

*The Life and Opinions of General Sir Charles James Napier, G.C.B.* By Lieut.-General Sir W. Napier, K.C.B., &c. &c. 4 vols. 12 mo With Portraits. London, 1857.

(Continued from our last.)

For some months the family of Charles Napier believed him dead. At length an English frigate was sent to inquire after him, and Baron Clouet, the aide-de-camp of Ney, carried the message to the Marshal. 'Let him,' he replied, 'see his friends, and tell them he is well treated.' 'He has an old mother,' rejoined Clouet, 'a widow, and blind.' 'Has he?' said the Marshal, 'Let him go, then, and tell her himself that he is alive.' The widow for once must have been gratified to see the old man, the blindness which restored the son to her arms whom she had long believed to have been numbered among the slain. No description can give an adequate idea of their mutual affection. To judge of it truly, the correspondence of Charles Napier in the biography must be read. One extract from a letter, dated November 1, 1810, which relates to this loss of his mother's sight, will display in part the beautiful devotion of her son:

'Lord March has just come in, and tells me you have had your eyes done, and can see a little. Oh, my beloved mother, is this blessed news true? Great God grant it to be so! How thankful I am to God for this great blessing! But my anxiety is too great to write. I am afraid!'

The event justified the fear, for the benefit was not permanent. But with this winning attachment to his admirable mother there was one feeling stronger still. It cannot have escaped the observation of any one who reads his account of the battle of Corunna that the idea which predominated over filial affection, physical torture, death itself, was the distress he felt in the mistaken belief that the English had been beaten, and that Moore would imagine he had not done his duty! To those who realize the scene, this sovereignty of soldierly honor can appear nothing short of sublime.

Charles Napier was released on the condition that he would not serve till he was exchanged. The French and English Governments were at variance upon the conditions which should regulate the treatment of prisoners, and it was not till January, 1810, that he was restored to his regiment, then quartered in England. In May of that year, having got leave of absence, he joined the light division in the Peninsula as a volunteer. He went forth to war with another aspect than he had worn when he entered Spain under Moore. His ordinary expression previous to the battle of Corunna had been grave and sedate. The energies drawn out by that terrific struggle were henceforth stamped on his mind, and shone out from his eyes. 'His countenance,' says his brother, 'assumed a peculiarly vehement earnest expression, and his resemblance to a chained eagle was universally remarked.' He had up to this period been careful of his dress, but deeper thoughts ever after occupied his soul, and he had seen his profession under forms which were far too tremendous to permit him again to attach importance to trifles.

The light division was stationed beyond the Coa, far in advance of the main army. The fiery Craufurd—who is described by Sir William Napier as at one time a master-spirit in war, and at another as if possessed by a demon, raging in folly—commanded these troops, whose courage was not less brilliant than his own. The fight of the Coa took place on the 24th of July, 1810, and Craufurd's demon of folly was strong

that day. 'Nothing but the excellence of his men and officers,' wrote Charles Napier at the time, 'saved the division.' The young Major, who had already the eye of a general, noted the errors of his commander, and set them down for his own instruction. Just thirty years afterwards, on the anniversary of the battle, he described his arrival at the bivouac of the 24th at one o'clock in the morning drenched with rain, and the campaigning comforts which awaited him,—a vivid scene in the realities of war:—

'George and his company were on an immense plate rock, the rain was over, they had a good fire and a supper of beefsteaks with tea. I had not eaten that day, except a bit of bread. George gave me during the night, and was fairly done up about the middle of the night, and was very anxious about William's wound, and depressed at our having fought so uselessly, throwing away lives so recklessly. I stripped, and the soldiers, who were then dry and had supped, took—one my shirt, another my coat, and so on, to dry them. I sat meanwhile naked, like a wild Indian, on the warm rock. It was very pleasant, drinking warm tea, and eating steaks built raw, taken of the poor beast which had drawn our baggage all day; one cannot be gentlemanial about bedticks on such occasions. We regretted the poor fellows who were slain; these were a precious lot, but the excitement of battle does away with much regret, there is no time. It is indeed that makes people grieve long, or rather bitterly.'

The English shortly afterwards retreated towards the lines of Teites Vedras pursued by Massena. Wellington paid a trap at Basaco and gave battle to the enemy on the 27th of September.

'A very beautiful fight,' says Charles Napier, 'it was. The French were in the valley shrouded in mist, when the morning broke and the running fire of the outposts began. Soon an irregular but very sharp musketry rang through the gradually dispersing mist, which mingled with smoke came up the mountain, and from it many wounded men broke out. The projectiles then appeared, being driven back, but being so hard that our line loudly cheered them from the crest above. Following close came the enemy's column, and 80 pieces of cannon opened with a roar from the summit of the mountain, sending shrapnel shells and round shot down on them. The battle was thus begun, and soon they reached us. The firing roared loud and heavy, the shouts of our men were grand, and their charges in different parts of the line went fiercely home.'

Charles Napier remained mounted when the severity of the fire had induced the whole of the staff and volunteers to alight. His cousin, the sailor, observing that he was the only man on horseback in a red coat, begged him to get down or cover it with a cloak. 'No,' said he, 'this is the uniform of my regiment, and as it will show or fail this day.' He was being marked while he spoke. A bullet passed through his nose from the right, shattered the left jaw, and lodged near his ear. 'Black shadows,' he says, 'came across my eyes, my sight went, I tumbled in the saddle and fell.' Lord Wellington came up as the soldiers were bearing him away, and asked, 'Who is that?' Charles Napier pulled off his hat and waved it to him, gasping out in faint words, which were stifled in blood, 'I could not die at a better moment.' His conviction that his wound was mortal appeared to the bystanders to have been verified a few minutes later, and though he could neither see nor speak, he heard some one exclaim, 'Poor Napier, after all his wounds, is gone at last.' 'The observation,' he says, 'made me uneasy, for when a fellow has no life they are sometimes, on a field of battle, overquick in berying him: so with a slight twist I lacerated, alive but not merry.' The surgeons seated him on the grass, cut a gash three inches long in his cheek, and endeavored

to get out the ball. It came at last, bringing with it numerous splinters of bone. Nevertheless he did not utter a sound, and his cousin who heard him, stated that he treated it as lightly as if it had been the drawing of a tooth. He was placed in a chapel in the convent of Basaco, where, through an arch partially blocked up from the bottom and open at the top, he could hear the conversation of some officers high in rank, who sat eating and drinking in an adjoining room. His wound had put his name into their mouths, and they talked of his father and mother, praising them for their extraordinary beauty. This delighted him for a while and made him forget his pain; but his cousin told the battle was still raging, he was infuriated to think that men not disabled should have slunk from their posts, and, getting up from his pallet, he staggered to the door to look for his horse. Here he was met by Edward Pakenham, who, having had a wound dressed, was just returning to the front when he stopped Napier in his effort to do the same. He asked him if he was mad, and the impetuous warrior, who was rushing back to the field with his jaw broken and the blood flowing from his mouth, could not even articulate.

'While the men were eating and drinking,' he continues, 'my two or three comrades in the fight and some few who could not come to see me. How proud and happy this message made me! I grieved in them, yet thinking I could not live long, I was very anxious to see them, especially as I and George had been wounded. He was gradually losing a charge, and while half-tamed, was a very good dog, and by a Frenchman through the middle of the antelope to my wound. With a hole been shot through the hip two months before, I did not go to the rear, and went on actively here with the wound still open. Well, we are now [1842] all three still alive and old men—we were then young, strong, and as hardy men as any in the army, and we had fifteen or sixteen wounds amongst us, and being very fond of each other, it made a talk amongst our comrades. Noble, brave, and excellent comrades they were! I think of these times gone by with a mournful, gloomy mind. We three battle rangers at that day into battle with sad hearts, for our cousin Lord March had told us our beloved sister Caroline, just twenty-two years of age, was dead. Our hearts sunk with sorrow—we said nothing, but embraced each other and went to our posts. Mine was with Lord Wellington.'

No scene in story or song can go beyond this. Charles Napier removed to Lisbon to recover, and thence he wrote to console his mother, on the 20th of October 1810, in these noble terms:—

'It is war now, and you must have fortitude, in common with thirty thousand English mothers, whose anxious hearts are for Lord Pagal, and who have not the pride of saving their three sons had been wounded and were all alive! How this would have repaid my father for all anxieties, and it rests due for you! We! a Roman matron would not have let people touch her garments in such a case. In honest truth, though, my share of wounds satisfies me.'

In conformity with this last observation, after instituting a comparison between himself and General Kellerman, who was thirty-two at the battle of Vimiera, and had thirty-two wounds, he thus concludes: 'My share is six in two years, how! Kellerman takes the prize: I am content not to get the twenty-six wanted in the next four years.' He might well resign the painful privilege, for the torment from his last disaster probably exceeded the suffering from the whole of Kellerman's thirty-two scars. The surgeons fearing inflammation were afraid to touch his jaw. It set crooked, and they told him it would never come straight. Having