

cannot account for his amazing over-confidence.

Of the behaviour during the day of the two great leaders there is much interesting evidence extant.

Wellington, cool and impassive as ever, but fully realizing the unparalleled issues at stake, displayed the most extraordinary personal gallantry throughout the day. No matter what the havoc or destruction might be around him, he was the coolest man there. He continually exposed himself to the hottest fire and he seemed to be ubiquitous, directing, rallying and encouraging wherever a critical occasion arose. He was the "genius of the storm," and his presence had a magical effect whenever he appeared. As an old peninsular officer exclaimed, "I would rather see Wellington's long nose in a fight than a reinforcement of 10,000 men any day."

He seemed invulnerable, and though most of his staff were either killed or wounded around him, he was never touched. He was not an eloquent man but his brief exhortations to his troops had a stirring effect.

Some of his recorded sayings during the battle are:—

"My only plan is to stand my ground here to the last man," and when Kempt asked for reinforcements, "Tell him what he wishes is impossible. He and I and every man here must fight till we die on the spot where we stand."

"Stand fast 95th, we mustn't be beat. What would they say in England." And on being remonstrated with for exposing himself in the final charge, he said:—"Never mind, the battle's won and my life is of no consequence now."

On riding back across the battlefield by moonlight, the appalling carnage so affected Wellington that he burst into tears, and his letters after the battle he showed that the "Iron Duke" had a soft heart under his impassive exterior.

Speaking of the terrible British losses he wrote:—

"The glory resulting from an action so dearly bought is no consolation to me"; and again, "The losses I have sustained have quite broken me down, and I have no feeling for the advantages we have acquired." Our battle was one of giants, but God grant I may never see another, for I am overwhelmed with grief at the loss of my old friends and comrades."

Of the conduct of Napoleon there is also much interesting evidence, the most valuable of which is furnished by the Belgian guide whom he kept close by his side throughout the day. This man, named Jean de Coster, lived in a little house, which still stands close to La Belle Alliance.

He was an intelligent man and selected by Napoleon on account of his minute knowledge of the country.

Coster, in his sworn deposition on Jan. 16th 1816, states that he was taken prisoner in the morning and brought before Napoleon, who asked him if he would serve as his guide, and that "his recompense should be a hundred times greater than he could imagine." He was then tied to a horse and was kept between Napoleon and an A.D.C. all day. He says that about noon Napoleon took his post just across the road from La Belle Alliance, and remained here throughout the day until 5 p.m., surrounded by a special body guard of cavalry and artillery.

Napoleon was on foot and constantly walked backwards and forwards, sometimes with his hands crossed, but more often behind his back. He kept his eyes fixed on the battle, and kept pulling out his watch and snuff box alternately. He took snuff incessantly and gave several pinches to De Coster.

He made continual comments on the conduct of the British troops of which the Scotch regiments, especially the Scots Greys, took his particular fancy. "What brave troops, How they work" he said several times, and "Those terrible grey horses" burst from him when the Scots Greys made their memorable charge. The dangers of the battle did not seem to affect him. He was perfectly calm and showed much sang-froid during the action, without appearing out of humor, and he always spoke very mildly to his officers.

De Coster was much alarmed by the shower of bullets that flew past his ears, and kept ducking his head. This seemed to annoy Napoleon who rebuked him several times saying "he would not escape the balls any more by stooping than by standing upright."

"All goes well." Before the guard made their last charge he led them as far as the cutting in the roads, and there halted with his staff. He was then under direct fire and his generals implored him not to expose himself so much.

When he saw his last blow had failed, and his Guard retreating in disorder, he turned to his staff and said:—"All is finished, let us save ourselves." and rode off at full gallop, surrounded by a guard of cavalry. He was, as previously described, very nearly captured at Genappe, but finally forced his way through the flying mass and stopped or spoke to no one until he reached Charleroi. Here he halted in a field outside the town, and a fire was made before which he stood with nine of his staff around him, talking and taking some food and wine, the first refreshment he had touch-

ed for 14 hours.

At a quarter to 5 in the morning he dismissed De Coster, taking away his horse and giving him one napoleon, and then riding off with his staff.

This was rather hard on De Coster, who had been exposed to the perils of battle all day, but had been upborn by Napoleon's promise, that "his recompense should be a hundred times greater than he could imagine." Napoleon's gift of one napoleon, would seem to infer that he placed the limit of de Coster's imagination at about FOUR CENTS, which is rather moderate even for a Belgian peasant.

This parsimoniousness greatly impressed De Coster, who summed him up as 'un vrai scélérat.'

Ladies and Gentlemen, I have now endeavoured to give you some kind of an account of this great world's drama, and whilst I must apologise for the meagre sketch I have been compelled to make, I hope that some of you at least may leave this hall to-night with a clearer idea of this, one of the most glorious episodes in our history.

The great victory was no stroke of chance, as French vanity would make it out to be, nor was it the mere spoil, as some of our countrymen would have it, of dogged unaided British courage. To those who look impartially into its history, it stands proved rather as the fairly won prize of valour, skill, and mutual support, such as the world has never before or since witnessed in allied armies led by independent generals.

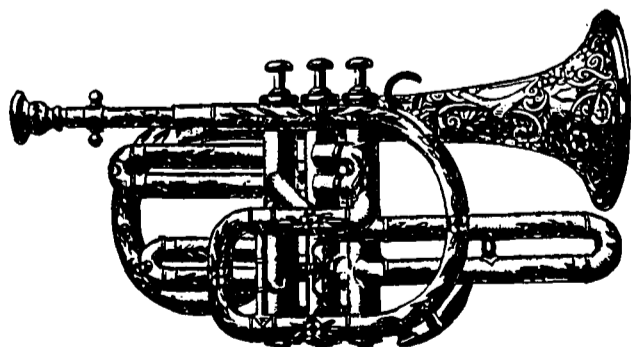
The value of self-sacrifice and faithful co-operation to the common end, is the great military lesson to be learnt from this campaign, and it is one which all soldiers of this and every country cannot take too closely to heart.

Waterloo must ever remain one of the brightest spots in the history of our great nation, and in it the whole of Europe owes us a debt which it can never repay, and yet which was alas, only soon forgotten.

The actors in this mighty drama have now all passed away, but their fame is imperishable, and I think there will be few amongst us disposed to cavil at Scott's stirring lines:—

Yes, Agincourt may be forgot,  
And Cressy be an unknown spot,  
And Blenheim's name be new;  
But still in story and in song,  
For many an age remembered long;  
Shall live the towers of Hougoumont,  
And field of Waterloo!

Lord Leighton has bequeathed his house in trust for the use of the future presidents of the Royal Academy.



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