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Battle of Waterloo—"A Horse! a Horse!"—Breakfast—Position—Disposition—Meeting of Friends—Dish of Power and Ball—Fricasee of Sword—End of First Course—Pounding—Brewing—Poisoning—Cutting and Maiming—Furious—Fanatizing—Charging—Cheering—Chasing—Opinionizing—Anecdotes—The End.

BATTLE OF WATERLOO, 15TH JUNE, 1815.

When I awoke—it was morning, at daylight, I found myself soaked with rain. I had slept so long and so soundly that I had, at first, but a very confused notion of my situation; nothing bright in it—but that my horse had gone—my companions were—I were to sleep. I was rather startled at finding that it was now none; nor could I rub my eyes clear enough to procure a sight of him, which was vexation enough: for independent of his value *as a horse*, his services were indispensable; and an aide-de-camp might as well think of going into action without his arms as without a supporter. But whatever my feelings might have been towards him, it was evident that he had none for me, from having drawn his sword and marched off. The chances of finding him again, amid ten thousand others, were about equal to the odds against the needle in a bundle of hay; but for once the single chance was gained, as, after a diligent search of an hour, he was discovered, between two artillery horses, abouot half a mile from where he broke loose.

The weather cleared up as the morning advanced; and, though everything remained quiet at the moment, we were confident that the day would not pass off without an engagement, and therefore, proceeded to put our arms in order, also, to get ourselves dried and made as comfortable as circumstances would permit.

We made a fire against the wall of Sir Andrew Barnard's cottage, and boiled a huge camp-kettle full of tea, mixed up with a suitable quantity of milk and sugar, for breakfast; and, as it stood on the edge of the high road, where all the baggages of the army had occasion to pass, in the early part of the morning, I believe almost every one of them, from the Duke downwards, claimed a cupful.

About nine o'clock, we received an order to retain a quantity of spare ammunition, in some secure place, and to send everything in the shape of baggage and baggage-animals to the rear. It, therefore, became evident that the Duke meant to give battle in his present position; and it was, at the same time, generally understood that a corps of thirty thousand Prussians were moving to our support.

About ten o'clock, an unusual bustle was observable among the staff-officers, and we soon after received an order to stand to our arms. The troops who had been stationed in our front during the night were then moved off to the right, and our division took up its fighting position.

Our battalion stood on what was considered the left centre of the position. We had our right resting on the Namur-road, about a hundred yards in rear of the farm-house of La Haye Sainte, and our left extending behind a broken hedge, which ran along the ridge to the left. Immediately in our front, and divided from La Haye Sainte only by the great road, stood a small knoll, with a sand-hole in its farthest side, which we occupied, as an advanced post, with three companies. The remainder of the division was formed in two lines; the first, consisting chiefly of light troops, behind the hedge, in continuation from the left of our battalion reserve; and the second, about a hundred yards in its rear. The guns were placed in the intervals between the brigades; two pieces were in the road way on our right, and a rocket-brigade in the centre.

The road had been cut through the rising ground, and was about twenty or thirty feet deep where our right rested, and, which, in a manner, separated us from all the troops beyond. The division, I believe under General Alten occupied the ground next to us, on the right. He had a light battalion of the German legion, posted inside of La Haye Sainte, and the household brigade of cavalry stood under cover of the rising ground behind him. On our left were some Hanoverians and Belgians, together with a brigade of British heavy dragoons, the royals, and Scotch greys.

These were all the observations on the disposition of our army that my situation gave me to make. The whole position seemed to be a gently rising ground, presenting no obstacle at any point, excepting the broken hedge in the front of our division, and it was only one in appearance, as it could be passed in every part.

Shortly after we had taken up our ground, some columns, from the enemy's left; were seen in motion towards Hugamont, and were soon warmly engaged with the right of our army. A cannon ball, too, came from the Lord knows where, for it was not fired at us, and took the head off our right hand man. That part of their position, in our immediate front, next claimed our undivided attention. It had hitherto been looking suspiciously innocent, with scarcely a human being upon it; but innumerable black specks were now seen taking post at regular distances in its front, and recognizing them as so many pieces of artillery, I knew, from experience, although nothing else was yet visible, that they were unerring symptoms of our not being destined to be idle spectators.

From the moment we took possession of the knoll, we had busied ourselves in collecting branches of trees and other things; for the purpose of making an *abatis* to block up the road between that and the farm-house, an soon completed one, which we thought looked sufficiently formidable to keep out the whole of the French cavalry; but it was put to the proof sooner than we expected, by a troop of our own light dragoons, who, having occasion to gallop through, astonished us not a little by clearing away every stick of it. We had just time to replace the scattered branches, when the whole of the enemy's artillery opened, and their countless columns began to advance under cover of it.

The scene at that moment was grand and imposing, and we had a few minutes to spare for observation. The column destined as *our* particular *friends*, first attracted our notice and seemed to consist of about ten thousand infantry. A smaller body of infantry, in one of cavalry moved on their right; and, on their left, another huge column of infantry, and a formidable body of cuirassiers, while beyond them it seemed one moving mass.

We saw Buonaparte himself take post on the side of the road, immediately in our front, surrounded by a numerous staff; and each regiment, as they passed him, rent the air with shouts of "*vive l' Empereur*" nor did they cease after they had passed; but, backed by the thunder of their artillery, and carrying with them the *rubidub* of drums, and the *tantarara* of trumpets, in addition to their increasing shouts, it looked, at first, as if they had some hopes of scaring us off the ground; for it was a singular contrast to the stern silence reigning on our side, where nothing, as yet, but the voices of our great guns, told that we had mouths to open when we chose to use them. Our rifles were, however, in a very few seconds, required to play their parts, and opened a fire on the advancing skirmishers as quickly brought them to a standstill; but their columns advanced steadily through them, and, in spite of our incessant *tiraillade*, were soon in our centre with fearful execution, and our post was quickly turned into two flanks which compelled us to fall back and join our comrades, behind the hedge, though not before some of our officers and men had been engaged in personal combat.

When the heads of their columns showed over the knoll, which we had just quitted, they received such a fire from our first line, that they wavered, and hung behind it a little; but, cheered and encouraged by the gallantry of their officers, who were dancing and flourishing their swords in front, they at last boldly advanced to the opposite side of our hedge, and began to deploy. Our first line, in the mean time, was getting so thinned, that Picton found it necessary to bring up his second, but fell, in the act of doing it. The command of the division, at that critical moment, devolved upon Sir James Kempt, who was galloping along the line, animating the men to steadiness. He called to me by name, which happened to be standing in the rear of our battalion, and desired me "that I would never quit that spot." I told him that he might rely upon it;" and in another instant he was away in a fair way of keeping his word more religiously than I intended; for, keeping my eye to the right, I saw the field covered with the cuirassiers some of whom were making directly for the gap in the hedge where I was standing. I had not hitherto drawn my sword, as it was generally to be had at a moment's warning; but from its having been exposed to the last night's rain, it had now got rusted in the scabbard and refused to come forth! I was in a precious scrape. Mounted on my strong Flanders mare, and with my good old sword in my hand, I would have braved all the chances without a moment's hesitation; but, I confess, that I felt considerable doubts as to the propriety of standing there to be sacrificed, without the means of making a scramble for it. My mind, however, was happily relieved from such an embarrassing consideration, before my decision was required; for the next moment the cuirassiers were charged by our household brigade; and the infantry in our front giving way at the same time, under our terrific shower of musketry, the flying cuirassiers tumbled in among the routed infantry, followed by the life-guards, who were cutting away in all directions. Hundreds of the infantry threw themselves down, and pretended to be dead, while the cavalry galloped over them and then got up and ran away. I never saw such a scene in all my life.

Lord Wellington had given orders that the troops were, on no account, to leave the position to follow up any temporary advantage; so that we now resumed our post, as we stood at the commencement of the battle, and with three companies again advanced on the knoll.

Maryland Historical Society

The Maryland State Colonization Society Papers

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