

THE MEMORABLE EIGHTEENTH OF JUNE.  
Narrative of the Conduct of Napoleon Bonaparte on the 18th of June, 1815, during and after the Battle of Waterloo: taken from the Deposition of John Baptist de Coster, who served as his Guide on that day.

J. B. de Coster is aged about 53; he was born in the village of Corbec-loo, near Louvaine, and has inhabited Wallon for 33 years; he is five feet ten inches high, and of a robust florid complexion; he is intelligent, and there is great appearance of truth in the answers he makes to questions put to him; he understands French very well, & expresses his ideas with great facility.

Before the invasion of Napoleon, de Coster occupied a small ale-house (*cabaret*) with about six acres of land. Upon the approach of the French Army, on the 17th of June, he retired with his Family, consisting of his wife and seven children into the wood of the Abbey d'Awyiers, where he passed the night (Saturday); at six o'clock Sunday morning he went to church, and from thence to his brother's, who lived at Panchenoit. He met there three French Generals who enquired of him if he had lived in the country a long time, and if he was well acquainted with the environs. Upon his answering in the affirmative, one of them sent him to Bonaparte with a letter, and accompanied by a servant.

Bonaparte slept on the 17th June in a farm, called the Caillon, and left it at six next morning. De Coster found him at a farm, named Rossum, where he (Bonaparte) arrived at eight, A. M. and was immediately presented to Bonaparte, who was standing in a room about 20 feet by 16, in the midst of a great number of officers of his staff. Bonaparte asked him, if he was well acquainted with the local situation of the country, and if he would be his guide? De Coster having answered him satisfactorily, Bonaparte told him he would accompany him, adding, "Speak friendly with me, my friend, as if you were with your children."

Rossum farm is near La Belle Alliance. The Emperor remained there till near mid-day. During this time De Coster was closely watched in the farm-yard by one of the Garde, who, whilst walking with him, informed him of the force of the army (French), and told him, that upon passing the frontiers, they had an army of 150,000 men, of which 40,000 were cavalry, among which were 9000 cuirassiers 7000 of the New and 8 or 9000 of the Old Guard. This soldier praised much the bravery displayed by the English at Quatre Bras. He particularly admired the *sangfroid* of Scotch Highlanders, who, (says he, in his military style) "*ne bougeoient, que lorsqu'on leur mettoit la baïonnette au derriere.*"

During this time Bonaparte had De Coster called three different times, to obtain information as to the maps of the country, which he constantly consulted. He questioned him chiefly upon the distance of several towns of Brabant from the field of battle, and made him explain those he had seen in his youth. De Coster named fourteen, which appeared to please Bonaparte; he seemed very much satisfied to find that De Coster was Flemish, and that he spoke the language; he advised him, above all, to give only well authenticated information, and not to answer for things of which he was uncertain, shrugging his shoulders at the same time. He repeated often these instructions, adding, "that if he (Bonaparte) succeeded, his recompence should be a hundred times greater than he could imagine." He dispensed with every particular mark of respect, telling him, that instead of taking off his cap, he need only put his hand to his forehead.

At mid-day Bonaparte went out with his staff, and placed himself upon a bank on the side of the road, which commanded a view of the field of battle. Shortly afterwards news arrived that the attack upon the farm and *chateau* of Hougomont, which he had commenced at eleven o'clock, was unsuccessful.

At one the battle became general, Bonaparte remained in his first station with his staff until five; he was on foot, and constantly walked backwards and forwards, sometimes with his arms crossed, but chiefly behind his back, with his thumbs in the pockets of a dark coloured great coat; he had his eyes fixed upon the battle, and pulled out his watch and snuff box alternately. De Coster, who was on horseback near him, observed frequently his watch. Bonaparte perceived that De Coster took snuff, and that he had none, gave him several pinches.

When he found that his attempts to force the position of the Chateau of Hougomont had been made in vain, he took a horse, left the farm Rossum at five P. M. and riding foremost, halted opposite De Coster's house, about 100 yards from La Belle Alliance. He remained here until seven. At this moment he, by means of a telescope, first perceived the Prussians advance, and communicated it to an aid-de-camp, who upon turning his spying glass, saw them also. Some moments after, an officer came to announce that Bulow's corps approached. Bonaparte replied that he knew it well, and gave orders for his guards to attack the centre of the English army; and riding at full gallop, in advance, he placed himself with his staff, in a hollow made by the road, half way between La Belle Alliance and Haye Sainte. This was his third and last position.

Bonaparte and his suite ran great risks to reach this hollow, a bullet struck the pommel of the saddle of one of his officers, without touching him or his horse. Bo-

naparte contented himself by coolly observing, "that they must remain in this hollow."

Here there was on each side of the road a battery, and perceiving that one of the cannons of the left battery did not play well, he dismounted, ascended the height of the road, advanced to the third piece, and rectified the error, whilst the bullets were hissing around him.

Whilst in this position, he saw eight battalions of his Old Guard, to whom he had given orders to force the centre of the English army advancing upon Haye Sainte. Three of these battalions were annihilated in his sight, whilst crossing the road; by the firing from the farm and batteries. Nevertheless the French made themselves masters of the farm and the Hanoverians who occupied it, were obliged to surrender for want of ammunition.

To support the foot guards (*garde à pied*) Bonaparte made his horse guards, composed of eight or nine regiments, advance; he waited the result of the charge with the greatest anxiety but he saw the flower of his army destroyed in an instant, whilst ascending the hill upon which Haye Sainte is situate. This was his last trial; for on seeing his Old Guard destroyed, he lost all hope, and on turning towards his officers said, "*a present c'est finis, sauvons nous.*" (It is now finished, let us save ourselves.)

It was half-past eight o'clock, and without pursuing any steps, or giving any orders, and taking all possible care to avoid the Prussians, he, accompanied by his staff, rode off at full gallop to Genappe. In passing before a battery of 14 guns, that was near the Observatory, he ordered that, before they abandoned it to the enemy, they should fire 14 rounds.

When he arrived at Genappe, it was half-past nine o'clock, P. M. The only street which forms this village, was so incumbered with caissons and cannon, that it required an entire hour to pass them, alongside the houses; all the inhabitants had forsaken their dwellings. There was no other road to take, because the Prussians occupied the left, and there was no other bridge but that of Genappe, by which to pass the river that flowed there.

From Genappe he advanced towards Quatre Bras, hastening his pace, always afraid the Prussians would arrive before him; he was more tranquil when he had passed this last place, and when arrived at Gosseluy, he even dismounted and walked the remainder of the road to Charleroy (about one league). He traversed Charleroy about two hours and a half, and stopped in a meadow called Marcenelle, at the other end of the town. There they made a large fire, and brought him two glasses and two bottles of wine, which he drank with his officers. He took no other nourishment. They spread upon the ground a sack of oats, which his horses eat, in their bridles. At a quarter before five o'clock, after having taken another guide, (to whom he gave the horse that had served De Coster), he remounted, made a slight bow to De Coster, and rode off. Bertrand gave De Coster, for his services, a single Napoleon, and disappeared, as also the whole staff, leaving De Coster alone, who was obliged to return home on foot.

During the whole time that he was with Bonaparte, he was not maltreated, except, whilst they were retreating, on their arrival at Quatre Bras, when one of the officers finding that a second guide which they had with them had escaped, tied the bridle of De Coster's horse to his own saddle as a precautionary measure.

From the moment that Bonaparte began to retreat until his arrival in the meadow of Marcenelle he did not stop nor did he speak to any one. He had taken no nourishment from the time he left the farm Rossum, and De Coster even thinks he had taken nothing from six in the morning.

The dangers of the battle did not appear to effect him. De Coster, who was greatly agitated through fear, lowered his head frequently on the neck of his horse to avoid the balls which hissed over his head. Bonaparte appeared displeased at it, and told him that those motions made his officers believe that he was wounded, and also added, that he would not escape the balls more by stooping than by holding himself upright.

During the battle, he often rendered justice to the opposing army; he principally praised the Scotch Greys, and expressed much regret to see them suffer so severely, when they manœuvred so well, and wielded the sword so dexterously.

Until half-past five P. M. he had the greatest hope of success, and repeated every moment "*All goes well.*" His Generals entertained the same hope. He was perfectly calm, and shewed much *sangfroid* during the action, without appearing out of humour, and always spoke very mildly to his officers.

He was never in danger of being taken prisoner, being always surrounded; even in the third station, where he was nearest to the enemy, he had with him twelve pieces of cannon, and three thousand grenadiers of his guards.

He made no use of the observatory which had been constructed for him six weeks before the battle by the engineers of Holland.

In his flight he frequently received news from the army, by officers who came up with him in their escape from the pursuit of the Allies.

The house of De Coster having served as a bivouac for the French, they burnt all the doors, windows, and

wood, that they could find. The rent that he paid was 100 francs.

This narrative was given at Waterloo, in the public house kept by Jean De Nivelles.

LONDON, April 20.

The following letter from Sir Robert Wilson Earl Gray, was intercepted by the French government, and is one of the documents upon which the charges against Sir Robert are founded:

Sir Robert Wilson to Earl Gray.

"It was determined (says R. Wilson) that the fugitive should wear the English uniform; that I should conduct him without the barriers in an English cabriolet, wearing the uniform myself; that I should have a relay horse at La Chapelle, and proceed from thence to Compeigne, where Ellister should afterwards travel to Lavalette to Mons, by the way of Cambrai. I had no difficulty in procuring from Sir Charles Stewart, my request, and on my responsibility, passports for Gen. Wallis and Col. Lesnock, names which we chose because they were not preceded by christian names. The passports were duly countersigned by the minister for foreign affairs, but when they were presented for signature, one of the secretaries asked who Col. Lesnock was? He immediately replied, it is the father of the admiral. This object accomplished, Ellister took the passports for Col. Lesnock procured post-horses for his carriage; and finally, to avoid all suspicion, took an apartment and a coach-house. Bruce fortunately perceived that the brigade, commanded by his cousin, Gen. Brisbane, was at Compeigne, with the horses and baggage belonging to the general who was then in England. We saw the aid-de-camp at Bruce's, where we met by appointment. He told him that very particular circumstances obliged us to pass through Compeigne with a person who must remain unknown, we wished to stop an hour or two in a remote and retired quarter. He frankly replied, that he would trust entirely to us on the subject; that his existence depended on preserving his situation, but that he would not hesitate to accede to our proposition, particularly since he saw we were interested in the affair. I avow that I felt repugnance at implicating such a person in this; but the cause was too important to stop at that consideration, and I encouraged the hope that a day would one time arrive in which it might be possible for me to acknowledge the service. Bruce procured Lavalette's measure, and Hutchinson gave it to a tailor saying it was the measure of a quarter-master of his regiment, who wanted a great coat, waistcoat and pantaloon, but did not need a suit. The tailor observed that it was the measure of a tall man and that it had not been taken by a tailor.

His remark alarmed me so much that I thought it was advisable to send Hutchinson to say to him, that as the Quarter-Master could not wait till Saturday Evening it was necessary that the clothes should be carefully packed up, and that they would be forwarded to him after his departure.--Hutchinson and Ellister took besides all necessary precautions with respect to the horses, and reconnoitered the barriers in a promenade on the preceding day. Every precaution for avoiding accident being adopted, it was finally agreed that Lavalette should be removed to Hutchinson's lodgings on Sunday, June 7, at half past nine in the evening precisely; and the next day, at half past seven in the morning, equally precise, I should be at his door with Bruce's cabriolet, my servant, the servant on my mare, well equipped, as if I were going to make an inspection. That Hutchinson should ride along by the side of the cabriolet keeping up conversation with us, and that in case any embarrassments occurred, Lavalette should mount my horse and I the mare, in order that we might act more freely and gain in expedition. I should certainly have preferred passing the barriers on horseback but it was thought that the manner of riding on horse back, might attract attention, and that passing the barriers in fully day, and in an open carriage would shew too much confidence to give cause for suspicion.

The hour being at last arrived. Ellister, Bruce, and myself repaired to Hutchinson's apartments, under the pretext of a party for punch; at the moment when Lavalette was to present himself, Bruce advanced to the top of the stairs, Lavalette took him by the hand, and saw before us this interesting personage. He was dressed in a blue uniform, and sufficiently disguised to pass without remark in the apartment of an Englishman. The friend who conducted him did not enter the room but he delivered at Hutchinson's a pair of double barrelled pistols for Lavalette. He appeared at first moved. We did not permit him to give vent to his sentiments of gratitude, but a few moments after Ellister and I withdrew, and left him to the care of Hutchinson and Bruce.

"Next day at half past seven, I was at Hutchinson's door. In five minutes I had seated Lavalette, and we were on our way to the bar of Clichy. We met several English Officers, who appeared surprised at seeing General Officer whom he did not know. My servant avoided all questions; I passed the barrier at a moderate pace; the gendarmes looking earnestly at us, the presenting of arms gave Lavalette the opportunity of covering his face in returning the salute. When we had got through the barrier, Lavalette pressed his legs against mine, and when we were out of the reach of observation, his whole countenance appeared enlightened by this first favor of fortune.