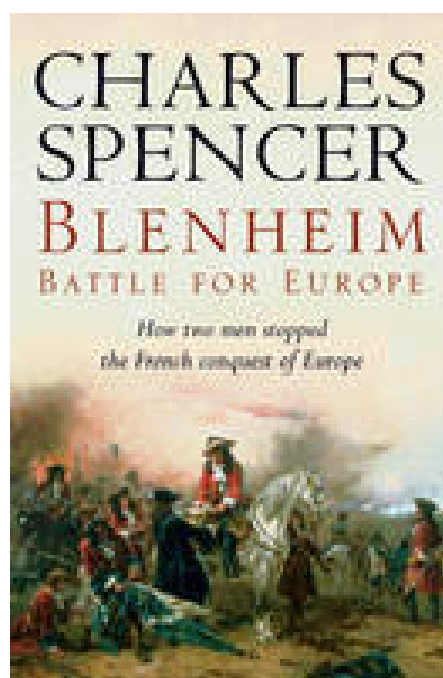




Blenheim

Charles Spencer

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By the summer of 1704 Louis XIV's vast armies dominated Europe. France defeated every alliance formed against her and Louis was poised to extend his frontier to the Rhine and install a French prince on the throne of Spain. Two men saved Europe from French military domination: the Duke of Marlborough and Prince Eugene of Savoy. Marlborough masterminded a brilliant campaign, working with Eugene to surprise the French invaders inside Germany. The rival armies clashed in August and the hitherto unbeaten French were utterly destroyed. Blenheim was a major turning point in European history. Charles Spencer's narrative is drawn from original sources and moves seamlessly from the deliberations of kings and princes to the frontline soldiers. This is the battle that creates the enduring reputation of the British redcoat and shatters the image of the 'Sun King' and his mighty army.

Blenheim Details

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Author : Charles Spencer

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From Reader Review Blenheim for online ebook

Robert Hausladen says

An excellent account of the battle and the war to that point.

Spencer deals with the history leading up to the battle in great detail, sometimes to the level of slowing the narrative considerably. One cannot but admire however, the research that went into it.

'Aussie Rick' says

Battle for Europe by Charles Spencer is a riveting account of the great battle fought at Blenheim between Allied forces under the command of John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, and the French Army of Louis XIV on August 13, 1704. This is a splendidly told story, not only covering this pivotal battle but the events leading up to it and the main characters involved, including my favourite, Prince Eugene of Savoy.

This battle possibly changed the course of European history with the near destruction of Louis XIV's army. Up to this point the French Army under the command of many capable marshals had never been beaten. It was virtually unstoppable until it met Marlborough, the Captain-General of the armies fighting against France. In this book Charles Spencer describes the outcome of that meeting at Blenheim.

The story telling is first-rate, the narrative flows fast and smoothly, is packed full of information but never over-loads the reader with too much. The colour plates are excellent and the maps sufficient for the story however I would have appreciated maybe a few more.

The account of the fighting is excellent and once you start reading it's hard to stop. The narrative draws you into the fighting as the allied infantry assaults the villages of Blenheim and Oberglaue and then mass in the centre for the decisive offensive that was to break the back of the French forces. In the end the allies lost 12,000 men killed and wounded but the French lost more than three times that number.

This is an excellent account and adds much to the military history of this period, no decent library should be without a copy on their shelves.

Rindis says

Charles Spenser is certainly correct in his assertion that the Battle of Blenheim is one of the more important battles of history that is not well remembered today. This is more surprising in the English-speaking world since it was an English commander in charge, and English troops played an important part in the battle.

I'm not so sure how much I can go for his subtitle, "How Two Men Stopped The French Conquest Of Europe", however. It's not just a tag put on by the publisher, as it is certainly an idea present in his book, but it's not that well supported. The immediate consequences of a (likely) French victory in the War of Spanish Succession are obvious enough, but after some good analysis of internal French troubles one wonders just how well they could have done. Finally, I felt through the entire book that the story of the second man, Prince Eugène of Savoy, was not very well served by the narrative.

In fact, Blenheim suffers most from being too close to typical English accounts of the battle, instead being much more about the story of Marlborough than anything else. There are good reasons for this, but I was hoping that the book would move its center of gravity a little further away from the instinctual 'how great our man is' mode.

Thankfully, the book is at the same time much more than that, and very handy for the casual history reader. Spenser does spend quite a bit of time laying the groundwork, presenting the career of Louis XIV as whole, as well as William of Orange's resistance to his territorial aims in the Low Countries, and an account of the War of the League of Augsburg. So the background is very good, and takes up a fair chunk of the book.

The War of Spanish Succession itself is centered around Marlborough's campaigning, and isn't an account of the war as a whole; coverage after Blenheim drops off dramatically. That said, as with much else with the book, what is there is well done, and the Marlborough's move from the Low Countries to the Danube is handled very well.

As a casual history book, centered around Marlborough, it's very good, and other viewpoints from contemporary diaries are included to good effect, and I recommend it, but on that basis only. Prince Eugène's story is given, but not in as much detail. As a history of the War of Spanish Succession it fails from not giving proper attention to the rest of the war, and as a history of the Battle of Blenheim, it spends too much time on the rest.

Angus Ballantine says

Spencer achieves what many historians fail to do; he writes in a very readable manner that captures your interest from start to finish. His work reads almost like an adventure yarn; pacy, thrilling, a page turner but never losing sight of the basic requirement of any historic account and that is to be clear, concise and informative. For the layman an excellent introduction to what lay behind the War of the Spanish Succession and how one of the greatest battles in history was planned and won.

Robert Lloyd says

An enjoyable read about a little known battle

Kudos to the author for this well written book. The wars of Spanish Succession are a little known event in this day and age, however the author did a good job of pointing out how pivotal this war (and specifically Blenheim) was in changing the balance of power in Europe. I found the narrative to be engaging and entertaining, as well as informative. A good book.

Richard Howard says

When I first was made aware of the Duke of Marlborough, I also became mystified as to how he was so little known. As a general he never lost a battle! And, every town, he besieged, surrendered! He moulded the British army into a formidable fighting force but, more impressively, cared for the welfare of his men, ensuring they were well victualled, looked after when wounded (He can't be blamed for the poor medical knowledge of the time.) and paid on time. His generalship ensured that Europe did not become the fief of

France and altered Britain's status from the poor cousin of Europe to one of its major powers. All this and yet Nelson gets a column for, essentially, one naval victory! This book does a superb job of explaining the politics both of the Spanish Succession and England's political parties. (Nice to see that the Tories have always been the nasty party.) The book is well written, remarkably riveting and accessible. (Would that all military histories were.)

Stephen says

It definitely sets it in a context of a decisive victory in an era when these were the exception proving the rule. Possibly a little Anglocentric given the troop strengths involved but the sheer daring nature of Marlborough's Danube march & then fighting when by the rules of the day he should have withdrawn as outmanoeuvred is well invoked. More on his erstwhile partner Eugene wouldn't have gone amiss either.

Still a worthy effort.

Robert Morganbesser says

The rise of England's military

The Duke of Marlborough and Eugene, Prince of Savoy saved Europe from French domination. Two of the great military minds of their age, the lessons they laid on the battlefields of Europe are still studied today. This book is well worth reading.

Martin Wegner says

A fascinating read

A very well written account of an important but obscure European war. A great attention to detail really brings the story to life. This book has me excited to tackle Churchill's volumes on Marlborough.

Vikas Datta says

Rivetting read about this key battle at the dawn of the modern age...

David says

This happened by accident. I read two books in a row by the same author. I was very excited to read this book because I had heard of the Duke of Marlborough and the Battle of Blenheim, but didn't know much about them. The last book I read was fast-paced and interesting, so I hoped for more of the same. I was not disappointed. It was exciting and did a good job of putting the man and battle in its historical context. My problem with the book is the bias of the author. I did not realize Charles Spencer was married into the royal

family and is related to the Duke of Marlborough. He had a clear bias against the French the whole book, but what really got me at the end was him claiming that the battle was a victory of democracy over absolutism. Um. Marlborough served for QUEEN Anne and his allies were PRINCE Eugene and PRINCE Louis.

Bill Hennigan says

Thorough

An excellent overview of the importance of the battle, and of the time and social forces in play at the time.

Torsten says

I was deceived by the title. This book follows much more in the footsteps of Marlborough rather than telling the story of the battle. In addition whilst the author gives full credit to the role of Prince Eugene (the second of the two men) - the imperial perspective is not fully developed. This is primarily an english account.

As a battle account this book is inferior to Peter Englands fantastic "The Battle that Shook Europe" about the 1709 battle of Poltava and Michael Shaaras "The Killer Angels". In that these books achieve giving a much more intimate feel of the battles, which they portray. The battle and its highlight the cavalry charge the broke Louis XIV is over in mere pages.

But not a bad telling, as long as you are aware that what you are buying is a story of Marlborough to and from the Battle of Blenheim.

George says

A fascinating look at the War of the Spanish Succession in the early 18th century, with the decisive Battle of Blenheim in 1704 taking centre stage, and the history's protagonists being the heroic Prince Eugene of Savoy and Britain's military champion, John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough: Ancestor of Sir Winston Churchill.

The book follows their campaigns against France's Louis XIV, the Sun King, and his ambitions to dominate Europe, and paints Blenheim as 'a seminal moment in [Britain's] history,' as well as 'one of the most important battles in European history.'

It also works to highlight the importance of what happened in deciding upon the future of European affairs, as the author tells us that Blenheim has been 'largely forgotten.'

Immersive and riveting, putting the reader at the heart of the age's military events, it's a great read for anyone interested in 18th century Britain and Europe, as well as warfare. Highly recommended.

Akash Parakh says

It is a great episode in European History but the author fails to capture it captivantly. The chronology

seems inconsistent. That's why 3 stars !!
