

## THE AUTUMN MANŒUVRES.

## THE SCENE OF OPERATIONS.

(From the Broad Arrow

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While this episode was occurring, Glyn's Brigade, consisting of the 4th Battalion Rifles, 17th Foot and South Down Militia, had deployed in skirmishing order ready to scale the heights on the enemy's right flank, which they had so skilfully turned. A resolute dash at this moment would have decided the fate of the day in the most signal manner, as the two battalions of Guards not engaged in holding Codford were in reserve, and Arthur Hardinge's Brigade was in close proximity to their rear. The Northern Army Corps was temporarily so situated as to be hopeless in the face of such a formidable onslaught; but in war, as in every mundane pursuit, time is everything. Sir John Michel had forbidden Horsford to proceed beyond the point he had reached until further orders from headquarters, and so poor Sir Alfred had to sit on his horse in apparent tranquillity, while the golden moments slipped away and the enemy's reinforcements came up. Aggravating indeed, must have been his position had the situation been a reality. After three good quarters of an hour—precious, nay, invaluable time sacrificed—the tardy *né* de camp arrived, and in a moment later the steady line of scattered red and green coats was again in rapid motion. Anything more brilliant, well conducted and dashing than the ensuing charge up the precipitous slopes which had to be carried, can scarcely be conceived. The Rifles, in advancing, extended almost imperceptibly till they completely outflanked their opponents on the left, and the other two battalions of Glyn's Brigade pressed on straight to the front, at such a speed as in a measure to neutralize the effect of the heavy fire by this time concentrated upon them. When the "cannon firing" sounded, and the battle was over, the valley was filled with troops destined to support Michel's attack. The umpires and commanding officers gathered together, and after a long consultation it was decided that Sir John Michel had succeeded in forcing a passage of the Willey, and in rendering the position of the Northerners on Codford Hill, no longer tenable. The practical result is that each force returns to its present encampment, although the invaders will be allowed to commence their attack tomorrow from the point they gained to day north of the Willey.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 7TH.

"General idea" of the day.—The Southern Army had been reinforced by the detachment from Maiden Bradley, which arrived too late to take part in yesterday's operations. The force which yesterday was at Ringwood has reached Downton, and the force at Cranborne has pushed forward towards Wilton to connect the force at Downton with Sir John Michel's right. The operations are not to commence before eight o'clock, a. m. This however, does not affect the posting of pickets.

*Battle of Wishford—Defeat of Walpole.*—The proceedings today were full of interest and resulted in a crushing and deserved defeat of the Northern Army. To render this intelligible we must begin with a glance at the ground occupied by the two armies

before the fight began. On Friday night Walpole's headquarters were at Winterbourne Stoke. During the night he abandoned the ground successfully held at Codford, and the line of the Willey as far as Steeple Langford. Hence his left extended in the direction of the Avon, above Stapleford, Wishford, and South Newton, to the right of the road from Salisbury. Thus he covered the road from Willey by Yanbury Castle to Winterbourne, that along the Willeybourne stream by Stapleford and Berwick to Winterbourne, and the north road from Salisbury to Devizes. As the crow flies, his line of posts from right to left was about five miles in length. The triangle enclosed by lines drawn along his front, and the advanced posts on his flanks to Winterbourne Stoke is bisected, and for tactical purposes divided into two separate triangles by the stream of Willeybourne, which is crossed by the following bridges—two at Stapleford, at each end of the village, about half a mile apart. An interval of a little less than a mile separates the upper one of these from Berwick St. James, here again the passages are similarly arranged; above the upper bridge at Berwick is a ford, and at Winterbourne the river is bridged and fordable. There were thus five avenues of communication between the right and left zones of defence, and the pontoon train was moved to Stapleford in the morning before eight o'clock. Whether it was used or not, we are at present not informed, but probability points to its having been laid half way between Stapleford and Berwick St. James, where a track across the high down strikes the stream. The whole of the position is cut across at nearly right angles by valleys—not difficult to cross, yet entailing fatigue and delay to the passage of troops. Walpole's most advanced posts on the left were at Wishford. South Newton was occupied later, as well as the wood in Newton Down. At about eight o'clock in the morning the great triangle which would have been difficult to guard satisfactorily with 50,000 or 60,000 men, was attempted to be covered by Walpole with about 14,000, as nearly as we could ascertain in the following manner: The Household Brigade of Cavalry was in a valley to the left of Yanbury, concealed by Little Down. To the left the line was prolonged by a portion of Erskine's and Pakenham's Brigade. The 30th, from Pakenham's Brigade, were in Stapleford. The 2nd Battalion of the 4th and a battery were about half way between Stapleford and Yanbury. Steeple Langford was weakly occupied; Stapleford in considerable force by the Rifle Brigade of the 3rd Brigade 4th Division, who had also some companies at Wishford. There was a battery at Newton Hill, behind the wood. The remaining battalions of Stephenson's Brigade were held in support behind the slopes above Wishford. The Light Brigade of Cavalry, minus the 19th Hussars, which, we believe, was on the extreme right, was near the same spot; the remaining batteries, Maxwell's and Anderson's brigades in reserve near Berwick St. James; Parke's towards Yanbury. The Wiltshire Yeomanry were at Wishford. The whole of the ground was completely overlooked by the opposite hills across the Willey. Yet, on proceeding thither, not a rifle or helmet, except those of sentries, and videttes, was visible from the summit of Graveley Wood.

As for the Southern Army, it also derived extraordinary advantage from the favourable character of the ground it occupied, yet, as will presently be seen, it did not escape the misfortunes that deservedly over-

took troops manœuvring in a woodland district, unless their flanks are thoroughly protected by cavalry. Grovely Hill throws out spurs towards the Willey, and one, the most important, toward Wilton, very favourable to the concealment of a flank movement to turn Walpole's left. The whole length of the ridge is some ten or eleven miles, and the value of the woods to an assailant has been sufficiently dwelt upon, their danger to an officer neglecting to use his cavalry to save him from all possibility of surprise was to receive a very practical illustration. About nine o'clock the Wiltshire Yeomanry made a demonstration, advancing through Wishford towards Grovely, driving in the Southern vedettes. At the same time, and while it may be presumed that this little diversion served sufficiently to distract Michel's attention from other cavalry movements, Shute, with the 9th Lancers, 13th Hussars, the reserve battery, and Hampshire Mounted Rifles, was directed to move upon Wilton, cross the river, to pass through Wilton Park, and rapidly reconnoitre the enemy's right and right rear. Taking with him Captain Janet, of the Wiltshire Yeomanry (late Grenadier Guards), an officer thoroughly acquainted with the country, as a guide, Shute's little brigade trotted to Wilton, managed unobserved to pass the Willey at this point, and, gaining the downs beyond, swept along the reverse side of the ridge. They pounced suddenly upon and captured a battery, escorted by a troop of the 7th Hussars; considerably worried Hardinge's brigade, which the reserve battery contrived to entangle while marching along a lane, and crowned their exploits by taking prisoners Sir Alfred Horsford and his staff. The capture was sustained in theory by the umpire but not practically acted upon, and General Horsford was released to complete the tactical operation in which he was embarked when the Lancers surprised him. Returning after the performance of this brilliant exploit in safety to the north bank of the Willey, by Wishford, they ascended the downs unmolested, and took post behind the wood on Newton Hill, bringing also intelligence that the enemy was evidently meditating an attack in force on the left and might be expected from the direction of Wilton.

At noon a well conceived feigned attack on the part of the Southerners was made by two battalions of Guards, which, issuing from Grovely Wood, opposite Steeple Langford, deployed into line, threw out skirmishers, and threatened to carry the foot bridge and ford. They were opposed by a half battalion of the 27th Regiments, garrisoning Steeple Langford. Colonel Fielding, deputy adjutant general, observing the menacing attitude of these battalions, made the necessary dispositions to repel them. Whereupon their commander, considering his object attained, retired to the shelter of Grovely Wood and took shelter therein, to advance again when the flank march by Wilton should be developed. By this means time was gained for the prosecution of the design against Walpole's left, and a portion of his reserves were moved to the neighbourhood of Steeple Langford, a point more distant than that from which they started. The Southern commander, although retiring his infantry, left a gun supported by some cavalry, which continued to fire upon the ground, and prevented Walpole's post from being withdrawn.

At about one o'clock the attack began in earnest. The greater part of the 1st Division including one battalion of the Guards (Hardinge's), and part of the Flying Brigade,