fifty horse and arms, 30 of these horse being the primest in these parts. He took also all the powder, match, and arms that the said convoy had furnished themselves withal at Shrewsbury, which renders the exploit more famous and of greater consequence, for in all probability the enemy is in want of powder, and if that noble Colonel were but timely furnished and supplied, and his most honourable Major-General competently dispatched and hastened away, those parts would (if the time and season be not neglected) be quickly cleared from those rapines and oppressions wherewith they are now deplorably infested.¹

¹ From a pamphlet entitled "A True Relation of a notable Surprise and eminent Defeat given to the Rebels at Ellesmere, &c., by that vigilant . . . commander . . . Col. Mytton, commander-in-chief of the forces in Shropshire, under the Earl of Denbigh. Printed according to order for G. B. and R. W. (January 26, 1644)." (K. P. 140-9.)