

THE AUTUMN MANŒUVRES.

THE SCENE OF OPERATIONS.

(From the Broad Arrow

(Continued from Page 16)

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 10TH.

Battle on the Avon.—The battle which was to decide the fate of the campaign, was fought to day. To make the result intelligible to the reader, we must state what is called the "general idea" of the day's proceedings. The Southern Army was supposed to have been reinforced by troops which had got possession of Salisbury, and the invaders were therefore free to follow up the advantages gained on previous days. Their camp last night was at Berwick St. James, while that of the defending army was on Winterbourn Stoke Down, three or four miles further north. The force of Sir John Michel very nearly occupied the ground which his antagonist held before he fell back yesterday, and his army lay to the west of the road from Salisbury to Devizes, in front of Berwick St. James, with the left towards Winterbourn, and the right near Stapleford Down. The idea of his movement seems to have been to keep part of his light cavalry on his left, and to move it so as to give the notion that he was going to march on Amesbury and turn Welpole's right, while Brownrigg's Division made a *détour* by the valleys over the course of the Winterbourn, to cross the Avon, and then strike for the main road to London; Horsford's Division moving on a shorter line and more directly for the river, so as to leave Walpole on the right or wrong bank, with a very strong position on the ridges over the road from Salisbury (which was supposed to be in Michel's possession) to Amesbury to face, with what appetite he might. This pretty plan of action was crossed by Sir Robert Walpole's vigilance and dash. Pushing his force rapidly forward—at an earlier hour than he should have done, it is alleged—he took possession of the ridges running from Winterbourn village to Normanton Down, and sent out vedettes as far as in front as Lako Down, when the enemy's scouts came upon them between eight and nine o'clock. The infantry of both armies were at the time still some distance in the rear. Brownrigg had led his infantry well out of sight of the west of the Devizes road, starting before Horsford some time, and crossing the river without opposition, although Walpole's engineers maintained that the Durnford and Woodford bridges were blown up, and that the villages were defended by a figurative army. How that could have been if Salisbury and Wilton belonged to Michel cannot be easily understood. Anyway, Greathed's Brigade was at Woodford by half past nine o'clock, while the light cavalry of the Southerners were manoeuvring on the Downs eastward of the Druid's Head, and receiving punishment from guns posted at the edge of a small wood in their front. Far out on the plain the Household Cavalry could be seen, with helmets glistening in the sun, waiting as if for more serious work, but though it was believed Shute's Cavalry were also massed in the same direction, they could not be identified by spectators from the southern side. Brownrigg's Division had started at least an hour before any movement on Walpole's side gave a suspicion that he had detected Michel's plan, and pretty as the sight was of Hussars skirmishing along the front, with guns pounding

away from hills and woods at distant objects, it must be confessed that it would have been a more animating spectacle to a soldier, speaking relatively, to have seen an advance of the formidable body of cavalry composing Walpole's two brigades at a critical moment than their appearance as they manoeuvred slowly in the plain, timorous, apparently, of a bold attack. Had they broken the crust, or rather the veil of Parke's cavalry they would have seen Horsford's columns on the line of march and have come down on the rear and flank of Michel's army without much to fear from his artillery or the force of cavalry then present. As it appeared to observers on the southern side they might have checked the execution of the whole plan, and if Walpole's object was, as asserted, to drive the enemy over the river, then they would have precipitated its execution with immense loss to the Southern Army.

Walpole's reconnaissance in front retired before the 7th Hussars, but presently their supports came up, and the Hussars fell slowly back to the Southern lines. By this time Walpole's artillery, which had been advanced to a position on Normanton Down opened fire. Then the 10th Hussars and Lancers made a dash for a commanding position known as Fox Hill, and having taken it they were soon followed by a battery of Royal Horse Artillery. The general progress of the fight can now be best described by taking the account of one side. A correspondent with the Southern Army thus says: "Before the guns could be unlimbered, they were surprised by a shot from some guns masked by the enemy close behind his cavalry skirmishers, and cleverly placed within a circle of barrows. Half a battery of our guns was brought down the slope below the Druid's Head to answer them, and for a time there was a terrific artillery duel at close quarters, until the enemy's guns had to retire harassed by cavalry. The Household Brigade were sent up to redeem the position by a charge, the magnificent weight of which would have been enough to send any cavalry regiment down. Meanwhile, the enemy was sending his skirmishers out, and our columns could be seen winding along the opposite bank of the Avon under cover of our position. At Box Hill evidently, then we were at our old game, and trying to get round the flank of our antagonist. One point we had already achieved by getting across the river undisturbed. Brownrigg's division was sent on to occupy the banks of the river and the heights opposite Normanton, while Horsford contented himself with drawing his forces gradually from the left, where they had been making a feint, and posting them along the hedges on Doreland and Box Hills, and in the villages of Woodford and Netton. Hardly had this been done before the enemy's skirmishers were seen advancing rapidly towards us. Having succeeded by a well directed fire in dislodging our guns from Box Hill, the skirmishers of Parke's Brigade made a rush which nothing could resist, and placed themselves amid a clump of trees crowning the knoll, whence they could sweep the slope in front. In vain our cavalry went at them with the most praiseworthy self sacrifice. The 102nd would not budge from a strong position thus gained, and soon the approach of the 23rd Regiment compelled the Hussars to retire at a gallop. Not satisfied with his achievement Parke pushed forward recklessly in the face of a terrific fire from our skirmishers, still safely sheltered behind the hedges. The presence of an umpire determined to do his

duty should have stopped this stupid advance at once; but no, 'the cry is still they come,' and so we must needs retire. I believe one of the umpire staff who was present had the extraordinary audacity to remonstrate with Parke, but of course he did not carry his firmness so far as to order that brigadier to go back, as he certainly should have done. Far away to our right, Brownrigg's artillery could still be heard with those of Lord Mark Kerr, but very weakly, and there could be no doubt that Staveley was pressing the main attack on Horsford, in hope of turning our left so as to cut off our communication with Salisbury. That he intended to do this, if possible, at all hazards was equally evident, for he hesitated at no sacrifice of life or expenditure of powder. Slowly, inch by inch, we were driven from the hedge rows into the villages. The Dirty Half Hundred, now better and more appropriately known as the "Fighting 50th," held the village of Woodford against attack in all directions in the most splendid way. Not a man of their force could have faced that steady well directed fire, and if they had, we may be sure the 50th would not have been unworthy of their better name. They were, however, ordered to retire, which they did fighting stubbornly until they crossed the bridge. Their retreat was covered by another regiment of the same brigade, the 1st Provisional Battalion of Volunteers. The way in which the 'gentle amateur' did this work was worthy of all the praise they have received since joining the camp. Every bit of cover was taken advantage of, and not a shot wasted. Sir John Michel congratulated Colonel Weston on having the honour to command such a splendid battalion. Even their fire, however, could not check the enemy's advance. It could only protect our regiments while they crossed the bridge. Nearly the whole of his brigade was taken by the fire of four batteries placed by Horsford on the heights above, and it is very questionable whether the bridge could ever have been crossed in real warfare, exposed as it was to this artillery fire, and to the bullets of the riflemen in the valley. Crossed it was, however, just before twelve o'clock, but the enemy found us stronger than he had expected. The delay had given Horsford time to call up a brigade from General Brownrigg's division, so that we had really a much larger number than our assailants, and every advantage of ground in our favor. The 'cease fire' sounded at this point, and the last battle of this year's manoeuvres was at an end. It is always difficult to obtain the decision of the umpires, but substantially, I believe it was to the effect that the Southern Army had made good its previous victories, but at great loss, and its position at the end of the strife was considered precarious. This somewhat ambiguous verdict left it open to the generals on both sides to take credit to themselves for having done a smart thing, and may be taken as an instance of the happy talent of the Commander in Chief for smoothing down the ruffled feathers of his subordinates. Tomorrow we shall be very quiet, and engaged only in preparations for the grand march past on Thursday. The hour fixed for this event is twelve o'clock, and the place Beacon Hall, near Amesbury. The two armies are encamped near each other tonight in the neighborhood of Durging Down." For the sake of doing full justice to this interesting engagement we subjoin another sketch of the day's operations by the correspondent of the *Times*, writing from Ogbury Camp.

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