

THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO

June 18th 1815



Napoleon Bonaparte, Commander of the French (From an Old Print)



The Duke of Wellington who Commanded the English at Waterloo (From a Painting)



Wellington Ordering a Charge at Waterloo (From an Old Print)



The Defense of the Hougoumont (From an Old Print)



Field Marshal Gebhard Leberecht von Blücher, Commander of the German Forces

On June 18th, 1815, One of the Famous Battles of the World Was Fought On Belgian Soil - Men Who Commanded the Troops - How Napoleon Was Defeated.

THE famous battle of Waterloo which took place a century ago was fought solely for the purpose of ending the career of Napoleon Bonaparte, the greatest military genius the world has ever known. When the news of Napoleon's return from Elba spread over Europe consternation reigned among the powers who had been wrangling at Vienna and they vowed his destruction, declaring that the peace of Europe rested upon his downfall.

For fourteen years Napoleon as First Consul and Emperor of France had played a part which developed every phase of his character. The military party of that nation idolized him. He had led them with glory and plunder and they repaid him with a devotion such as has never been shown by the French for any other man, and when he returned from Elba the army at once rallied to his standard and restored him as ruler of the Empire, determining to cast their destiny with him.

Napoleon.

There is much discussion as to his preparation and many writers declare that his old fire of militarism was gone and that the Napoleon of Waterloo was a far different man from the Napoleon of Austerlitz and Wagram. He

was forty-seven years of age, had grown corpulent and was easily tired out. The reckless exposure and intense labor of sixteen hours out of twenty-four in his earlier campaigns had told upon his health and he often slept too much where he once slept too little. He now hesitated to order the death of a traitor, where in the early days a man was shot on suspicion. He even sought the advice of others (a thing unheard of in times gone by) and had many conferences with the patriot Carnot. "When one has had misfortunes one no longer has confidence, which is necessary to success," he told the old warrior before leaving Paris to join his army. Napoleon felt that he was working at a disadvantage—he stood at bay against a world in arms.

Wellington.

The Duke of Wellington, the hero of the Vienna Congress, who had been surnamed the "Iron Duke" on account of his physical strength and inflexible will, was to lead the united forces against the French. Like the majority of the English generals of note he was of Irish birth. He first fought the French troops in Portugal and in Spain, where he offered them strong resistance, and in 1814 he fought the battle of Toulouse at Soult. His ca-

reer in Spain made him a hero and resulted in his selection by the powers to "save Europe." Although he had the unbounded confidence of his army, the warm admiration of most Englishmen and the esteem of the sovereigns of Europe, it is doubtful whether any human being ever really loved him. Always austere and self-loved and never known to laugh he conducted everything after a military fashion and resented any reforms of any kind, especially in the army he had a few intimates and was exacting even in the smallest matters. He was about the same age as Napoleon and like the "Little Corporal" a teetotaler.

Blücher.

Field Marshal Blücher, the commander of the Prussian forces who saved the day at Waterloo, was of a totally different make-up—seventy-three years of age at the time of the battle, a hard drinker, headstrong, boisterous and iron willed, yet true-hearted and fearless, a born fighter who could not be discouraged for no matter how things went in battle he was sure to "come back." Always ready to take the field, and adorned by his troops, he was eager to go himself wherever he had sent them—shirking nothing. With all these rough

qualities he was a devoted husband and a loyal subject. His hatred of Napoleon was intense, and knowing this Wellington felt sure that he could count on Blücher in the Waterloo fight if he could hold out against the French until the arrival of the Prussians. Such were the three men who led the forces in that battle which sent Napoleon to St. Helena.

Gathering of the Forces.

At the beginning of June, 1815, Napoleon had raised an army of 276,923 men of whom nearly 200,000 were ready for battle.

The energy and resolution of the allies were shown by the immense forces directed against France, although the Duke of Wellington complained bitterly of the inefficiency of his army. "I have an infamous army," he wrote to Lord Stewart, "very weak and ill-equipped, and an inexperienced staff. In my opinion they are doing nothing in England." By the middle of June Wellington from all sources had raised an army of a little over 105,000 men and 196 guns. They were a heterogeneous mass of British and Continental troops. Their greatest virtue was their implicit faith in their commander and their willingness to carry out his orders on the minute.

Blücher in June had 120,000 men and about 300 guns. The men were all Prussians—an attempt to make use of 14,000 Saxons came near being fatal to the army, as they mutilated and attempted to slay Blücher at his headquarters. The Prussians were well trained and eager to "set at" Napoleon. The Dutch-Belgians—a splendid body of men, were under the command of the Prince of Orange. On June 15th, the French and Prussians had a skirmish at Charleroi, the Prussians losing one thousand men.

Nothing was known of this encounter by the Duke of Wellington, who was in Brussels until the next day, although he was aware that the French had crossed into Belgium.

The Duchess of Richmond gave a ball and supper on the night of the 16th to which all the notables of the city were invited. There was the widest sort of revelry and all went well until nearly midnight, when the rumor spread that an action had taken place between the Prussians and the French. No credit was given to the rumor at first, but gradually the officers began to disappear from the ball-room and the guests learned the truth. Charleroi had been taken by the French, who were advancing on Fluevies. At one o'clock on the following morning the bugle call summoned all the soldiers to their respective regiments and before daylight Wellington's men were on the march.

The battle of Quatre Bras and Ligny followed. During the latter Wellington narrowly escaped being made a prisoner. The Prussians fell back on Wavre and the British and allied troops on Waterloo, where Wellington took up his headquarters in a house opposite the village church. A part of the army occupied the house and garden of the Hougoumont, a spacious chateau which included a number of buildings enclosed by a stone wall. There was a dense woods about the place, making it an ideal one for soldiers to hide. Blücher remained at Wavre.

Napoleon was surprised when the dawn broke on the morning of the eighteenth and he saw through the drizzling rain the allied armies. Raising his arm he pointed toward the Hougoumont and exclaimed, "Ah, I have them, these English!" The sun

came out about nine o'clock, and later the French opened with a terrific attack on the Hougoumont. After considerable firing a division of infantry under command of Jerome Bonaparte advanced toward the Hougoumont, shouting as they came—"Vive l'Empereur!" but they were soon forced to seek shelter. Later the orchard fell into the hands of the French and they made desperate attempts to enter the building. In the meantime the other part of the army harassed the center hoping thereby to break the British center and get between them and the Prussian army, which Napoleon knew was on its way to the field.

Defense of the Hougoumont.

From noon until three in the afternoon the fighting around Hougoumont continued, and at that hour Napoleon, seeing that the British could not be ousted, gave orders that the chateau be set on fire. Many of the wounded perished in the building before they could be moved. After this the French commander turned his attention to the right wing of the British forces.

The Hanoverian, Dutch and Brunswick squares made a stubborn resistance although many of the men were mowed down by the French guns. Bonaparte remained at La Belle Alliance, "walking about in deep thought and occasionally taking a pinch of snuff." He anxiously scanned the British lines and gave his orders rapidly. The Prussians had not arrived, and he saw the allies falling like stones before his guns. The Duke of Wellington, too, saw the carnage among his troops and exclaimed to one of his officers, "Would to God, that night or Blücher would come!"

It was 4:30 in the afternoon when the promised aid arrived. The roads were almost impassable owing to the storm of the night before, and the Prussians had been on the march since four o'clock in the morning. The trained eye of the Prussian Field Marshal at work took in the serious situation and he hurried his two brigades into battle without waiting for the arrival of his whole force.

Napoleon sent his reserves against the new arrivals, declaring that his men would fight to the last. The Prussians, the Marquis of Anglesme made a brilliant charge against the French and succeeded in cutting up

two battalions of the French Guards. Napoleon Defeated.

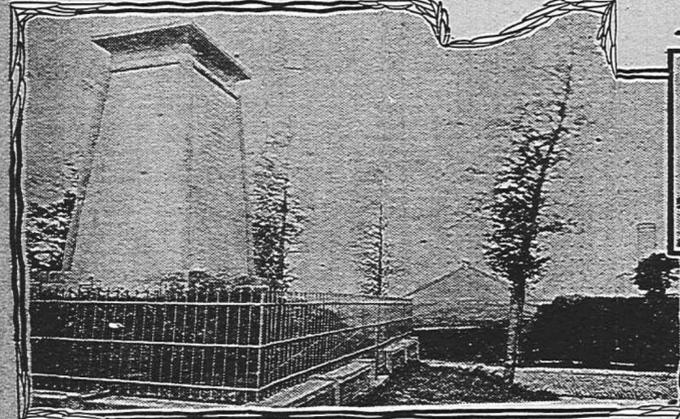
At seven in the evening the fighting was furious all along the lines, which were very close to each other. Napoleon still believed that he would win, and pointing to the farm of the Sacred Hedge he said to his men—"There, gentlemen, the road to Brussels!" Between eight and ten at night Wellington ordered the British to advance, the Prussian army performing a similar movement at the same time. This threw the French on the defensive and they were forced to flee. The cry of "Vive l'Empereur!" died away and the allied forces were soon on the ridge behind La Belle Alliance which had been the stronghold of the French. At the village of Plancenoit, where the reserve of Napoleon's old guard were stationed, there was some resistance, but after they were stormed by the Prussians the day was complete. All night long there was a general stampede of the French. They were followed for a time by the Prussians who came up after the battle was over and at up after they were so close to Napoleon that he was compelled to defend himself with his pistol. He abandoned his carriage and rode horseback to Charleroi and then took another carriage to Paris which he had left but a week before confident of victory.

Numbers Engaged.

Napoleon had 74,000 men and 245 guns in the field; Wellington had 67,000 men and 184 guns. Military men who have gone over the field declare that the British position was especially strong and Napoleon's attempt to break the center of the English army so well posted, it was has been compared to Lee's effort to storm the heights at Gettysburg. No battle was ever fought with more obstinacy and courage. The losses in all were about 40,000 men—400 men of both armies died in the attack on the Hougoumont alone. Twenty-five thousand horses perished.

Such was the price Europe paid at Waterloo for the defeat of Napoleon.

The Field at Waterloo One Hundred Years After the Battle



On Left, Monument to Hanoverian Troops In Center, Lion Mound - At Right, Monument to Lieut. Col. Gordon

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Interesting Monuments and Ruins Now Dot the Field Where Napoleon Met His Final Defeat.

THE horrors of war have always shocked the sensibilities of the average person and whilst in progress its carnage and the misery and deprivation occasioned thereby have been uppermost in the thoughts of the general run of mankind. But as time goes on and the war is looked upon more from its historical point of view and the part it has played in the affairs of nations, the scene of a decisive battlefield becomes a place of ever increasing interest and fascination. It is then the purely personal phase is lost sight of and its importance as an epoch in the world's history becomes more pronounced. One can study the marches and counter-marches, the charges and repulses and the results accomplished not so much as evidences of personal bravery or individual heroism and patriotism, but rather as they may have affected the destiny of some military chieftain or the inordinate ambition of some imperious nation.

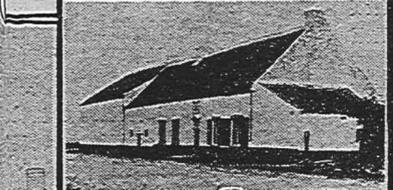
Such a scene is Waterloo, the battlefield that finally crushed the almost unconquerable Napoleon and estab-

lished once more the peace of Europe which he had disturbed for a decade or more. It has been the Mecca of military men who must recognize in the career and tactics of the great man fighting in desperation his last battle, one of the foremost military heroes of all time, so they might learn something of the art of war and profit as much from his failure as from his successes on other fields. It is also visited by thousands of civilians actuated by curiosity to see where the "Little Corporal" saw the last ray of hope fade away for his restoration, as well as view a battlefield which up to that time was regarded as the place of the most pivotal struggle in European history.

Waterloo is about ten miles from Brussels and is reached by either steam train or automobile. At present it is within the German lines, although there has been little fighting near the field, which remains practically the same as it was before the Kaiser's men invaded Belgium.

Wellington's Headquarters.

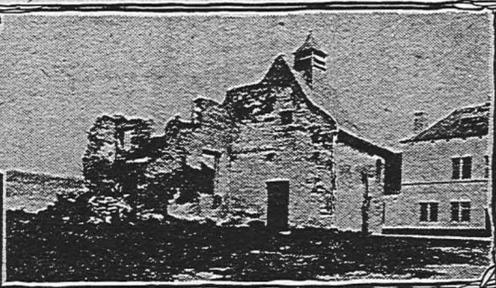
In visiting the scene of the battle



The Farm of the Sacred Hedge - An Important Link in the Battle of Waterloo



Ready quarters of General Wellington.



All that is left of the Famous Chateau Hougoumont



The Waterloo Lion

the first stop is usually made at the village of Waterloo, the little steam train stopping directly in front of the building which was used by the Duke of Wellington for a time as headquarters. It is now a restaurant and in order that the American traveler may understand that the train will stop for some time at this point there is a sign on the house in English and reads "Standstill." This is directly under the French notice announcing the stopping of the train. Inside one may see the table and chairs used by the British commander, and it is quite the thing to drink a glass of rich milk while seated at this table. A number of interesting relics, too, are on exhibition. The house is well preserved.

Almost opposite Wellington's headquarters is the celebrated Waterloo church, where hundreds of wounded were cared for after the battle. During the present war it has been a

haven for the refugees who fled at the approach of the German invaders. The church was restored in 1855, and contains a poorly executed bust of Wellington and numerous tablets in memory of English officers.

The scene of the actual battle is about two miles beyond the village. There is no natural beauty about the place for it is just ordinary rolling country with here and there a small farm house or a ruin. It has none of the sylvan beauty of our Gettysburg or Chancellorsville, which are parks in themselves. However, the great events of the battle and its meaning to the world lend a never failing interest to the country about the scene of the conflict on that memorable June 18th, 1815, when the whole of Europe, leagued against Napoleon, revenged herself for the humiliating defeats she had so often suffered at his hands. France lost in one day the

fruits of her former victories and the terrible disaster of Waterloo restored the map of Europe to what it was prior to the Napoleon regime.

The Waterloo Lion.

The topography of the battlefield has been changed somewhat by the setting up of a memorial known as the Waterloo Lion to mark the spot where the Prince of Orange was wounded. It consists of a great artificial mound two hundred feet high, containing three hundred and twenty thousand cubic feet of earth, surrounded by a huge bronze lion weighing twenty-eight tons. The lion was cast in the foundry made from the metal of captured French cannon. The French soldiers on their march to Antwerp in 1832 stopped long enough at this point to hack off a part of the lion's tail. This has been replaced. The top of the mound, reached by about two hundred

steps, commands the best survey of the battlefield, and several times every day a guide by the aid of maps describes the progress of the battle from this point.

The range of heights which extends past the mound to Smobain on the east and Merbraine on the west was occupied by the first line of the allies. As the crest of these heights is narrow a second line occupied a sheltered position on the northern slopes concealed from the eye of the enemy. The whole line was about one mile and a half long, forming a semi-circle corresponding to the form of the hills. A monument to the memory of the Hanoverian troops has been set up near the center of the line. It is "consecrated to the memory of forty-two Hanoverian officers who perished in battle." This remembrance is due to their companions in arms.

The chain of heights occupied by the allies, one mile distant, separated from the allies' position by a shallow intervening valley across which the French columns advanced a number of times in trying to break the allies' center. One of the most astonishing things the traveler sees when he looks at the lines to each other, for at no time were they more than a mile apart. The guide who lectures (both in English and in French) is entirely neutral in his explanation, and professes in his comments to the bravery of the officers of the various nations who participated in the battle.

Historic Ruins.

A number of houses which played a part in the conflict can be seen from the mound—old ruins battered by shot and shell, bearing mute evidence of the awful fighting of a century ago. The Hougoumont—an old chateau where the allies made such a gallant stand, is perhaps the most interesting from the fact that twelve thousand men were engaged at that point and at least half of them perished either from bullets or fire, as a part of the Hougoumont was burned by Napoleon's order when he found that the French were unable to take it from the allies. The woods about it was practically destroyed by cannon and later the few remaining trees were set fire in order to burn the dead bodies piled up in the orchard. Two graves are marked there, one being that of Captain Blackman, who fell during the fight, and Sergeant Cotton, a veteran of Waterloo who died at Mont Saint Jean in 1849. It was at his request that his body rest near the Hougoumont.

It is almost incredible that such a diminutive stronghold should have held out so long. Today one shot from a "Busy Bertha" several miles distant would have demolished the whole place. Close by is a monument erected for Colonel Gordon who was killed while carrying orders from his General to the Duke of Wellington.

La Hale-Sainte, the farm of the Sacred Hedge, which Marshal Ney captured from the English at the commencement of the battle, is still in the state of preservation, although the fighting around it was severe. The

door of the house bears traces of numerous bullets. Several of the unfortunate defenders fed into the kitchen adjoining the garden. The window was and is still secured with iron bars so that all escape was cut off. Several men were shot here and others were thrown into the kitchen well, where their bodies were found after the battle. An iron tablet bears an inscription to the memory of the officers and privates who fell in defense of the house.

Plancenoit.

To the southeast of the mound rises the village of Plancenoit, the scene of the terrible struggle between the French and Prussians. Here both sides fought with such unbridled desperation that it finally became a massacre. Most of the fighting was hand-to-hand and the strongest man won. One of the severest encounters took place in the cemetery of the village church, where many of the combatants were afterward buried. In the town is a sort of obelisk surmounted by a cross, which the King of Prussia directed to be erected to the memory of the soldiers killed in the battle. It was the intention of the German government in 1832 the French soldiers attempted to destroy the monument, but only succeeded in knocking off the cross at the top. A few days later it was replaced. There is also a French memorial in the town—a bronze eagle with the name of the officers of the heroic attack of the French Imperial Guard under Marshal Ney.

The house which marks Napoleon's headquarters was not in reality his headquarters, as he only occupied the yard for an hour, and others were amine some maps. A chair and table were provided him by one of the inmates of the house. These pieces of furniture are on exhibition at the house.

There are few trees left on the battlefield and the greater part of it is in grain. Even the historic old elm under which the Duke of Wellington is said to have stood during the battle, is no longer there. As the story goes, an Englishman purchased it from the owner and had it cut down and shipped into a mill box, clear holders and other objects which he sold at fabulous prices.

On a little hill to the east is La Belle Alliance, where Wellington and Blücher met after the battle. According to the tablet which marks the spot Wellington, after embracing the bluff old Field Marshal said: "Marshal, you are the first general of the world, for you have beaten Napoleon!" "Not to be outdone, Blücher," then answered, "the glory of this day is due first to you." After that there were more embraces and the two men parted.

At the foot of the mound there is a museum, where all sorts of relics are on sale—pieces of broken belts, buckles, bullets, shrapnel and parts of guns. These may or may not be authentic, but it is a well known fact that almost every year human bones are dug up on the field.