EATON CHARLOTTE WALDIE

WATERLOO DAYS

Charlotte Eaton

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Eaton C.

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Содержание

Charlotte Annie Waldie Eaton Waterloo Days The narrative of an Englishwoman resident at Brussels in June 1815

INTRODUCTION.[1]

The following little book which was first published within two years of the events which it describes, was republished in 1852, after some revision by the author, under the title of "The Days of Battle." It has now been out of print for a considerable time, but its merits as a very graphic and interesting description of those few momentous days which have left their mark on English literature no less than on the history of Europe, are sufficient, it is believed, to justify its republication in a popular series.

Though it was first published anonymously as a "Narrative of a few days' Residence in Belgium with some account of a visit to the field of Waterloo, by an Englishwoman," it has so much personal interest that the reader will, doubtless, be glad to know something of its author, more especially as she is favourably known by other works, and with other members of her family has claims upon the memory of a younger generation.

Miss Charlotte Anne Waldie, the lady in question, was born 28 September, 1788, and was the second of three daughters of George Waldie, Esq., of Hendersyde Park, near Kelso, Roxburghshire, and Forth House, Newcastle-on-Tyne. There were also two sons, one of whom is mentioned in the following pages, but they both died without issue. The eldest daughter, Maria Jane, married in 1812 Mr. Richard Griffith, the distinguished civil engineer, who was appointed by Government sole commissioner for the general valuation of Ireland, and was the author of the famous geological map of that country. After more than forty years of arduous public service, during a large part of which he was President of the Board of Works in Ireland, he was created a baronet; and his son, Sir George R. Waldie-Griffith, inherited Mr. Waldie's estates.

The youngest of the three sisters, Jane, was an accomplished painter, and her pictures are to be met with in many institutions in the north of England. She also had considerable literary talent, and wrote a work entitled "Sketches descriptive of Italy," which was published in four volumes in 1820. She married Captain, afterwards Admiral, Watts, of Langton Grange, near Staindrop, Darlington, but unfortunately died in early life.

Charlotte, the sister with whom we are chiefly concerned, accompanied her brother and younger sister, as is hereafter related, on a visit to Brussels, in June, 1815, when it had temporarily and hastily become the headquarters of the army under Wellington. The allied forces, as every one supposed, were to meet and crush Napoleon, who had just returned from Elba, before he had time to take the offensive. But his movements were more rapid than had been anticipated, and the Belgian capital, crowded with non-combatants of both sexes, instead of being merely a point of departure, suddenly found itself the central point of the seat of war. The pen of Thackeray has well adapted this dramatic situation to the purposes of fiction; but in the following pages we have the circumstances brought before us with all the vividness which actual experience only can give. A few weeks later the two sisters visited the field of Waterloo, and a short narrative of the battle written by one, and

[1] I have to thank Mr. C.O. Eaton, J.P., of Tolethorpe Hall, Stamford, for his assistance in preparing this account of his mother's various writings; and Mr. George Hooper, author of "Waterloo, the Downfall of the First Napoleon," for kindly revising the notes at the end of the volume.

illustrated by the pencil of the other, was published anonymously by Murray, and rapidly went through ten editions.

In the course of the next year the two sisters rejoined their brother in France, and went on with him to Italy, and it was then, as explained in the author's preface, that the following account, which incorporated the previous narrative, made its appearance.

In 1817-18 Miss Charlotte Waldie was again in Italy, and in 1820 published, still anonymously, her best known work, "Rome in the Nineteenth Century."[2] This work gives the result of her own experience and observation, and is written in the personal style which, when it is combined, as in her case it is, with cultivated taste and sensible criticism, is not to be equalled in interest by any formal description. Notwithstanding the many changes which recent research and excavation have wrought in the descriptive topography of Rome the book is still useful to travellers, and is largely quoted by the latest popular writer on the subject.[3]

In the same year her sister published her "Sketches in Italy," above referred to. Two years later Charlotte Waldie married Stephen Eaton, Esq., banker, of Stamford, and of Ketton Hall, Rutland. A few years afterwards she published a story in three volumes, entitled "Continental Adventures."

Mrs. Eaton's last work, "At Home and Abroad," was published in 1831. In 1851 she prepared a new edition, the fifth, of "Rome in the Nineteenth Century," in two volumes, with illustrations, for Bohn's Illustrated Library, and in 1852 she revised the present work for the same publisher. She died on 28 April, 1859, in the seventy-first year of her age.

The following reprint differs only from the author's last edition in respect to the title and the appended notes. It must be remembered that the few details of the battle of Waterloo are based upon the reports current at the time, and have since been supplemented or corrected in various ways. In all that came under the writer's own observation there is no room for doubt as to her correctness, and her picture of Brussels during the days of battle is corroborated by another account, also by a lady and an English writer, namely, the well-known Fanny Burney, who was then the wife of General D'Arblay, a French officer in the service of Louis XVIII. Madame D'Arblay, being unsuccessful in an attempt to leave the city by canal-boat, spent some weeks in Brussels, but pre-occupied as she was by the absence of her husband she exercised less observation on what was going on around her, and her account is far less graphic than that of her younger fellow-countrywoman. Nor did she visit the field of battle, and realize in an equal degree the terrible penalty which war exacts from victors as well as vanquished.[4] Whilst military glories are held to be worthy of commemoration, it is fitting that such details should not be left untold. And in truth the campaign of Waterloo has memories which an Englishman cannot afford to lose. If a righteous and unselfish cause may hallow the horrors of those days, it is not well to ignore them altogether. If a cool and confident intrepidity on the part of a leader, if daring disregard of life in comparison with duty on the part of his officers, if resolute and patient endurance for hours, of rank and file, under repeated charge, or still more deadly storm of lead – if, in short, courage and fortitude, well employed, are virtues not yet out of date, the tale of Waterloo should still be told, and this little book, genuine as it is, has still its testimony to add thereto.

E.B.

[2] The first edition was published by Constable, Edinburgh; a second edition was brought out by Murray in 1826.

[3] See "Walks in Rome," by Augustus J.C. Hare.

[4] There is another small book published shortly before this, "A Visit to Flanders in July, 1815," by James Simpson (Edinburgh, 1815), which also gives an account of the field a few weeks after the battle. Müffling's "Passages from my Life," and Kincaird's "Adventures in the Rifle Brigade," also give some interesting details of Brussels on the eve of Waterloo.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

This little Narrative is the simple and faithful account of one who was a spectator of the scenes she describes, and a witness of the events she relates, during those days of desperate conflict and unparalleled victory which must be for ever memorable in British history, and interesting to every British heart. It was written whilst the impression of those eventful scenes was yet fresh upon the mind: and the thoughts and feelings which such awful and affecting circumstances were irresistibly calculated to inspire, were expressed without restraint, in the full security of the sympathy and approbation of the partial friends for whose perusal alone this Narrative was intended.

During the absence of the Author in Italy in 1816, the members of her family in England sent the manuscript to the late Mr. Murray, and it was already in the press before she received any intimation of its intended publication.

The Author must be permitted most earnestly to disclaim all idea of entering into competition with the writers whose talents and genius have been so well employed in describing the battle and the field of Waterloo. They were not, however, like the Author, on the spot at the time; they were pilgrims who afterwards visited the memorable scenes of these glorious events, and wrote from report: they related the past – she described the present.

Conscious of her inadequacy to a theme on which all that can be said falls so far short of what must be felt; impossible as it is to do justice to the achievements of that gallant army who have been the champions, the conquerors, and the deliverers of the world, and to whom, under Heaven, Europe owes her security, and England her glory – the writer yet ventures to hope, that the generous indulgence of a British public will be extended to this humble attempt to record the proofs displayed on those glorious "days of battle," of their heroic valour in combat, their noble magnanimity in victory, and their unshaken fortitude in suffering – faintly and feebly as they are described by

An Englishwoman.

THE DAYS OF BATTLE

June 1815

On Saturday, the 10th of June, 1815, my brother, my sister, and myself, sailed from the pier of Ramsgate at three in the afternoon, in company with Sir Neil Campbell, the celebrated Knight of Elba, Major Wylie, of the Royal Fusiliers, extra aide-de-camp to the Duke of Wellington, a Mr. N., an English merchant; together with an incongruous assemblage of horses, dogs, and barouches; Irish servants, French valets, and steerage passengers, too multifarious to mention, all crowded together into a wretched little packet. On Sunday evening, the 11th of June, we found ourselves, after a passage of thirty-six hours, many miles distant from Ostend, lying at anchor in a dead calm, and without a hope of reaching it till the following morning. To escape remaining another night amidst the discomforts of this packet, without food, for we had eaten up all our provisions; and without sleep, for we had experimentally proved that none was to be got, our three selves, and our three companions in misfortune, the Knight, the Major, and the Merchant, embarked in a crazy little boat, about nine o'clock in a beautiful summer's evening, as the sun was sinking in golden splendour, and trusted ourselves to the mercy of the waves. The tide was running strong against the rowers, and night closed in long before we approached the shore; but though the light of the heavens had faded, the ocean was illuminated with that beautiful phosphoric fire so well known in warmer latitudes. The most brilliant magic light played upon the surface of the waters, and marked the path of our little vessel through the deep, with the softest, purest radiance; the oars seemed to be moving through liquid fire, and every drop, as it dashed from them, sparkled like the blaze of a diamond: the little rippling waves, as they curled their heads, were covered with the same transparent ethereal fire, which would mock the powers of the poet's fancy, "glancing from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven," to embody or describe. It is more like the pale beam the glow-worm sheds from his evening lamp than anything on earth, but ten thousand times more bright and more beautiful. By such a light Oberon and his Queen, attended by their band of tiny sprites, might have held their midnight revels, amidst the bowers and halls of fairyland; and by such a light, enchanted spirits in happier worlds might be supposed to slumber. This soft, transparent, *unearthly* light gleaming around us, and kindling at every touch in living brightness over the waters; the calm and glassy stillness of the wide extended ocean; the softened glow that lingered in the western sky; and the mild breath of evening, made our passage to the shore, slow as it was, most delightful. It was a night calculated to soothe every unquiet passion into rest, and in which the imagination loved to indulge in dreams of delight and beauty. The heart must have been cold that did not feel the harmony of nature, and the spirit turbulent that did not partake of its repose: everything seemed to have been touched by the hand of enchantment. But the magic spell was dissolved, and the visions of fancy faded away in a moment; for we suddenly struck upon the sands, when we seemed still far from the shore; waves of apparent fire dashed into the boat; and the sturdy sailors, abandoning their oars, seized upon us without the smallest ceremony, and carried us literally through fire and water to the beach.

Thus were we thrown, late at night, and in the dark, upon a foreign coast, uncertain which way to direct our steps through the deep, deserted, trackless sands that surrounded us; forewarned of the rapid approach of the tides upon this coast, and wholly at a loss in what direction lay the town, or how to get admittance through the sentry posts, at such an hour, if we did reach it. Yet under these appalling circumstances, I cannot say that we felt the smallest alarm, or even a momentary uncomfortable situation: we had no fear of being drowned, nor the remotest idea that any more serious mischief could befal us than spending the night upon the sands, of which, however, there seemed to be much

probability. Luckily for us, this Mr. N. proved a most able pilot; he had frequently been at Ostend before, and led the way with great sagacity, in spite of the darkness in which we were involved. We were all loaded with travelling bags, or parcels of some sort, for it was with difficulty the little nutshell of a boat contained our six selves, and all the servants were left in the vessel. We were each, therefore, obliged to carry all that we wanted of our travelling equipments; and thus burdened, and sinking every step ankle deep in the heavy sands, we reached at last, with considerable toil, the fortifications, and were immediately hailed by the soldier on guard. We declared ourselves to be "friends," but in vain; friends or foes were all the same to the sentry; we might have lain all night in the ditch, for anything he cared; for his orders were positive, to admit no person into the garrison, without the express order of the commandant after dark. But the cocked hat, aide-de-camp's uniform, and authoritative tone of Major Wylie carried us all through. He declared "that he and his party were going to join the army with speed;" and, although some of us must have struck the sentry as not being likely to prove a very valuable reinforcement to the troops, he did not venture to make any further opposition, and we all entered Ostend. Although we came "in such a questionable shape," we obtained admittance into "La Cour Impériale," where we got an excellent supper, which was particularly acceptable to some of us, who had eaten nothing all day, excepting a bit of bread. We then went to bed, where we enjoyed the sweets of undisturbed repose, with a zest which none but those who have spent a suffocating, sick, and sleepless night in a wretched little berth on board a packet, can understand.

Next day, after viewing the fortifications, which, although they had been recently repaired by the English, could no longer stand the long sieges which have made Ostend famous in history, we proceeded to Bruges, walked about in the rain till late at night, to visit the beautiful Hôtel de Ville, and other public buildings of that fine old city; and rose early the next morning to see the churches of San Sauveur and Notre Dame, and the magnificent tombs of Charles the Bold and his daughter. Already the churches were crowded with pious Catholics, whose attention was sadly distracted from their devotion by our appearance: sometimes they whispered an Ave Maria with the utmost fervency of prayer; and sometimes an half-uttered exclamation of wonder burst from their lips; sometimes they resolutely resumed counting their beads, and sometimes their eyes involuntarily rested on our foreign figures with the broad stare of curiosity.

We left Bruges in the same bark which had once conveyed Napoleon Buonaparte to that city, and which is now used as a côche d'eau. It contained 150 people of every sort and description, from the courtiers of Louis XVIII. down to Flemish peasants; all of whom, however, were obliging, talkative, attentive, flattering, and amusing. After dining on board, and spending a most entertaining day, we arrived in the evening at Ghent.

The whole of Wednesday we spent in this ancient city, and though its extent is so great as to have been the subject of a well-known imperial quibble,[5] I believe we left but little of it unexplored. We visited its magnificent cathedral, whose walls, pillars, roofs, columns, and pulpits are formed of the richest polished marble of every varying hue, and carved with exquisite skill; and whose sculptured ornaments, the work of ages when the statuary's art was in high perfection, seemed almost to start to life before our eyes. We explored the deep sepulchral gloom of its subterranean church; visited the costly shrines of all the saints; contemplated the ancient and decaying monasteries, which were formerly its pride; made a most indefatigable research after cabinets of paintings; and wandered with the utmost perseverance through its abominable streets. We saw the balcony in which the monster Vandamme, in the bloody times of the Revolution, used to stand, day after day, to see victims led out, at his bidding, to the guillotine. In its altered scenes, we now beheld loyal Bourbon beaux in gold epaulettes, and smart Flemish belles, in French fashions, laughing and flirting. We, like them, paraded in its gay promenade, and rambled through the perfumed walks and exotic bowers of its beautiful

[5] The Emperor Charles V., in disparagement of the capital City of his rival, used to delight in saying, "Je peux mettre tout Paris dans *mon Gand*." Ghent, on the Continent, is always spelt and pronounced Gand, the same as *gant*, glove.

Botanic Garden. The City of Ghent seemed to be restored to some traces of its ancient grandeur by the temporary residence of the Bourbon princes, and the little expatriated court of Louis XVIII. I had never been able to feel any extravagant degree of attachment to this unfortunate royal family: their restoration had not given me any enthusiastic joy, nor their fall much sorrow; and even the honour of paying my devoirs to Louis le Désiré, and exchanging some profound and reverential bows and courtesies with his most Catholic Majesty, failed to inspire me with much interest or admiration for this persecuted, princely race. These bows, by the way, cost the good old king considerable time and labour, for he is extremely unwieldy and corpulent, and gouty; and he looks very lethargic and snuffy; and it is really a thousand pities that an exiled and dethroned monarch should be so remarkably uninteresting a personage.

Early in the morning of Thursday, the 15th of June, we left the City of Ghent, passed its ancient walls, and crossed the "lazy Scheldt," which is here but a small stream, and belies the epithet Goldsmith applies to its more advanced course; for it runs with considerable rapidity. We proceeded along the straight, undeviating line of the broad, flat chaussée, or paved road, that leads to Brussels. It is bordered on each side with rows of tall trees, which form one long interminable avenue, as far as the eye can reach. We remembered that it was down this very road that Napoleon Buonaparte had made his triumphant progress through the Netherlands, and we most devoutly hoped, that neither by this, nor any other road, he would ever have it in his power to enter them again.

The country is thickly covered with neat cottages, scattered hamlets, and small farm-houses: the fields were waving with tall, luxuriant crops of corn, and far from wearing the appearance of the theatre of war, it seemed to be the abode of peace and plenty; and hope, contentment, and hilarity shone in the countenances of the people. The peasants almost all wore sabots; but the cottage children, bare-footed and bare-headed, frequently pursued the carriage for miles, keeping pace with the horses, tumbling as they went along, singing Flemish patriotic songs, the burden of which was invariably, "Success to the English, and destruction to the French;" and crying with unwearied perseverance, "Vivé[6] les Anglaises!" "Dat for Napoleon!" expressing at the same time, by an emphatic gesture, cutting off his head. They threw bouquets of flowers into the carriage, twisted their little sun-burnt faces into the most extraordinary grimaces, and kept whirling round on their hands and feet, in imitation of the rotatory motion of a wheel. Dr. Clarke, in his Travels, mentions that the children of the Arabs in Egypt performed the same exploit, and for the same purpose, that of extorting from the passengers a few sous; nay, even one they seemed to think a sufficient reward for a laborious chase of more than a league, and the exhibition of all these fatiguing antics.

At the little town of Alost, half way to Brussels, we stopped to dine. It was the head-quarters of the Duc de Berri, and the streets, the promenades, and the caffés looked gay. There is a pleasant walk, shaded by trees, round the ramparts; for, this little town, like every other in the Netherlands, was formerly fortified; although its dismantled walls no longer afford any means of defence. A violent shower of rain obliged us to take refuge, in rather an unceremonious manner, in a small house, the mistress of which, who was preparing to take her afternoon's coffee (though it was only one o'clock), received us with the utmost courtesy and kindness. Short as our stay was beneath her roof, it was long enough for her to express with great energy her detestation of Napoleon and of the French; which she said was universal throughout Belgium. We had a good deal of conversation with her upon this subject, and upon the past and present state of Belgium. – "Ah, madame! before they came among us," she said, "this was a very different country. Then we were rich, and good, and happy." She lamented over the trade, the manufactories, the commerce they had destroyed; the contributions they had exacted; the fine young men they had seized as conscripts; the convents they had ruined; the priests and "les bonnes religieuses" they had turned to the door. Wherever we had gone before, and wherever we afterwards went, we heard the same sentiments from every tongue, and we saw

[6] I write it not grammatically, but as they pronounced it, with a strong emphasis on the last letter.

the most unequivocal signs of the inveterate hatred of the Belgic people towards their former rulers. It bursts out spontaneously, as if they could not suppress it; their whole countenances change; their eyes sparkle with indignation; their very gestures are eloquent, and they seem at a loss for words strong enough to express the bitterness of their detestation. This surprised us not a little, as in England we had been taught to believe that the French were popular in this country; but we were at length convinced of our mistake. It is the *English*, not the French, who are popular in Belgium; and it was far more gratifying than any individual distinction could have been, to find that we were everywhere received with marked attention and respect for the sake of our country, and that the name of England is everywhere beloved and honoured.

At the village of Ashe, half way between Alost and Brussels, while I was buying in a little shop a basket of "gateaux sucrés," for which the place is famous, two Belgic ladies, who happened to be there, entered into conversation with me, with all the ease of foreign manners, and uttered the same energetic invective against their late French Government, and animated praise of the English, which we heard from every tongue during our stay in Belgium. These people evidently speak from their hearts: and yet in manners, in customs, in ancient ties, in modern predilections, and even in language, they are French. Their deep-rooted hatred, therefore, of the people to whom they were so firmly attached, must have sprung from very flagrant wrongs, and very galling oppression.

Alost is situated on the little river Dender, and from the road we caught a glimpse of the spire of Dendermond, so famous for its siege by the Allies in the last century. We were now in a country which had repeatedly been, in every age, the seat of war, and in which England had already gained immortal glory. In retracing the proud history of her past triumphs, and her recent and not less brilliant conquests, we felt the firm assurance that in those scenes where the British under the Duke of Marlborough had, in the eighteenth century, won the glorious victories of Oudenarde, Ramillies, and Malplaquet, the British under the Duke of Wellington, in the nineteenth century, would gain fresh laurels and immortal renown, and raise still higher the glory of their country's arms.

After leaving Alost, the country became more rich and undulating. Instead of a dull, dead flat, which we had before traversed, sloping grounds, and distant hills, and sheltered valleys diversified the prospect. The woods rose in prouder beauty, and the fields were dressed in brighter verdure and richer luxuriance; and as we passed through those smiling scenes, and saw the husbandman pursuing his peaceful labours, the cottage wife busy with her household cares, and the merry groups of haymakers spread over the fragrant meadows, we rejoiced in the hope that the hand of the spoiler would never lay waste these fruitful fields, nor burn these peaceful hamlets, and that these contented peasants would never again be torn from their homes to fight in the cause of unprincipled ambition, and become in turn the instruments of that oppression of which they had been the victims. It was with a feeling of pride for our country we indulged the thought that it was to England they owed their security; that it was her protecting arm which interposed the impenetrable shield of her armies between them and the tyranny and usurpation of France. We could not but rejoice that since the awful struggle must be made, its horrors – if inevitable – would, at least, be distant; – that since the awful thunderbolt of war must fall, it would descend, in all human probability, upon that country which had raised the storm; and that France herself would at length be visited by some part of the dreadful calamities which she had so long and so mercilessly inflicted upon other nations.[7]

Short sighted mortals! while we fondly indulged these hopes, and exulted in the blessings of security and peace, how little did we suspect that the most aggravated horrors of war were ready to burst over our heads; how little did we foresee the rapid changes and alarming events which even this very day was destined to produce; and while we watched the sun sinking in glory in the western sky, how little did we dream of the scenes that were to pass before the dawn of morning! In all the bliss of ignorance, however, we journeyed along, admiring from afar the lofty towers and spires of Brussels,

[7] It was not expected at that time that Belgium would be the theatre of war, but that the Allies would advance into France.

and its crowded roofs clustering round the steep sides of a hill, in the midst of a rich and cheerful country, and thinking with joyful and impatient anticipation of the well-known faces of the beloved friends whom we were to meet within its walls.

Near Brussels we passed a body of Brunswick troops (called Black Brunswickers). They were dressed in black, and mounted upon black horses, and their helmets were surmounted with tall nodding plumes of black horsehair, which gave them a most sombre and funereal appearance. As they slowly moved along the road before us in a long regular procession, they looked exactly like an immense moving hearse. I laughed, and observed to my sister, "that one might take this for a bad omen, and that it reminded me of the mourning wedding-ring in the Simple Story." Some of these black, ominous looking men kept before us, and entered Brussels along with us. At first we passed through some mean, dirty streets, but the appearance of the town soon improved. The houses are large, ancient, and highly ornamented. There is an air of grandeur and of architectural design in the towns of Flanders, which is peculiarly striking, on first coming from the plain, diminutive, shopkeeper-looking, red brick rows of houses in England. The streets of Brussels are narrow, but they have that air of bustle, opulence, and animation, which characterises a metropolis. To us everything was new and amusing: the people, the dresses, the houses, the shops, the very signs diverted us. Every notice was stuck up in the French language, and quite in the French style: the poorest and most paltry shop called itself a Magazine. Here were Magasins de Modes, Magasins de Souliers, Magasins de – everything, in short: it was amusing to see the names of people and trades, that we had only been accustomed to meet with in French books and plays, stuck up in gilt letters above every shop-door.

Everything wore a military aspect; and the number of troops of different nations, descriptions, and dresses, which filled the town, made it look very gay. Soldiers' faces, or at least their white belts and red coats, were to be seen at every window; and in our slow progress through the streets we were delighted to see the British soldiers, and particularly the Highlanders, laughing and joking, with much apparent glee, with the inhabitants. On our right we caught a glimpse of the magnificent spire of the Hôtel de Ville, far exceeding, in architectural beauty, anything I remember to have seen. We slowly continued to ascend the windings of the long and steep hill, which leads from the low to the high town of Brussels, and the upper part of which is called La Montagne du Parc. Passing on our left the venerable towers of the Cathedral, we reached at last the summit of this huge "Montagne;" and the Parc of Brussels, of which we had heard, read, and talked so much, unexpectedly opened upon us. What a transition from the dark, narrow, gloomy streets of the low town to the lightness, gaiety, and beauty of the Parc, crowded with officers in every variety of military uniform, with elegant women, and with lively parties and gay groups of British and Belgic people, loitering, walking, talking, and sitting under the trees! There could not be a more animated, a more holiday scene; everything looked gay and festive, and everything spoke of hope, confidence, and busy expectation.

The Parc of Brussels does not bear the smallest resemblance to what in England we denominate a park. It is more like a garden enclosed with iron rails, the interior of which is laid out with gravel-walks, grass-plots, and parterres, shaded with trees, and ornamented with fountains[8] and statues. It is quite a promenade, and is exclusively devoted to pedestrians. The walks are formal, but kept with great exactness, and the tout ensemble looks gay, inviting, and pleasant. It is surrounded by a wide street, enclosed by a square of magnificent houses, in which are the palace of the Prince of Orange, and many beautiful public buildings. Compared to this grand square, the finest squares of London, Edinburgh, and Dublin, are small and paltry. Adjoining the Parc is the Place Royale, and so strikingly grand and imposing is its architecture, that we all uttered an involuntary exclamation of surprise and admiration as we drove into it. The doors and windows of the Hôtel Bellevue, and of the Hôtel de Flandre, adjoining to it, were crowded with British officers. We took possession of two pleasant

[8] Afterwards, on our return to Brussels, I observed an inscription on one of these fountains, purporting, that the Czar, Peter the Great, having drunk too freely of wine, fell into its waters. The day and year are mentioned. It was, I think, about a century ago.

rooms in the latter, which had been secured for us by the kind attention of Sir Neil Campbell. They were in the troisième étage, and we had a hundred steps to ascend; but we were fortunate in procuring such good accommodation, as Brussels was extremely crowded. We had not entered the hotel many minutes, and had not once sat down, when we recognised our pleasant compagnon de voyage, Major Wylie, standing in the Place Royale below, encompassed with officers. He saw us, took off his hat, and, breaking from the people that surrounded him, darted in at the door of the hotel, and was with us in a minute. Breathless with haste, he could scarcely articulate that hostilities had commenced! Our amazement may be conceived: at first we could scarcely believe him to be in earnest. "Upon my honour," exclaimed Major Wylie, still panting, and scarcely able to speak, from the haste with which he had flown up the hundred steps, "it is quite true; and the troops are ordered to be in readiness to march at a moment's notice; and we shall probably leave Brussels to-morrow morning." In answer to our eager inquiries, he then told us that this unexpected intelligence had only just arrived; that he had that moment left the Duke of Wellington's table, where he had been dining with a party of officers; and that, just as the dessert had been set upon the table, a courier had arrived, bringing dispatches from Marshal Blucher, announcing that he had been attacked by the French: but although the fighting was hot, it seemed to be Blucher's opinion that it would most probably be nothing more than a mere skirmish. While the Duke was reading the dispatches, the Prince of Orange, General Mufflin, and some other foreign officers had come in. After a short debate, the Duke, expecting that the blow would be followed up, and believing that it was the enemy's plan to crush the English army, and take Brussels, immediately ordered the troops to be in readiness to take the field at a moment's notice. "And when did all this happen? – when was this attack made?" we anxiously inquired. "It took place this afternoon." "This afternoon!" I exclaimed, in astonishment, and, I suppose, with looks of consternation, which drew a good-natured smile from Major Wylie, for we had not been used to hear of battles so near, or fought the same afternoon. "Yes, it happened this very afternoon," said Mayor Wylie; "and when the express came away, they were fighting as hard as ever: but after all, it may prove a mere trifling affair of outposts – nothing at all." "But are the French in great force? Where are they? Where are the Prussians? How far off do you suppose all this fighting is?" were some of the many questions we asked. The fighting was in the neighbourhood of Charleroi, about half a day's march from Brussels: nothing certainly was known of the force of the French. In fact, nothing at all was known, except that the French had this very day attacked the Prussians, when they were totally unprepared, at a short distance from us. "However, after all, this may end in nothing," said Major Wylie, after a pause; "we *may* have to march to-morrow morning, or we may not march these three weeks: but the Duke expects another dispatch from Blucher, and that will settle the business: " and so saying, Major Wylie went away to dress for a ball. Yes, a ball! for the Duke of Wellington, and his aides-de-camp, and half of the British officers, though they expected to go to a battle to-morrow, were going to a ball to-night, at the Duchess of Richmond's; and to the ball they did accordingly go. They seemed to say, or to feel, with the Scottish Chief in Douglas:

"This night once more
Within these walls we rest: our tents we pitch
To-morrow in the field. Prepare the feast! —
Free is his heart who for his country fights:
He on the eve of battle may resign
Himself to social pleasure: sweetest then,
When danger to a soldier's soul endears
The human joy that never may return."

Late as it was, my brother and sister went to call upon Mrs. H., whom they were impatient to see. They had not been gone many minutes, when Sir Neil Campbell sent up to ask if I would

admit him. I made no objection: so in he came, looking magnificent, in a full dress uniform, covered with crosses, clasps, orders, and medals. Behold me, then, tête-à-tête with this splendid beau, in my own room, between ten and eleven o'clock at night! In England it would have been extraordinary enough, to be sure; but in Brussels it was nothing. It was impossible to receive him, or anybody else, in any other place than a bed-room, for the Hôtel de Flandre was entirely composed of bed-rooms, all of which were occupied. Without discomposing myself about the matter, therefore, I gave Sir Neil Campbell some tea, and we had a long chat together. He, too, had been dining with the Duke of Wellington, and had been present when these important dispatches arrived, and from him I heard a repetition of all that Major Wylie had told us, with the alarming addition, that the French were said to be upwards of 100,000 strong, and that Napoleon himself was at the head of the army. It was generally thought that this attack upon the Prussians was a stratagem to conceal more effectually his real designs, of surprising Brussels, and destroying, if possible, at one blow, the English army. It was well known that the Russians had crossed the Rhine; and Sir Neil Campbell said *he* had no doubt that Buonaparte would push forward at all hazards, and give battle before they could arrive. As Sir Neil Campbell had certainly reason to know *something* of Buonaparte, and as these rapid, unexpected movements were in perfect uniformity with his general policy, this conjecture seemed but too probable; but we concluded that the numbers of the French must be prodigiously exaggerated. It seemed quite incredible that so large an army could have formed, advanced, and even attacked Marshal Blucher, without his having any knowledge of their movements; and even if their force was very superior to ours, I felt confident that they would meet with a very different reception from that which they expected; and that Napoleon, with every advantage on his side, would not find the defeat of an English army quite so easy a thing in practice, as he had always seemed to consider it in theory. Having settled this point much to our mutual satisfaction, Sir Neil Campbell went away. My brother and sister returned, and we went to bed.

But we were not destined long to enjoy the sweets of repose. Scarcely had I laid my weary head on the pillow, when the bugle's loud and commanding call sounded from the Place Royale. "Is that the call to arms?" I exclaimed, starting up in the bed. My sister laughed at the idea; but it was repeated, and we listened with eager and anxious suspense. For a few moments a pause of doubt ensued. Hark! again! it sounded through the silence of the night, and from every quarter of the town it was now repeated, at short and regular intervals. "It is the call to arms!" I exclaimed. Instantly the drums beat; the Highland pibroch sounded – It was the call to arms! Oh! never shall I forget the feelings of that moment! Immediately the utmost tumult and confusion succeeded to the silence in which the city had previously been buried. At half-past two we were roused by a loud knocking at our room door, and my brother's voice calling to us to get up instantly, not to lose a moment – that the troops were under arms – were marching out against the French – and that Major Llewellyn was waiting to see us before he left Brussels. Inexpressibly relieved to find that this nocturnal alarm was occasioned by the departure of Major Llewellyn, not by the arrival of the French, which, in the first startling confusion of my thoughts, and trepidation of my mind, had actually entered my head; and much better pleased to meet an old and kind friend, than to run away from a furious enemy, we got up with the greatest alacrity, and hastily throwing some clothes about us, flew to see Llewellyn, who was waiting on the stairs. Short and agitated indeed was our meeting under such circumstances. By the light of a candle in my brother's room, we sat down for a few minutes on some boxes, scarcely able to believe our senses, that all this was real, and almost inclined to doubt whether it was not a dream: but the din of war which resounded in our ears too painfully convinced us that it was no illusion of phantasy: – we could scarcely even "snatch a fearful joy," for not for a single moment could we banish from our minds the impression, that in a few moments we must part, perhaps for ever, and that this hurried interview might prove our last. We could only gaze intently upon each other, as if to retain a lasting remembrance of the well-known countenance, should we indeed be destined to meet no more: we could only utter incoherent words or disjointed speeches. While he still lingered, we heard his charger,

which his servant held in the court-yard below, neighing and pawing the ground, as if impatient of his master's delay, and eager to bear him to the field. Our greetings and adieus were equally hurried. We bade him farewell, and saw him go to battle.

It was nearly two years since we had met; and little did we think, when we parted in the peaceful valleys of Roxburghshire, that our next, and perhaps our last, meeting would be in Brussels, in the dead of the night, and on the very eve of battle. He was the same to us as a brother. He left us then, as now, to fight the battles of his country; and we trusted that victory and glory would still follow the British arms, and that he would once more return in honour and safety.

Just as he left us, the dawn appeared, and, by the faint twilight of morning, we saw the Place Royale filled with armed men, and with all the tumult and confusion of martial preparation. All was "hurry skurry for the field." Officers were looking in vain for their servants – servants running in pursuit of their masters – baggage waggons were loading – bât horses preparing – trains of artillery harnessing. – And amidst the clanking of horses' hoofs, the rolling of heavy carriages, the clang of arms, the sounding of bugles, and the neighing of chargers, we distinctly heard, from time to time, the loud, deep-toned word of command, while the incessant din of hammers nailing "gave dreadful note of preparation."

A second express had arrived from Blucher, bringing intelligence that the French were in much more formidable force than he had imagined; that the attack was become serious; they had taken Charleroi, and driven back the Prussians. It was, therefore, necessary for the British to march immediately to support them. The Duke had received the dispatches containing this important news in the ball-room. We were afterwards told, that upon perusing them he seemed for a few minutes to be absolutely absorbed in a profound reverie, and completely abstracted from every surrounding object; and that he was even heard to utter indistinctly a few words to himself. After a pause, he folded up the dispatches, called one of his staff officers to him, gave the necessary orders with the utmost coolness and promptitude; and having directed the army to be put in motion immediately, he himself stayed at the ball till past two in the morning. The cavalry officers, whose regiments, for the most part, were quartered in villages about the frontier, ten, fifteen, and even twenty miles off, flew from the ball-room in dismay, in search of their horses, and galloped off in the dark, without baggage or attendants, in the utmost perplexity which way to go, or where to join their regiments, which might have marched before they could arrive. Numbers of the officers had been out when the first order to be in readiness to march was issued, and remained in perfect ignorance of the commencement of hostilities, until the alarm sounded, and called them from scenes of festivity and mirth to scenes of war and bloodshed. As the dawn broke, the soldiers were seen assembling from all parts of the town, in marching order, with their knapsacks on their backs, loaded with three days' provision. Unconcerned in the midst of the din of war, many a soldier laid himself down on a truss of straw, and soundly slept, with his hands still grasping his firelock; others were sitting contentedly on the pavement, waiting the arrival of their comrades. Numbers were taking leave of their wives and children, perhaps for the last time, and many a veteran's rough cheek was wet with the tears of sorrow. One poor fellow, immediately under our windows, turned back again and again, to bid his wife farewell, and take his baby once more in his arms; and I saw him hastily brush away a tear with the sleeve of his coat, as he gave her back the child for the last time, wrung her hand, and ran off to join his company, which was drawn up on the other side of the Place Royale.

Many of the soldiers' wives marched out with their husbands to the field, and I saw one young English lady mounted on horseback, slowly riding out of town along with an officer, who, no doubt, was her husband. But even at this interesting moment, when thousands were parting with those nearest and dearest to their hearts, my gravity was suddenly overset, and my sorrow turned into mirth, by the unexpected appearance of a long train of market carts, loaded with cabbages, green peas, cauliflowers, early potatoes, old women, and strawberries, peaceably jogging along, one after another, to market. These good people, who had never heard of battles, and who were perfectly at a loss to comprehend

what could be the meaning of all this uproar, stared with astonishment at the spectacle before them, and actually gaped with wonder, as they slowly made their way in their long carts through the crowds of soldiers which filled the Place Royale. There was something so inexpressibly ludicrous in the contrast which the grotesque figures and rustic dresses of these old women presented to this martial hurry and confusion, that really "*not* to laugh surpassed all powers of face," and that I did laugh I must acknowledge, though it was perhaps very ill-timed levity. Soon afterwards the 42nd and 92nd Highland regiments marched through the Place Royale and the Parc, with their bagpipes playing before them, while the bright beams of the rising sun shone full on their polished muskets, and on the dark waving plumes of their tartan bonnets. We admired their fine athletic forms, their firm erect military demeanour and undaunted mien. We felt proud that they were our countrymen: in their gallant bearing we recognised the true hardy sons of Caledon, men who would conquer or die; and we could not restrain a tear at the reflection, how few of that warlike band who now marched out so proudly to battle might ever live to return. Alas! we little thought that even before the fall of night these brave men, whom we now gazed at with so much interest and admiration, would be laid low!

During the whole night, or rather morning, we stood at the open window, unable to leave these sights and sounds of war, or to desist for a moment from contemplating a scene so new, so affecting, and so deeply interesting to us. Regiment after regiment formed and marched out of Brussels; we heard the last word of command – March! the heavy measured uniform tread of the soldiers' feet upon the pavement, and the last expiring note of the bugles, as they sounded from afar.

We saw our gallant army leave Brussels with emotions which may be better imagined than described. They went again to meet that enemy whom they had so often encountered, and as invariably vanquished; to follow that general, who, in a long course of years of command devoted to the service and glory of his country, had never experienced a single defeat; who had so lately led them from victory to victory, crossed, in his triumphant march, the plains of Spain, fought his way over the frozen heights of the Pyrenees, carried conquest and dismay in the very heart of France, and whose rapid and unparalleled career of conquest had only been checked by the angel of peace. As we saw the last of our brave troops march out of Brussels, the recollection of their past glory, the proud hopes of their present triumph, the greatness of the contest, upon the issue of which the fate of Europe and the security of the world depended; the dread of their encounter with the numerous and formidable hosts of *that man*, whom no treaties could bind, no adversity could amend, no considerations of justice or humanity could soften, no laws, divine or human, could restrain, swelled our hearts with feelings which language is too feeble to express: and our brave countrymen were followed by our tears, our warmest wishes, and our most fervent prayers for their safety and success.

Before seven in the morning, the streets, which had been so lately thronged with armed men and with busy crowds, were empty and silent. The great square of the Place Royale no longer resounded with the tumult and preparations for war. The army were gone, and Brussels seemed a perfect desert. The mourners they had left behind were shut up in their solitary chambers, and the faces of the few who were slowly wandering about the streets were marked with the deepest anxiety and melancholy. The heavy military waggons, ranged in order, and ready to move as occasion might require, were standing under the silent guard of a few sentinels. The Flemish drivers were sleeping in the long tilted carts destined to convey the wounded; and the horses, ready to harness at a moment's notice, were quietly feeding on fresh-cut grass by their side: the whole livelong day and night did these Flemish men and horses pass in the Place Royale. A few officers were still to be seen, slowly riding out of town to join the army. The Duke of Wellington set off about eight o'clock, in great spirits, declaring he expected to be back by dinner-time; and dinner was accordingly prepared for him. Sir Thomas Picton, who, like ourselves, had only arrived in Brussels the day before, rode through the streets in true soldier-like style, with his reconnoitring glass slung across his shoulders, reining in his charger as he passed, to exchange salutations with his friends, and left Brussels – never to return.

We had a most agreeable surprise at our breakfast-table in the sight of Major Llewellyn. He had ridden a few miles out of Brussels with the regiment, and then galloped back with Sir Philip Belson, who also wished to return. We spent a few hours together, and, embittered as they were with the prospect of so near and dreadful a separation, there was much consolation in thus meeting. No expectation was entertained of any engagement taking place to-day. Sir Philip Belson and Major Llewellyn, therefore, felt quite at their ease; "being certain," they said, "of overtaking the regiment *at a place called Waterloo*, where the men were to stop to cook." Little did any of us then suspect how memorable to future ages "that place called Waterloo" was destined to become! We denied ourselves to several idlers, but Sir Neil Campbell, and Mr. and Mrs. H., succeeded in gaining admittance.

At last the moment of parting arrived; Sir Philip Belson called for Major Llewellyn, and, after sitting a few moments, they got up to go away, and we bade farewell to one who from childhood had been our friend and companion, and whom we loved as another brother. We could not but feel how probable it was that we might never see him more; and, under this impression, some minutes after he had left us, which he had spent in bidding farewell to my brother below, we ran to the window, saw Sir Philip Belson and him mount their horses and ride away, and caught the last glimpse of them as they passed under the gateway of the Place Royale. Two hours afterwards they were in the thickest of the battle!

Although we had not the smallest suspicion that any engagement could take place to-day, our anxiety for news, both of the French and Prussians, was extreme; but we could hear nothing but vague, unauthenticated reports, upon which no reliance could be placed.

We dined, or rather sat down to dinner, at the table d'hôte, and afterwards wandered restlessly about the streets, our minds too much absorbed in the approaching contest, to see, hear, understand, think, or talk about anything but what related to public events.

Our consternation may be imagined when we were told that a dreadful cannonade had been heard from the Parc, in the very direction which our army had taken, and that it was supposed they must have been attacked by the French within a few miles of Brussels. At first I was utterly incredulous; I could not, would not believe it; but, hurrying to the Parc, we were too soon, too incontestably convinced of the dreadful truth, by ourselves hearing the awful and almost incessant thunder of the guns apparently very near to us. For many hours this tremendous cannonade continued, while, unable to gain any intelligence of what was passing, ignorant of everything, except of the fact, proclaimed by the loud and repeated voice of war, that there was a battle, we listened in a state of terrible uncertainty and suspense, and thought with horror, in the roar of every cannon, that our brave countrymen were every moment falling in agony and death.

Unable to rest, we wandered about, and lingered till a late hour in the Parc. The Parc! what a different scene did its green alleys present this evening from that which they exhibited at the same hour last night! Then it was crowded with the young and the gay, and the gallant of the British army, with the very men who were now engaged in deadly strife, and perhaps bleeding on the ground. Then it was filled with female faces sparkling with mirth and gaiety; now terror, and anxiety, and grief were marked upon every countenance we met.

In addition to the general alarm and anxiety, which surpassed anything it is in my power to describe, we had a particular subject of solicitude. We had but too much reason to fear that it would be impossible for Sir Philip Belson and Major Llewellyn to join their regiment in time for the action. The idea, the very doubt was dreadful. If *we* listened to the cannonade with such heart-sinking apprehensions for them, what must have been *their* feelings, if, at a distance from the army, absent without leave, they heard its sounds! After years of service in various climates and countries, after six long and glorious campaigns in the Peninsula, would they forfeit, by one act of imprudence, all the distinction they had obtained by a life devoted to their country, and be found absent from their post in the hour of danger! Dear to us as was the life of our friend, his honour was still dearer; and while every one else was anxiously dreading lest the battle should be near, and trembling at the reports

that prevailed of its vicinity, I was secretly praying that it might not be distant, and would have felt inexpressibly relieved to have been assured that it was within a few miles of Brussels.

But it was in vain we attempted to discover where it really was. Some people said it was only six, some that it was ten, and some that it was twenty miles off. Numbers of people in carriages and on horseback had gone out several miles on the road which the army had taken, and all of them had come back in perfect ignorance of the real circumstances of the case, and with some ridiculous report, which, for a time, was circulated as the truth. No authentic intelligence could be gained; and every minute we were assailed with the most absurd and contradictory stories. One moment we heard that the allied army had obtained a complete victory; that the French had been completely repulsed, and had left *twenty thousand dead* upon the field of battle. Gladly would I have believed the first part of this story, but the *twenty thousand dead* I could not swallow. Then again we were told that the French, 180,000 strong, had attacked the British, that the Belgians had abandoned their arms and fled, that our troops were literally cut to pieces, and that the French were advancing to Brussels. Then an English gentleman stopped his carriage to tell us, that *he* had been out farther than anybody, and that he had actually *seen* the engagement, which was between the French and the Prussians, and that old Blucher had given the rascals a complete beating. We had not gone ten paces farther, before another man, in a great hurry, advised us to set off instantly if we wished to make our escape; that he was on the point of going, for that certain intelligence had been received "that the French had won the battle, and that our army was retreating in the utmost confusion." I never remember to have felt so angry in my life; and I indignantly exclaimed, that such a report deserved only to be treated with contempt, and that it must be false, for that the English would never retreat *in confusion*. The man seemed a little ashamed of himself, and Mr. H. advised him "by all means to take care of himself, and set off directly." We hastened on. Presently we met another of Mr. H.'s wise friends, who assured us, with a face of the greatest solemnity, "that the day was going against us; that the battle was as good as lost; that our troops had been driven back from one position after another; and that the artillery and baggage had commenced the retreat; that all the horses would be seized for the service of the army; and that in two hours it would be impossible to get away." All this time we could hear nothing of what was really passing; or these idle tales and unfounded rumours were unworthy of a moment's attention, and did not give us a moment's alarm; but the poor Belgians, not knowing what to make of all this, and nearly frightened out of their senses, firmly expected the French in Brussels before the morning; for their terror of them was so great and so deeply rooted, that they believed nothing on earth could stop their advance.

This dreadful uncertainty and ignorance of the truth made us truly wretched. Nobody knew anything of the actual state of affairs. Nobody could tell where our army was engaged, nor under what circumstances, nor against what force, nor whether separately or conjointly with the Prussians, nor which side was gaining the advantage. We knew nothing, except that there was a battle, and that at no great distance from us; for that the unceasing cannonade too certainly proved. Anxiously and vainly we looked for news from the army – none arrived. The consternation of the people was not to be described. "The cannonade is approaching nearer!" they exclaimed. "Hark! how loud was that peal! There, again! Our army must be retreating. Good heavens! what will become of us!" On every side, in the tones of terror and despondency, we heard these exclamations repeated. Heard through the density and stillness of the evening air, the cannonade did, in fact, seem to approach nearer, and become more tremendous. During the whole evening we wandered about the Parc, or stood in silence on the ramparts, listening to the dreadful thunder of the battle. At length it became less frequent. How often did we hope it had ceased, and vainly flatter ourselves that each peal was the last! when, again, after an awful pause, a louder, a longer roar burst on our ears, and it raged more tremendously than ever. To our great relief, about half-past nine, it became fainter and fainter, and at last entirely died away.

After we had returned to the hotel, Sir Neil Campbell, who, in our absence, had been twice at our rooms and in the Parc in search of us, good-naturedly came again, to tell us that he had met

Sir G. Scovell, who had left the field with orders from Brussels about half-past five, and that so far "all was well." The French army had encountered our troops on their march, upon the high road, about fifteen miles from Brussels. The 92nd and 42nd Highland regiments were the first in order of march. These brave men immediately made a stand, formed into squares, received the furious onset of the French with undaunted intrepidity, and alone sustained the fight, until the Royal Scots, the 28th, and some other regiments, came up to support them. Every regiment, as it arrived, instantly formed and fought; and though the English had been taken by surprise, unprepared, unconcentrated; without cavalry, and with scarcely any artillery; and, though the enemy outnumbered them far beyond all computation, they had not yielded an inch of ground, and they were still fighting in the fullest confidence of success. "There can be no doubt of their repulsing the French," said Colonel Scovell, "but nothing of any importance can be done till the cavalry come up, which it is expected they will do this evening. To-morrow the engagement will most probably be renewed, and I hope it will prove decisive." The Duke, he said, who was in excellent spirits, was to sleep to-night at Genappe.

Certainly no other troops but the English, without any cavalry, and with very little artillery, would have thought themselves sure of repulsing an enemy with both, and with an almost countless superiority of numbers: and most certainly none but the English could have achieved it. It is a perversion of words to call the troops engaged in the battle of Quatre Bras the English army. During the greater part of the day a few regiments only, a mere handful of men, were opposed to the immense masses the French continually poured down against them; but they formed impenetrable squares, which were in vain attacked by the French cavalry, "steel-clad cuirassiers," and infantry; and against which tremendous showers of shot and shell descended in vain.

The 92nd, 42nd, 79th, the 28th, the 95th, and the Royal Scots, were the first, and most hotly, engaged.[9] For several hours these brave troops alone maintained the tremendous onset, and the shock of the whole French army, and to their determined valour Belgium owes her independence, and England her glory. I do not, however, mean to give them exclusive praise. I do not doubt that had the post of honour fallen upon other British regiments, they would have acquitted themselves equally well: but let honour be paid where it is so justly due. Let England be sensible of the vast debt of gratitude she owes them; and let the names of those who perished there be enrolled in the long list of her noblest heroes! The 92nd, 42nd, and 79th Highland regiments had suffered most severely. They had received the furious and combined attack of the French cavalry and infantry, from first to last, with undaunted firmness, till, after supporting this unequal contest the whole day, after making immense havoc among their columns, and repeatedly charging and driving them back in confusion, they had themselves fallen, overpowered by numbers, and among heaps of the slaughtered enemy, on the very spot where they first stood to arms; and we were told that they were, almost to a man, cut to pieces. With grief and horror, not to be described, we thought of these gallant soldiers whom, in the morning, we had seen march out so proudly to battle, and who were now lying insensible in death on the plains of Quatre Bras. They had fought, and they had fallen, as became the same noble spirits who had wrested from the same vaunting foe the standard of the Invincibles on the sands of Egypt. They were gallantly supported by the 28th, who, on the same soil, as well as in the long campaigns of Spain, had gained immortal honour, and who particularly distinguished themselves in this day's battle by their complete repulse of the French cuirassiers, who, though clad in mail, and "armed at all points precisely cap-à-pie," were driven back with immense loss from every attack, and uniformly gave way before the dreaded British charge with the bayonet. One regiment of raw Belgic troops had turned and fled where they had the finest opportunity of charging. I confess I was not sorry to hear that these recreant Belgians had, almost to a man, been cut to pieces by the very French troops they had not courage to face. The fate of cowards is unpitied. The consequences of their misconduct had,

[9] [The 32nd and 44th should be added. – Ed.]

however, been retrieved by part of Sir Thomas Picton's division,[10] which regained the post they had lost, though with considerable slaughter.

After hearing this account our spirits completely revived, I scarcely knew why; for, except in the new proof we had just had of invincible British valour and firmness, there was nothing to inspire satisfaction or confidence. We had just learned, beyond all doubt, the truth of the alarming report, that the Prussians were separately engaged with another division of the enemy, which completely outnumbered them. Thus the allied armies seemed to be effectually cut off, and prevented from assisting each other, or acting in concert. The French then, whose combined numbers report magnified to 180,000, were on two sides of us, at the distance of only three hours' march from Brussels. Their army was collected, combined, concentrated, and well-appointed. The Prussians and the English were surprised, separated, dispersed, and unprepared; the latter were destitute of cavalry, ill-supported by artillery, and with an appalling inferiority even of infantry; and these too partly composed of Belgians, who seemed to make a practice of running away. Yet, in spite of all these disadvantages, they *had* bravely stood the first brunt of the battle, and we felt the firm assurance that they would eventually triumph.

Colonel Scovell had left the army at half-past five; the battle, or at least the cannonading, had lasted till about ten; and our anxiety to know its results, our impatience for further news from the army, may be imagined; but no later intelligence arrived; we could hear nothing but vague reports of defeat, disaster, and dismay, to which, as they were founded upon no authority, we paid no attention. Sir Neil Campbell was going to join the army, like many others who had no business there: – he was to set off at one in the morning, so that we should see him no more, and what was infinitely worse, receive no more, through him, immediate and authentic intelligence of all that was known. In this respect he was a great loss to us; for he was indefatigable in bringing us news, and took unwearied pains to be of use to us in every possible way.

Late as it was we went to see Mrs. H., whom we knew to be in great alarm. We found her sitting surrounded by plate, which she was vainly trying to acquire sufficient composure to pack up, with a face pale with consternation, and quite overcome with agitation and distress. We did all we could to assist, and said all we could to console and reassure her. Mr. H. had gone out towards the army, and, late as it was, had not yet returned. We stayed with her some time, and had the satisfaction of leaving her in much better spirits than we found her.

My brother had engaged, and made an agreement to pay for, horses, upon the condition of their being in readiness to convey us to Antwerp at a moment's warning, by day or night, if required. We had not, however, the smallest intention of leaving Brussels for some days to come, unless some sudden and unexpected change in public events should render it absolutely necessary. Thinking it, however, prudent to be prepared, we had sent our valet de place to la blanchisseuse to desire her to send home everything belonging to us early in the morning. La blanchisseuse sent back a message literally to this effect, – "Madame," said the valet, addressing himself to me in French, "the blanchisseuse says, that if the English should beat the French, she will iron and plait your clothes, and finish them for you; but if, au contraire, these vile French should get the better, then she will assuredly send them all back quite wet – tout mouillé – early to-morrow morning." At this speech, which the valet delivered with immoveable gravity, we all, with one accord, burst out a laughing, irresistibly amused to find that amongst the important consequences of Buonaparte's gaining the victory, would be our clothes remaining unplaited and unironed; and that the British were, in a manner, fighting, in order that the getting up of our fine linen might be properly performed. The valet, as soon as he could obtain a hearing, went on to say, that he sincerely hoped we should get our clothes dried and finished, and that

[10] Consisting of the 28th, 32nd, 79th, 95th, a battalion of the 1st, or Royal Scots, the 42nd, 92nd, and the 2nd battalion of the 44th, and a battalion of Hanoverians. It was the first division which arrived, and, during the principal part of the day, it was the only part of the British army engaged.

the English would beat "ces diables de Français;" but this seemed quite a secondary consideration with the valet, compared with ironing our clothes, and we were again seized with an uncontrollable fit of laughter. Even the valet's long face of dismay relaxed into something like a smile, and, as he left the room, he said to himself, "Mais ces demoiselles sont bien enjouées."

It was half-past twelve; and hopeless now of hearing any further news from the army, we were preparing to retire to rest – but rest was a blessing we were not destined to enjoy in Brussels. We were suddenly startled by the sound of the rapid rolling of heavy military carriages passing at full speed through the Place Royale: – a great tumult instantly took place among the people below; the baggage waggons, which we knew were not to set off, except in a case of emergency, were harnessed in an instant, and the noise and tumult became every instant more alarming. For some minutes we listened in silence: faster and faster, and louder and louder, the long train of artillery continued to roll through the town: – the cries of the affrighted people increased. I hastily flew out to inquire the cause of this violent commotion. The first person I encountered was a poor, scared fille de chambre, nearly frightened out of her wits. "Ah, madame!" she exclaimed, "les François sont tout près; dans une petite demi-heure ils seront ici. – Ah, grand Dieu! Ah, Jésus! Jésus! que ferons-nous! que ferons-nous!" In vain I eagerly asked how she knew, or why she believed, or from whence this news came, that the French were near? She could only reiterate, again and again, "Les François sont tout près – les François sont tout près!" my questions were unanswered and unheard; but suddenly recollecting herself, she earnestly besought us to set off instantly, exclaiming, "Mais, mesdames, vous êtes Anglaises – il faut partir tout de suite —*tout de suite*," she repeated, with great emphasis and gesticulation, and then resumed her exclamations and lamentations.

As I flew down stairs the house seemed deserted. The doors of the rooms (which in foreign hotels are not only shut, but locked) were all wide open; the candles were burning upon the tables, and the solitude and silence which reigned in the house formed a fearful contrast to the increasing tumult without. At the bottom of the staircase a group of affrighted Belgians were assembled, all crowding and talking together with Belgic volubility. They cried out that news had arrived of the battle having terminated in the defeat of the British; that all the artillery and baggage of the army were retreating; and that a party of Belgians had just entered the town, bringing intelligence that a large body of French had been seen advancing through the woods to take Brussels, and that they were only two leagues off. In answer to my doubts and my questions, they all exclaimed, "Ah! c'est trop vrai; c'est trop vrai. Ne restez pas ici, mademoiselle, ne restez pas ici; partez, éloignez vous vîte: c'est affreux!"

"Mais demain matin – " I began.

"Ah! demain matin," eagerly interrupted a little good-humoured Belgic woman belonging to the hotel – "demain matin il n'y aura pas plus le tems – une autre heure peut-être, et il ne sera pas plus possible de partir." "Ecoutez, mademoiselle, écoutez!" they cried, turning paler and paler as the thundering noise of the artillery increased. At this moment several people, among whom were some English gentlemen and servants, rushed past us to the stables, calling for their carriages to be got ready instantly. "Apprêtes les chevaux, tout de suite – Vite! vite! il n'a pas un moment!" was loudly repeated in all the hurry of fear. These people confirmed the alarm. I sent for our côcher, and most reluctantly we began to think that we must set off; when we found, to our inexpressible joy, that the long trains of artillery, which still continued to roll past with the noise of thunder, were not flying from the army, but advancing to join it. It is impossible to conceive the blessed relief this intelligence gave us. From that moment we felt assured that the army was safe, and our fears for ourselves were at an end. My brother, who had been roused from his sleep, and who, like many other people, had been running about half-dressed, and was still standing in his nightcap, in much perplexity what to do, now went to bed again with great joy, declaring he was resolved to disturb himself no more about these foolish alarms.

We were now perfectly incredulous as to the whole story of the French having been seen advancing through the woods to take Brussels; but the Belgians still remained convinced of it; and

though they differed about how it would be done, they all agreed that Brussels would be taken. Some of them said that the British, and some that the Prussians, had been defeated, and some that both of them had been defeated, and that the French, having broken through their lines, were advancing to take Brussels; others believed that Buonaparte, while he kept the allies employed, had sent round a detachment, under cover of night, by a circuitous route, to surprise the town; but it seemed to be the general opinion, that before morning the French would be here. The town was wholly undefended, either by troops or fortifications; it was well known to be Napoleon's great object to get possession of it, and that he would leave no means untried to effect it. The battle had been fought against the most fearful disparity of numbers, and under the most disadvantageous circumstances to the British. Its event still remained unknown; above all, no intelligence from our army had arrived. Under such circumstances it was not surprising that the general despondency should be so great; while continual rumours of defeat, disaster, and dismay, and incessant alarms, only served to confirm their worst fears. As the French, however, had not yet come, this panic in some degree subsided, and comparative quietness seemed to be restored. Great alarm, however, continued to prevail through the whole night, and the baggage waggons stood ready harnessed to set off at a moment's notice. Several persons took their departure, but we quietly went to bed. My sister, however, only lay down in her clothes, observing, half in jest, and half in earnest, that we might, perhaps, be awakened by the entrance of the French; and overcome with fatigue, we both fell fast asleep. Her prediction seemed to be actually verified, for at six o'clock we were roused by a violent knocking at the room-door, accompanied by the cries of "Les François sont ici! les François sont ici!" Starting out of bed, the first sight we beheld from the window was a troop of Belgic cavalry galloping from the army at the most furious rate, through the Place Royale, as if the French were at their heels; and instantly the whole train of baggage waggons and empty carts, which had stood before our eyes so long, set off, full speed, by the Montagne de la Cour, and through every street by which it was possible to effect their escape. In an instant the whole great square of the Place Royale, which had been crowded with men, horses, carts, and carriages, was completely cleared, as if by magic, and entirely deserted. The terrified people fled in every direction, as if for their lives. While my sister, who had never undressed, flew to rouse my brother, and I threw on my clothes I scarcely knew how; I heard again the dreadful cries of "Les François sont ici! Ils s'emparent de la porte de la ville!" My toilet, I am quite certain, did not occupy one minute; and as I flew down stairs, in the hope that it might yet be possible to effect our escape, I met numbers of bewildered-looking people running about half-dressed in every direction, in all the distraction of fear. The men with their nightcaps on, and half their clothes under their arms; the women with their dishevelled hair hanging about their shoulders, and all of them pale as death, and trembling in every limb. Some were flying down stairs loaded with all sorts of packages; others running up to the garrets sinking under the accumulated weight of the most heterogeneous articles. The poor fille de chambre, nearly frightened out of her senses, was standing half-way down the stairs, wringing her hands, and unable to articulate anything but "Les François! les François!" A little lower, another woman was crying bitterly, and exclaimed, as I passed her, "Nous sommes tous perdus!" But no language can do justice to the scene of confusion which the court below exhibited: masters and servants, ladies and stable-boys, valets and soldiers, lords and beggars; Dutchmen, Belgians, and Britons; bewildered garçons and scared filles de chambre; enraged gentlemen and clamorous coachmen; all crowded together, jostling, crying, scolding, squabbling, lamenting, exclaiming, imploring, swearing, and vociferating, in French, English, and Flemish, all at the same time. Nor was it only a war of words; the disputants had speedily recourse to blows, and those who could not get horses by fair means endeavoured to obtain them by foul. The unresisting animals were dragged away half-harnessed. The carriages were seized by force, and jammed against each other. Amidst the crash of wheels, the volleys of oaths, and the confusion of tongues, the mistress of the hotel, with a countenance dressed in woe, was carrying off her most valuable plate in order to secure it, ejaculating, as she went, the name of Jesus incessantly, and, I believe, unconsciously; while

the master, with a red nightcap on his head, and the eternal pipe sticking mechanically out of one corner of his mouth, was standing with his hands in his pockets, a silent statue of despair.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.