

WATERLOO.

NAPOLEON'S LAST CAMPAIGN.

Lecture Delivered by Captain A. H. Lee, R. A., in the "Victoria Rifles" Armory Hall, Friday Evening, Nov. 22nd, 1895.

The Lecture Was Illustrated Throughout by Numerous Maps, Plans, and Photographic Views Thrown on the Screen by a Stereopticon.

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN - On the last occasion that I had the honor of addressing you in this hall, I took as my subject the latest of illustrations of the Art of War, the great struggle lately concluded between Japan and China.

On this occasion I go back eighty years for my subject, but many times eighty years may pass before the fame of this greatest of all campaigns in the world's history ceases to be of live interest to the citizens of the great British empire, or indeed to the whole human race. Its result involved the peace and prosperity of the whole civilized world, and, as has so often been said, had it ended otherwise than it did, the whole map of Europe would have had to be changed.

Never has any campaign raised such a storm of controversy, and such an avalanche of literature, legends and lies, as this one of Waterloo, and the subject is one of such vast magnitude that it is impossible for me to attempt to more than lightly sketch in its main features, within the limits of the time at my disposal this evening.

I propose, however, to endeavor to give you in the first place a brief and fairly lucid summary of the actual events, as they are now established in the clear light of actual history, and undistorted by the high passions of the moment; and in the second place, I propose to give you some idea, pictorially, of the nature of the country over which this mighty struggle was enacted, and this I am enabled to do by means of actual photographs. This summer I spent several days going carefully over the whole country of the campaign and the various battlefields, and took photographs of all points of interest. And these are especially instructive because the country presents almost exactly the same appearance now as then, and it is possible to recognize almost every building and feature of ground that played any part in the events of the great drama of 1815.

The name of Waterloo is in most people's minds merely associated with a gorgeous bloody battle which took place on a Sunday morning in June, between the French and the English, with a Prussian army coming in vaguely somewhere. Every school child knows how the duke said, "Up guards, and at 'em!" (which he didn't), and how the imperial guard cried proudly that "They died but never surrendered" (which they did); but few people seem to exercise their minds as to how or why these various armies met on this particular point on this particular day, and it is on these points that I propose first to touch.

It will not be possible for me to do more than to touch lightly on the political situation that preceded and led up to the actual hostilities, but the origin of the campaign was briefly this:

Napoleon had been banished to Elba in 1814, but from that convenient point

of observation kept a watchful eye on the state of France. Ten months of Bourbon rule, characterized by blundering harshness which exasperated the entire people, were sufficient to throw this volatile nation into a state of ferment again, and Napoleon's opportunity had come. He was not slow to perceive and seize it. He knew that the army, whose idol he had been for nearly twenty years, was at heart still devoted to him, and only needed his presence to cast off their allegiance to the despised Louis XVIII. As Napoleon himself said at this period, "Our victories and misfortunes have established between me and the army an indestructible bond; with me alone can the army obtain once more vengeance, power, and glory," and again he proclaimed his mission in these words, "I caused the misfortunes of France, I ought to repair them."

With this philanthropic object in view Napoleon secretly left Elba on Feb. 26, 1815, accompanied by the faithful 1,000 guards who had accompanied him in his exile; and successfully evading the guard ships, landed near Cannes on March 1. He at once marched on Paris, the army everywhere flocking to his standard as fast as they were dispatched to oppose and capture him. Nay, "Le braves des braves," who had warmly approved the restoration of the Bourbons, and who before sallying out at the head of his army corps to arrest Napoleon, kissed Louis' hand and promised to bring Napoleon back in an "iron cage," was one of the first to desert and join him. After this act of treachery it can hardly be a matter for surprise that he was shot as a traitor, when captured after the battle of Waterloo. Napoleon entered Paris on March 20th (Louis having fled north the previous day), and he at once commenced to organize his government and his army. His first attempt was to gain time by opening negotiations with the European powers, but these with one consent refused to recognize or communicate with him, and his courtiers were turned back at the frontier. He was unanimously declared to have destroyed the only legal title to which he owed his political existence, to have placed himself outside the pale of the law, and that there could be neither truce nor peace with him. The proclamation of the Vienna convention concluded, "The powers in consequence declare that Napoleon Bonaparte is placed beyond the pale of civil and social relations, and that as a common enemy and disturber of the peace of the world he has delivered himself over to public justice."

And these were no idle threats, for on March 25th, Great Britain, Russia, Austria, and Prussia signed a treaty binding themselves to provide 150,000 men each, and to devote their entire resources to wiping Napoleon out of existence. As usual, however, England had to supply most of the real sinews of war, and be-

side her own expenses she contributed no less than eleven millions sterling to the friends of the allies in 1815. With great celerity the convention of the powers drew up their plan which was briefly to converge on Paris from all points of the French frontier with enormous armies, and to crush Napoleon between them. It was resolved to form four great armies, over 700,000 strong in all, and such an array of force had never before in the history of the world been put into motion for one object.

With marvellous energy Napoleon applied himself to the not reassuring task of organizing his forces to meet this terrible aggregation of foes, but his previous 20 years of war had drained the very life-blood of France, whose manhood had been literally decimated, and in spite of his almost superhuman exertions for the three months following his escape from Elba, he only succeeded in getting together a force of 277,000 regular troops, of which less than 200,000 were available for an offensive campaign. These campaigning troops were, however, nearly all veterans, full of enthusiasm, and of the finest possible quality. In fact they probably formed the most homogeneous and efficient force of its size that he had ever commanded. It will of course be evident that with this number he could not expect to successfully await the onslaught of his 700,000 foes, though great his valor and genius, but his chance lay in the fact that the vast hosts against him were much scattered and unprepared, and might be attacked singly before the others could come up. If then he could throw all his weight on the nearest army and gain a great victory, he might be able to conclude an advantageous peace with the Coalition, secure recognition of his sovereignty, and preserve France from invasion. He therefore decided to attack his most threatening foes, Wellington and Blücher, (commanding the British and Prussian armies in Belgium), first, and hoped by defeating them to reap the richest results.

From a strategic point of view he hoped to take advantage of their extended and weak front, to drive his army like a wedge in between them, pushing them apart and defeating them separately by alternate blows, and then seizing Brussels. The Belgians would then, he hoped, rally to his side, and another stride would take him to the Rhine, where he could base himself anew, and be on the flank of the allied armies as they advanced into France.

From a political point of view, he reckoned as a probable result that the defeat of Wellington would entail the fall of the British ministry, which would be replaced by the peace party, and the war would be ended at one stroke.

Of course there was no disguising the fact that he was in a desperate situation with overwhelming odds against him, but like the desperate gambler that he was, he was determined to risk all on the last throw, and this being admitted, his scheme was a most brilliant and daring one.

His first steps in carrying it out were as follows:

He first threw an almost impenetrable screen round his frontier and every outlet was most strictly guarded, so that the allies should be unable to discover his movements. He then very rapidly concentrated nearly 130,000 men behind the chain of northern fortresses, and between the rivers Sambre and Meuse.

Napoleon left Paris for the front on June 12th, and the concentration was complete on the 14th. His army, splendidly equipped in every detail, now consisted of 128,000 men, of whom 22,000 were cavalry, with 344 guns, and it was secretly drawn up close to the frontier. All was now ready for his destined swoop to separate Wellington and Blücher.

Let us turn to the latter and see how they were posted at this moment. They