

= Battle of the Lippe =

The Battle of the Lippe was a cavalry action fought on 2 September 1595 on the banks of the Lippe river , in Germany , between a corps of Spanish cavalry led by Juan de Córdoba and a corps of Dutch cavalry , supported by English troops , led by Philip of Nassau . The Dutch statholder Maurice of Nassau , taking advantage of the fact that the bulk of the Spanish army was busied in operations in France , besieged the town of Groenlo in Gelderland , but the elderly governor of the citadel of Antwerp , Cristóbal de Mondragón , organized a relief army and forced Maurice to lift the siege . Mondragón next moved to Wesel , positioning his troops on the southern bank of the Lippe river to cover Rheinberg from a Dutch attack . Maurice aimed then , relying on his superior army , to entice Mondragón into a pitched battle , planning to use an ambush to draw the Spanish army into a trap . However , the plan was discovered by the Spanish commander , who organized a counter @-@ ambush .

The Dutch intended to overtake a Spanish foraging convoy and deliver it into their camp in order to draw the Spanish army in pursuit to the banks of the Lippe , where Maurice was awaiting with the Dutch States Army in order of battle . However , Mondragón reinforced the escort of the convoy and hid a large force of cavalry in a wood nearby under his lieutenant Juan de Córdoba . Thanks to Mondragón 's long experience , the Spanish routed the Dutch force and inflicted a number of casualties upon Philip of Nassau 's men , including himself and several other high @-@ ranking Dutch and English officers in the Dutch army .

= = Background = =

In 1595 , Henry IV of France declared war on Spain in response to Philip II 's continued support of the Catholic League of France , and formed an alliance with Elizabeth I of England and the Dutch Republic , who were engaged in their own wars against the Spanish Crown . The Catholic Netherlands were , consequently , caught between two fronts , and French and Dutch forces even tried to create a corridor linking their respective states through the Prince @-@ Bishopric of Liège . The new Governor @-@ General of the Spanish Netherlands , the Count of Fuentes , directed his efforts against Picardy and Cambrésis , leaving a few troops to defend the loyal provinces from a Dutch attack .

In July , while Fuentes was busied in the siege of Doullens , Maurice of Nassau , statholder of the Dutch Republic , assembled a force of 6 @,@ 000 infantry , some cavalry companies and 16 artillery pieces of the Dutch States Army , and led them under the walls of Groenlo , a medium @-@ sized town in the County of Zutphen . Its northern flank defended by the Slinge , a stream of the Berkel river , Groenlo was fortified with five bulwarks and garrisoned by 11 infantry companies from Count Herman van den Bergh 's regiment numbering 600 troops under Jan van Stirum , a German officer , and four small artillery pieces .

On receiving news of the siege , Cristóbal de Mondragón , the elderly Spanish governor of Antwerp , whom Fuentes had left in command of the Spanish forces opposite to the Dutch , collected a little army gathering forces of several garrisons and marched to Groenlo through Brabant and Gelderland . Mondragón 's force comprised two Spanish tercios (under Luis de Velasco and Antonio de Zúñiga) , an Irish regiment under William Stanley , a Swiss regiment and 1 @,@ 300 cavalry under Juan de Córdoba , which , having crossed the Meuse at Venlo , were joined by Frederick van den Bergh 's German regiment .

At over 80 , Mondragón was still able to mount on horseback , though he had to be helped by two men and could only wear light armour . He first came to prominence at the Battle of Mühlberg , in 1547 , and was one of the few Spanish officers of good fame in the rebel provinces , being portrayed in a positive light by contemporaneous Dutch authors such as Hugo Grotius and Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft . Mondragón planned not only to relieve Groenlo , but also to lure Maurice into a pitched battle . The Dutch general , however , on receiving news of his enemy 's march , set fire to supplies , tools and ammunitions gathered for the siege and retreated two miles out of Groenlo . Mondragón could therefore resupply the town unmolested .

= = Prelude = =

After Groenlo was secured , Mondragón marched south to Rheinberg to cover the town from a Dutch attack . He encamped his army near Wesel , at Dinslaken , while Maurice followed him and took up positions at Bislich , both armies being separated by the Lippe river . The Spanish position was strong ; the rearguard and the left flank covered by the Rhine and the right flank by the Lippe and a range of moorland hills called Testerburg . For several weeks both armies looked at each other , often skirmishing when both cavalries sallied to forage . As time passed , the Spanish foragers were forced to look for victuals two or three leagues far away from their camp . Maurice took the opportunity to plan a mock ambush on Mondragón 's foraging convoy aiming to lure him into a general action in which he could destroy the Spanish army . Mondragón also hoped to lure his enemy into a trap .

On 1 September , Maurice gave the command of the ambush to his favourite commander , his cousin Philip of Nassau . Maurice instructed him to cross the Lippe river the following day at dawn , hide in a wood next to which the Spanish convoy was expected to pass , and fall on its guard . Maurice 's goal was to seize the foraging convoy , separate it from the escort and lead it to the Dutch camp , thus forcing Mondragón to intervene with a larger force . Then , after the appearance of Mondragón with the main army , Nassau was to retreat to the Dutch camp , thus luring the Spanish army into an ambush . For his task , Nassau received the command of some 500 or 700 Dutch and English horsemen and was accompanied by his two brothers , Ernst Casimir and Ludwig Gunther , as well as several other Dutch officers , Count Ernst of Solms , Paul and Marcellus Bacx , and the English captains Nicholas Parker , Cutler and Robert Vere .

The Dutch intentions were anticipated by the Spanish . According to Joseph de La Pise , a French jurist hired by Maurice 's half brother and successor Frederick Henry to write a history of the Princes of Orange , Mondragón had learned of the ambush from English soldiers who had deserted from the Dutch colours , but the Italian Jesuit Angello Gallucci claims that it was Spanish spies who informed Mondragón , who had used spies to gather information on the enemy since the siege of Zierikzee , in 1576 . In any case , the Spanish general took measures to turn Nassau 's surprise into a trap . The convoy , normally guarded by 300 infantry and 150 cavalry , was reinforced by 300 musketeers and a large force of cavalry under Mondragón 's lieutenant , Juan de Córdoba .

= = Action = =

On 2 September , at dawn , the Dutch force crossed the Lippe across a pontoon bridge . Maurice awaited them with 5 @, @ 000 infantry and the rest of his cavalry arranged for the battle in the hills near Wesel , along the opposite riverbank . Philip of Nassau divided his troops into four squadrons : the first one of 125 men under the drossaard of Sallandt , the second one of 125 men under the Count of Kinsky , the third one , those in which Nassau and his brothers marched , of 150 soldiers under Lieutenant Balen , and the last , closing the way , of 120 men under the English captain Nicholas Parker . Having arrived at Krudenburg , Nassau sent 40 chosen men from the companies led by Balen to surprise the foraging horses . On finding a force much larger than they expected , the Dutch officers thought that something was wrong and sent a report back to Philip of Nassau . The Dutch commander , nevertheless , believed that it was only the convoy 's escort and moved on with his troops and his entourage to attack the Spanish cavalry , aiming to prevent its escape .

The Dutch officers ' report was not mistaken : early in the morning , two Spanish scouts had found the track of the Dutch force crossing the river , and Mondragón , anticipating them , had deployed his cavalry beyond a beechwood , the countryside southwards the Lippe being covered by small woods alternating with moorlands . Besides the troops guarding the convoy , Juan de Córdoba had the command of at least seven cavalry companies : those of Hendrik van den Bergh , Girolamo Caraffa , Carlo Maria Caracciolo , Paulo Emilio Martinengo , his own company , ' s @-@ Hertogenbosch lances under Adolf van den Bergh and Sancho de Leyva 's company . Other authors also list Alonso Mendo 's company . Mondragón had informed the guard of the convoy of the Dutch

intentions and encouraged the soldiers to hold their ground , promising them that he was behind them with the whole Spanish army to come in relief .

Commanding 75 lances from Kinsky 's company , and followed by the bulk of his force , Nassau passed through a narrow path in a small forest , and , coming out to open field , was surprised by the Spanish troops , namely by those under Hendrik van den Bergh , followed by Carlo Maria Caracciolo and the ' s @-@ Hertogenbosch lances . Van den Bergh 's harquebusiers , discovering the Dutch column emerging from the forest , fired a volley and , turning right , clashed with the Dutch scouts , starting the action . There was then a firece fight . The Dutch troops were formed into eight squadrons , but caught by surprise in a narrow passage , the Dutch soldiers were unable to use their lances , so they were forced to defend themselves with swords and pistols . Philip of Nassau , his brothers and their cousin Ernst von Solms were seriously wounded and dismounted at the beginning the fight . Kinsky 's and Balen 's troops , coming in relief , were unable to rescue the wounded commanders , and some Dutch soldiers started to flee from the battlefield . Nicholas Parker , however , managed to collect the fugitives and , renewing the action , he put disorder into the Spanish cavalry . The encounter turned then a general action out the wood , in open ground .

At first the Dutch were winning the action , but after they put in disorder two or three Spanish squadrons , Paulo Emilio Martinengo charged ahead his company on their flank and in turn routed a Dutch squadron , which allowed Córdoba to regroup his troops and renew the attack , this time with success . Despite the stubborn resistance offered by the Dutch troops , they were finally broken and fled in a disorderly fashion , attempting to save themselves before the Lippe river . Córdoba sent his cavalry to follow them up , and they found that some of the Dutch soldiers , having been unable to find a good place to ford the river , had drowned . The Spanish captives were freed , and the spoils taken by the Dutch recovered .

= = Aftermath = =

The battle is noted for the heavy death toll among the Dutch commanders . Philip of Nassau was mortally wounded at the beginning of the action , shot at point blank range through the body with an harquebus , his robes being set on fire . Robert Vere , brother of the English colonel Horace Vere , was slain by a lance thrust in the face . The drossaard of Zallandt and Count Ferdinand Kinsky were also killed . Count Ernst of Solms was seriously wounded and captured . Together with Philip , he was carried to Rheinberg , where both soldiers were visited by Mondragón and their Catholic cousins , the Van den Bergh brothers , and treated by the Spanish surgeons . Despite all the attentions , both Dutch commanders died of the wounds they had sustained ; Nassau the night after the battle , and Solms three days later . Count Ernst Casimir was captured and ransomed for 10 @,@ 000 florins . Mondragón dispatched him to Maurice of Nassau with the bodies of the dead counts , which were buried with honours at Arnhem .

As for the battle losses , sources vary . The Flemish Protestant Guillaume Baudart set Dutch losses at 88 horses , 83 prisoners and 24 killed . The Italian Cardinal Guido Bentivoglio claimed that more than 300 Dutch soldiers were slain as opposed to about 60 Spanish casualties . The Roman Jesuit Angelo Gallucci also wrote of 300 Dutch casualties . The Spanish soldier and writer Carlos Coloma set the Spanish loss as 19 men killed and claimed that the Dutch force lost three flags and about 400 serviceable horses . On the Spanish side the only soldiers of note among the casualties were Caraffa , Martinengo and Caracciolo , all of whom were wounded , but not mortally . Joseph de La Pise stated that the Dutch took seven Spanish prisoners and 15 horses . According to Antonio Carnero , accountant in the Spanish army , an envoy of the King of France to the Dutch camp was present at the battle and found later among the fatalities .

The English author Edward Grimeston wrote , in his book A General History of the Netherlands , that the battle of the Lippe " was a pettie battaile of young and hot bloods , who prooved but bad Marchants that got nothing " . Even though it was only a small battle , it was celebrated joyfully at the Spanish camp before Cambrai . Three salvos were fired upon the city by 87 artillery pieces and 6 @,@ 000 muskets and arquebuses . The North @-@ American historian John Lothrop Motley highlighted the key role played by the 91 @-@ year @-@ old Mondragón in the Spanish victory :

This skirmish on the Lippe has no special significance in a military point of view , but it derives more than a passing interest , not only from the death of many a brave and distinguished soldier , but for the illustration of human vigour triumphing , both physically and mentally , over the infirmities of old age , given by the achievement of Christopher Mondragon . Alone he had planned his expedition across the country from Antwerp , alone he had insisted on crossing the Rhine , while younger soldiers hesitated ; alone , with his own active brain and busy hands , he had outwitted the famous young chieftain of the Netherlands , counteracted his subtle policy , and set the counter @-@ ambush by which his choicest cavalry were cut to pieces , and one of his bravest generals slain . So far could the icy blood of ninety @-@ two prevail against the vigour of twenty @-@ eight .

The Spanish and Dutch armies spent 16 more days observing each other from their encampments , but no action of importance ensued . Maurice of Nassau laid a bridge over the Rhine and tried to take Meurs by surprise , but the enterprise was discovered . He also committed Count William Louis of Nassau @-@ Dillenburg to intercept five Spanish companies sent by Mondragón to lodge in Twente , but the Spaniards managed to reach Enschede , leaving only a few chariots with supplies in Dutch hands . On 11 October , lacking of forage , Mondragón retired back to Brabant . Maurice aimed to cut off his retreat , but the Spaniard succeeded in bringing his troops to a secure position . Mondragón re @-@ crossed the Meuse in November and distributed his troops in different towns . Before crossing the river the Swiss mercenaries were paid and liscended . On 4 January 1596 , the elderly general died in the citadel of Antwerp . On his deathbed he wrote a letter to Philip II asking for the castellany of Antwerp for his son Alonso and a company of lances for his grandson Cristóbal , but both requests were denied .