PICTORIAL FIELD-BOOK

Battle of the Oak Woods, or Maguaga. The British and their savage Allies defeated. Appearance of the Savages.

Brock from Fort George.¹ He had reached Malden the previous day, and was sent over to assist Muir and his savage allies. He took with him twenty of his grenadiers, twenty light infantry, and twenty battalion-men. The Indians occupied the left of the line.²

A single shot on the left of the foe, then the terrible yells of scores of savages, and then a heavy volley of musketry from the whole British line, were the first intimations given to Snelling of the presence of the concealed enemy. He received and returned the fire gallantly, and maintained his position until joined by the main body. Miller's quick ear caught the first sound of battle, and, ordering his men forward at double quick, he rode at full speed toward the field of conflict. As his troops came up and formed in battle order, he waved his sword aloft, and cried, "Charge ! boys, charge !"³ The order was instantly, gallantly, and effectually obeyed; and, at the same time, a six-pounder poured in a storm of grape-shot that made sad havoc. A body of Indians, that had been detached to the left of the foe, and near the river, was driven back by an impetuous charge by Major Dequindre and his Michigan and Ohio Volunteers,⁴ and fled. Their white auxiliaries, who performed but little fighting in this engagement, mistaking them for Indian allies of the Americans, fired upon them. The savages returned it with spirit, and for a few moments these friends in the same service seemed determined to annihilate each other.

The battle had now become general. This sudden blow upon the right wing, and the confusion produced by the mistake just mentioned, alarmed the centre, and the whole British line, civilized and savage, wavered. Closely pressed in front, and expecting an attack in the rear, the British regulars and Canadians broke and fled in confusion, leaving Tecumtha and his savages to bear the brunt of the battle, which they did with great obstinacy.⁵ Muir rallied his men, in a good position, a quarter of a mile in rear of the battle-ground, when, becoming alarmed by firing in the woods on the left, they retreated "at the double-quick," as Major Richardson said, gained their boats as speadily as possible, and sped across the river to Malden as fast as strong arms and stout oars could take them. The savages finally broke and fled, and Miller ordered Sloan to pursue them with his cavalry. That officer's courage seemed to

Auchinleck, without the shadow of justification, says (page 55), that "every possible exertion was employed by agents of the United States government to detach the Indians from us, and to effect an alliance with them on the part of the States." Every honorable exertion was used by the United States to detach the Indians from the British interest and persuade them to remain *neutral*, but the government never consented to an alliance with the savages until the practice of the British made it necessary, as in the old struggle for independence, when Washington said "we must fight Indians with Indians."

³ Miller was thrown from his horse. He was supposed to be shot, and the savages rushed forward to scalp him. They were driven back, and in a few moments he was remounted.—Judge Witherell. M'Afee says he remained on foot through the remainder of the battle, and that the most active part devolved upon Majors Van Horne and Morrison.

⁴ Among those who performed gallant service in this charge was Sergeant Nathan Champe, son of Sergeant Champe, famous in the Revolution as the one employed by Washington to seize Arnold in the city of New York. Lieutenant George Johnston, who died at Green Bay in 1850, commanded the Michigan Cavalry on this occasion, and was called the Murat of that corps.—Judge Witherell.

⁵ For his services on this occasion Tecumtha was rewarded by the British government with the commission of a brigadier general. Rebuke of a hesitating !

have been paraly2 moment. He st The impetuous perceived it, and up to him, peremy dered him to. c leaped upon the h self, and, at the he troops, bareheaded having been shot the battle), his streaming in the dashed after the f and pursued the than two miles, w danger of an am the necessary car wounded, and the a of night, induced ant Colonel Miller a suspension of the The rout and victo complete. Accord the British accou loss of their regula twenty-four, only o never reported. O the Americans was

Miller was anxio and at sunset he dis a supply of provisio his regiment, and si of Miller. M'Arthu boats, and, under th Queen Charlotte and ed were immediatel light, M'Arthur fou the shore, left the b sent them to Detroi because he anticipa mean time, and atter were seized by the I

Miller was injured so ill that he could for more provisions.

¹ This is from a pencil ske Oak Woods, mentioned in the which this battle was fough *Mongenaga*, according to Mell ing to Judge Witherell and of was at or near the present vil ² Hull's Letter to the Secre

M'Afee, pages 78 and 79; Ju Lientenant Colonel Miller to ³ Major Muir and Lieutenan ed in the neck by a buck-shot

280

¹ The entire British force at Monguaga, including the Indians, has been differently estimated by different writers. It was probably about equal to that of the Americans.

^a Major Richardson, of the Forty-first, gives the following description of the appearince of the Indian warriors on the march from Brownstown to Monguaga: "No other sound than the measured step of the troops interrupted the solitude of the scene, rendered more imposing by the wild appearance of the warriors, whose bodies, stained and painted in the most frightful manner for the occasion, glided by us with almost noiseless velocity, without order and without a chief; some painted white, some black, others half black and half red, half black and half white; all with their hair plastered in such a way as to resemble the bristling quills of the porcupine, with no other covering than a cloth around their loins, yet armed to the teeth with rifles, tomahawks, war-clubs, spears, bows and arrows, and scalping-knives. Uttering no sound, and intent on reaching the enemy unperceived, they might have passed for the spectres of those wilds — the ruthless demons which war had unchained for the punishment and oppression of men." Major Richardson, perceiving the necessity of an apology for being found fighting Christian men side by side with these savage pagans as brethren in arms, says, but without warrant, "The natives must have been our friends or our foes. Had we not employed them the Americans would; and, although humanity must deplore the necessity imposed by the very invader himself of counting them among our allies, and combating at their sides, the law of self-preservation was our guide, and scrupulous, indeed, must be the power that would have hesitated at such a moment in its choice."—War of 1812. First Series, containing a full and detailed Narratice of the Operation of the Right Division of the Canadian Army, by Major Richardson, K. S. F.,—Pamphlet, page 52.