

few moments it must have been that, when ordered to stand, we could see the helmet spikes and then the figures of the skirmishers as they came on; a lot of them there appeared to be, five or six deep, I should say, but in loose order, each man stopping to aim and fire, and then coming forward a little. Just then the brigadier clattered on horseback up the lane. "Now, then, gentlemen, give it them hot," he cried; and fire away we did, as fast as ever we were able. A perfect storm of bullets seemed to be flying about us, too, and I thought each moment must be the last; escape seemed impossible: but I saw no one fall, for I was too busy, and so were we all, to look to the right or left, but loaded and fired as fast as I could. How long this went on I know not—it could not have been long; neither side could have lasted many minutes under such a fire, but it ended by the enemy gradually falling back, and as soon as we saw this we raised a tremendous shout, and some of us jumped up on the bank to give them our parting shots. Suddenly the order was passed down the line to cease firing, and we soon discovered the cause; a battalion of the Guards was charging obliquely across from our left across our front. It was, I expect, their flank attack as much as our fire which had turned back the enemy; and it was a splendid sight to see their steady line as they advanced slowly across the smooth lawn below us, firing as they went, but as steady as if on parade. We felt a great elation at this moment; it seemed as if the battle was won. Just then somebody called out to look to the wounded, and for the first time I turned to glance down the rank along the lane. Then I saw that we had not beaten back the attack without loss.