

and the loud boom of a large gun resounded through the air.

Then came a deafening shout, followed by a rattling volley of small arms, gradually swelling into a hot sustained fire, through which the cannon pealed at intervals. Several large meadows lay along the river side, where our brigade was drawn up as the detachments landed from the boats; and here, although nearly a league distant from the town, we now heard the din and crash of battle, which increased every moment, the cannonade from the sierra convent, which at first was merely the fire of single guns, now thundered away in one long roll, amid which the sounds of falling walls and crashing roofs was mingled. It was evident to us, from the continual fire kept up, that the landing had been effected, while the swelling tide of musketry told that fresh troops were momentarily coming up.

In less than twenty minutes our brigade was formed, and we now only waited for two light four-pounders to be landed, when an officer galloped up in haste, and called out:—

"The French are in retreat," and pointing at the same moment to the Valonga road, we saw a long line of smoke and dust leading from the town, through which, as we gazed, the colours of the enemy might be seen, as they defiled, while the unbroken line of the waggons and heavy baggage proved that it was no partial movement, but the army itself retreating.

"Fourteenth, threes about, close up, trot," called out the loud and manly voice of our leader, and the heavy tramp of our squadrons shook the very ground, as we advanced towards the road to Valonga.

As we came on, the scene became one of overwhelming excitement; the masses of the enemy that poured unceasingly from the town could now be distinguished more clearly, and amid all the crash of gun carriages and caissons, the voices of the staff officers rose high as they hurried along the retreating battalions. A troop of flying artillery galloped forth at top speed, and wheeling their guns into position with the speed of lightning, prepared by a flanking fire to cover the retiring column. The gunners sprung from their seats, the guns were already unlimbered, when Sir George Murray, riding up at our left, called out:—

"Forward; close up; charge!"

The word was scarcely spoken, when a loud cheer answered the welcome sound, and the same instant the long line of shining helmets passed with the speed of a whirlwind: the pace increased at every stride, the ranks grew closer, and like the dread force of some mighty engine we fell upon the foe. I have felt all the glorious enthusiasm of a fox-hunt, when the loud cry of the hound, answered by the cheer of the joyous huntsman, stirred the very heart within, but never till now did I know how far higher the excitement reaches, when man to man, sabre to

sabre, arm to arm, we ride forward to the battlefield. On we went, the loud shout of "forward" still ringing in our ears. One broken, irregular discharge from the French guns shook the head of our advancing column, but stayed us not as we galloped madly on.

I remember no more: the din, the smoke, the crash,—the cry for quarter, with the shout of victory,—the flying enemy,—the agonizing shrieks of the wounded—are all co-mingled in my mind, but leave no trace of clearness or connection between them; and it was only when the column wheeled to re-form, behind the advancing squadrons, that I awoke from my trance of maddening excitement, and perceived that we had carried the position, and cut off the guns of the enemy.

"Well done, 14th!" said an old gray-headed colonel, as he rode along our line; "gallantly done, lads! The blood trickled from a sabre cut on his temple, along his cheek, as he spoke; but he either knew it not, or heeded it not.

"There go the Germans!" said Power; pointing to the remainder of our brigade, as they charged furiously upon the French infantry, and rode them down in masses.

Our guns came up at this time, and a plunging fire was opened upon the thick and retreating ranks of the enemy; the carnage must have been terrific, for the long breaches in their lines showed where the squadrons of the cavalry had passed, or the most destructive tide of the artillery had swept through them. The speed of the flying columns grew momentarily more; the road became blocked up, too, by broken carriages and wounded: and, to add, to their discomfiture, a damaging fire now opened from the town upon the retreating column, while the brigade of Guards and the 29th pressed hotly on their rear.

The scene was now beyond anything maddening in its interest. From the walls of Oporto the English infantry poured forth in pursuit; while the river was covered with boats, as they still continued to cross over. The artillery thundered from the Sierra, to protect the landing, for it was even still contested in places; and the cavalry, charging in flank, swept the broken ranks, and bore down upon their squares.

It was now, when the full-tide of victory ran highest in our favour, that we were ordered to retire from the road. Column after column passed before us, unmolested and unassailed; and not even a cannon-shot arrested their steps.

Some unaccountable timidity of our leader directed this movement: and while before our very eyes the gallant infantry were charging the retiring columns, we remained still and inactive.

How little did the sense of praise we had already won repay us for the shame and indignation we experienced at this moment, as with burning cheek