

[FOR THE CRITIC.]

WATERLOO IN 1886.

(Concluded.)

Then I ascended the pyramid. There are two hundred and twenty-five steps, a stairway of stone. The sides are overgrown with long coarse grass; indeed it is simply a great mound of earth. At the top is an immense stone pedestal, on which stands a colossal stone lion, looking toward the south. The inscription on the pedestal is grandly simple, "June 18th, 1815," nothing more. Suggestive as the date may be to an Englishman, there is nothing in this bare reference to it to wound the susceptibilities of England's foes. Indeed, even a certain American gentleman whom I fell in with on one of the ocean steamers, and who argued that, according to the proper interpretation of the rules of war, Wellington was utterly defeated at Waterloo, might have looked upon it and lived. As for me, unenlightened by American research, I looked around on the field with awe, and gazed at the little eminence by the crossroads, where the great commander stood during the battle, with feelings of the profoundest reverence.

I was not suffered to remain under any misapprehensions as to the position of Wellington during the battle, or as to anything else. I had barely time to walk once round the great stone lion when a hand was laid on my arm, and a voice, speaking in tones of the gravest solemnity, said, "dis is de field of Waterloo!"

I turned. What was this? At my side stood a little lean individual with an expression of intense eagerness, animating the brightest pair of eyes I have ever looked into. One hand was laid on my shoulder, with the other he was pointing to the scene before us. "Dis, Monsieur, is de field of Waterloo! Dero is de high road to Brussels, where de English approached de battlefield—down dere dey come; dere are de cross-roads where de English are stationed during de battle, dere is de rising eminence behind de cross-roads where Wellington," pronounced *Wellington*, "stood during de conflict; dere, opposite, is de station of Napoleon, on date eminence—see, Monsieur!—de French come down dere, take up a position across dese small hills, along dere on de brow of dese hills, behind Hougoumont. Dere is Hougoumont—ruines—ruins. Behind Hougoumont, all along dat eminence, stands de French army; dere is La Haye Sainte, de farmhouse—see, Monsieur: dere, Hougoumont, dere La Haye Sainte;" and so on, and so on and so on, for about ten minutes. He really did deserve two francs; and, when he got them, it was truly wonderful, the nimble way in which he ran down the stone steps and disappeared.

Then I was free again to take breath and look around. Possibly no place in the world so well repays one for a visit as this scene. Other places, rendered famous by great events, one visits and finds changed and modern; years come and go, and every generation leaves its mark. Not so Waterloo,—the long roads running over the gently undulating ground, the green fields, the forest, the old chateau, the farmhouse, the faint outline of the small towns to the southward, the picturesque red cross of the village shrouded in the green foliage of the woods behind, all are there, unchanged, as they were seventy-one years ago. Numbers of trees between the battlefield and the city have been cut down, and one can now see the great dome of the new "Palais de Justice" at Brussels looming up in the gray distance; but these are changes which do not count, as one notes the general resemblance of things in the present to what they must have been in the early part of the century. No fences, no hedges, in this famed land, separate the fields from the roadway or from one another. A shallow ditch, not discernible from the pyramid, is all that is deemed necessary. The grass was of the deepest green, and the gentle hills seemed to be crowned with a velvet-like softness of expression as the bright sunlight of an October afternoon fell on their far famed brows. The ruins of the old chateau, surrounded by a few straggling, half-shattered skeletons of what were once noble trees, added much to the richness of the landscape by their contrast to the calm beauty of the meadows on either side. Away to the left stood the farmhouse of *La Haye Sainte*, surrounded also with trees, but of a younger growth and brighter hue. Then behind stretched the green fields again, gleaming like gold in the sunlight, while, far away in the purple horizon could be seen, standing out in dim relief against the sky, the spires of the little town of Genappe, where, as my guide informed me, the fallen emperor left his horse for his travelling carriage, and entered on that fatal journey which ended only at St. Helena.

A grand sight truly—a sight to be seen and not forgotten—something to be remembered long after with pleasure and with profit. But it must be confessed that this exultation of mind lasts only while one remains on the top of the pyramid; descend to the earth and the enchantment is gone. Visions of conflicting armies, of grim-faced French guards, facing death but never defeat, of fallen heroes and weeping generals, of the great conqueror riding away, with the roar of the artillery falling fainter and fainter on his ear as he galloped further and further from the field, all these were rudely dispelled. Guides, relic-vendors, and men with photographs beset me with a persistency and a resolution truly admirable, were it only exerted in a better cause. It was late in the season, and visitors were comparatively few; the falling off in the number of visitors, as was natural, insured a greater amount of attention to such as there were. Mingling with their distracting exhortations, or, I should say, in pleasing contrast to them, I heard the shrill voices of three American girls, who were searching for four-leaved clover in an adjoining field.

La Haye Sainte.—This is a charming cottage, very much out of repair, with a few ill-kept flowers and shrubs blooming around it, and here and there a young tree casting its shadows over the green grass and the sandy road. A picturesque, half-ruined building of red brick and white plaster, it stands almost midway between the spots where the English duke and the

French emperor kept watch over the contending armies. Though called "the farmhouse," one may judge from the absence of stables or sheds of any kind, and from the neglected condition of the garden, that it now has no right to the designation. I walked up to the door, and the occupants, or one of the occupants, came out to see me. What calling the master pursues—if there be a master—I do not know. This person, a woman with a pleasing countenance, who had a child of about three years of age clinging to her skirts, was a relic-vendor.

Relics—pieces of wood, pieces of stone, pieces of iron, bits of woolen stuff, bits of gold lace, photographs of the field, of Bonaparte, of Wellington, of everybody. I did not examine them, nor desire to possess them. The woman had a persuasive manner, and a gift of tongue which would be considered wonderful anywhere outside of Belgium. But her eloquence and her arguments were alike vain. Had I not seen the relics and had the photographs in my hand, I would have bought them on her recommendation. But it required only a very superficial investigation to convince one of the utter worthlessness of the collections: and, true to my principles of economy, I felt that it was not advisable to throw money away. The child, who listened to our conversation with apparent interest, manifested a sense of the fitness of things beyond his years. Running to the garden he picked a few pieces of mignonette, which he presented to me with great solemnity. In return I gave him twenty centimes, which he handed to his mother with the air of a man of business.

I was attempting to hold a conversation with this juvenile but characteristic inhabitant of Waterloo, when the bell at the inn, which announces the departure of the omnibus, rang, and I hastened away as fast as my feet could carry me. I got to the inn just in time. As the sun was now shining brightly, and gave promise of a delightful drive, we all, as was natural, drove outside. The old brown lady and her husband, having been everywhere, mounted, still smiling on us all as they had done on the journey down, the three American girls carrying, not four-leaved clover, but violet leaves, which, no doubt, served the purpose just as well, and an English Colonel and his daughter, who had come out in the next train after us, all got into their places, and away we went. Over the sandy road, down the hills, looking back from time to time to take a last look, along the high road, down by the hedges we drove, whips cracking, horses prancing and a couple of dogs careering on either side of us, and reached Braine l'Alleud just as the Brussels express, on which we were to return to the city, whistled in the distance.

A. C.

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OUR MONTREAL LETTER.

MONTREAL, 19th January, 1887.

Whatever may be the case in Halifax we in Montreal have no reason to complain of any lack of winter weather. Cold and snow with a thermometer given to dropping down to 20° below zero and under, are the characteristics of 1887 so far. No "soft" weather has shown itself since Christmas Eve, when it certainly did rain in torrents, but even then not altogether sufficient to spoil the sleighing.

Such weather (except when it snows too violently), is very favorable to the building of the Ice Castle, in which and in the approaching carnival a vivid interest is taken. This year Montreal promises to outdo herself, the castle (it used to be only called palace in former years) will be a larger structure than any of the kind yet erected and correspondingly beautiful in design. From the portion already built I should judge it will be a very fine affair indeed. Besides this an Ice Maze is being built on the pattern of the famous one at Hampton Court, with hot coffee and other refreshments in the centre for those who manage to reach that haven. A lumbermen's camp is being put up on Victoria Square, and something special in the way of toboggan slides from Jacques Cartier Square down to and half way across the river. A living arch of snowshoes is also talked off, and with numerous illuminations and display of fireworks, skating fancy dress carnivals, sleigh parades and races of various kinds, Montreal will, or at least ought to be, about the gayest city on earth for the second week in February. Already parties of Americans and others have taken up their abode at the "Windsor," and I would advise eastern friends who purpose taking in the carnival to lose no time in securing quarters, as the crowd is sure to be very great.

A subject which is creating a good deal of interest and excitement just now is, "who is to be our next Mayor?" The position is rather unique, and is briefly as follows. The present incumbent, Mr. Beaugrand, has got himself disliked by a number of his French-Canadian compatriots of the lower orders, principally it seems to me because he has endeavored to perform his duty conscientiously, especially during the trying times of the smallpox epidemic last year, and also on account of his being too liberal minded for their tastes on Church matters. He is a good official and possesses influence enough with the English speaking and better class French citizens to secure his re-election over any other French Canadian candidate brought forward. As a way out of the difficulty the French have come forward and say, "You English speaking people have a right to elect a Mayor this year, nominate a good man and we will support him." Mayor Beaugrand also announces if a unanimously selected English and Protestant candidate is brought forward he will not oppose him, but will render him all assistance. And now the English speaking part of the population are squabbling among themselves as to who is to be the lucky man. Public meetings have been held, to which admission at fifty cents a head would have been well spent money, had the spender desired to witness a circus, such was the uproar and boisterous behaviour. At present two names are before the community, viz., the Hon. J. J. C. Abbott,