

## Literature, &amp;c.

## New Works.

## FOREST DAYS: A ROMANCE OF OLD TIMES.

[We continue our extracts from this highly interesting New Work, by JAMES.]

## BATTLE OF EVESHAM.

It was a fine array to look upon, and stern and firm seemed the front of De Montfort's battle; but the vast superiority of the enemy's numbers cast a shadow, as it were, upon the spirits of the soldiery, while in the hearts of the leaders was nothing but the certainty of defeat and death. Had it been any other body perhaps, that opposed them but an English force, had any other generals commanded the adverse party but Edward and Gloucester, their confidence in their own courage and in their great leader might have taught them to look with hope even to the unequal struggle before them. The troops, however, by whom they were outnumbered were English soldiers, the chiefs who led the enemy were famous for their warlike skill and courage, and all were fresh from victory, and elated with recent success.

Upon the field of battle the banners which had been assumed to mislead De Montfort were cast by, and those of the different leaders themselves were displayed. The troops of Mortimer and the Lords Marchers were on the right, the division of Gloucester on the left, and the command of Edward himself in the centre. In the army of the Prince, hope and exultation were in every bosom, confidence was strong, and, amongst the foreign favorites of Henry III. who were ranged in that force, the burning thirst for revenge upon him who had overthrown their fortunes, and well nigh driven them from the land, added fierceness to their courage, and a savage joy at the thought of the coming vengeance.

After the array was complete, a stern and gloomy silence pervaded the whole line of De Montfort. Each man thought of to-morrow, of the home that he might never see again, the children left fatherless, the widowed wife, the promised bride, the sweet, warm relations of domestic life, soon to be torn by the bloody hand of war.

Yet none but the auxiliaries thought of flying: not one dreamt of avoiding the fate before him, for each man there arrayed came with a firm conviction of right and justice on his side; each believed that he was fighting for the deliverance of his country from foreign dominion; each came ready to die for the liberty and the freedom of the people of England. They were determined, resolute, unshaken, but they were without hope, and therefore in stern silence they awaited the onset of the foe.

On the other side, for some time, nothing was heard but cheerful sounds, the leader's shouts, the repeated blasts of the clarion and the trumpet, till at length, amongst them also, a momentary solemn pause succeeded, giving notice that the battle was about to begin. They hung like a thunder-bolt upon the edge of the slope, and that temporary calm but preceded the breaking forth of the tempest.

The heavy masses then, for a moment, seemed to tremble; and then a few men ran forward from the ranks, slinging, even at a distance at which no effect could be produced, large balls of stone or lead at the front of De Montfort's line. Others followed quick, in irregular masses, and then moved on, somewhat more slowly, but in fine and soldierly order, the whole of Edward's overpowering force.

A pin might have been heard to drop in the host of De Montfort, so still was the expectant silence with which they awaited the attack of the immense army which seemed not only about to assail them at once in front, but lapping over at both extremities, to crush either flank under the charge of its numerous cavalry.

The skillful dispositions of the great Earl, had secured them against that danger; and the wood on the right hand, which he had filled with archers and foot spearmen, defended one wing, while the hedges and low hawthorn trees, near which he had planted Hugh de Monthermer and the bowmen of Sherwood, were a protection to the left.

Nevertheless, the latter point was one of considerable danger, and Edward marked it as the weakest part of De Montfort's line. Scarcely had the first movement in the Prince's army taken place, when a strong body of horse, following close upon a band of crossbow-men, was observed by Hugh de Monthermer, marching straight against his post, headed by the banner of Bigod, Earl of Norfolk; and leaving his men-at-arms for a moment, he galloped to the spot where his friend Robin stood, saying in a low voice, 'Here will they make their first attack, Robin, in order to turn our flank.'

'Let them come!' replied Robin Hood, 'we will give a good account of them. We have planted stakes for their horses, my lord, so if you have to charge, mark well the gaps.'

'I see, I see!' cried Hugh de Monthermer, 'but as it is a great object to put them in disarray, send them a flit from your bowstrings as soon as your arrows will tell.'

'Ours will tell now!' said Robin, and at the same time he raised his bow above his head as a signal to his men.

At that instant a few balls dropping from the enemy's slingers, fell impotent along De Montfort's line; but the next moment a hundred and fifty arrows shot into the air, scattered the crossbowmen in face of Hugh de Monthermer's band, and even caused considerable disarray among the men-at-arms, from Norfolk.

A whole flight from Edward's army then crossed the air, but reached not the opposite host; and the Earl of Monthermer, distrusting his nephew's impetuosity, rode down to beg

him on no account to charge till the battle had really begun.

It was not long ere such was the case, however. Onward, with increasing rapidity, came the force of the Prince; the arrows and the quarrels on both sides began to work fearful havoc in the ranks; and the men-at-arms might be seen closing the barred aventail, preparing to enter with each other into deadly strife.

The arrows from the Nottingham bows—unmatched throughout all England—did execution of a fearful kind amongst the crossbowmen opposed to them. One went down after another as they hurried forward; their ranks became thinner and more thin: and at length the men-at-arms behind them finding that the living, as well as the dead and wounded, encumbered without serving, called to them loudly to retire.—Before the retreat of the infantry could be well accomplished, the Earl of Norfolk gave the word; and with levelled lances the horses rushed on, though repeated arrows from an unerring hand struck every part of the Earl's armor as he approached.

'At the horses!' cried the voice of Robin Hood, as the men-at-arms drew near; and in an instant another flit, point blank rattled like hail amongst the advancing cavalry. Five or six chargers instantly went down, and others, furious with pain, reeled and plunged, spreading disarray around.

Hugh de Monthermer was now about to give the order to advance in order to support the archers, and complete what they had done, but at that instant a cry of, 'They fly—they fly!' came from the right, and, looking up the line, he perceived the whole body of Welsh auxiliaries running from the field in rout and disarray. The panic of any large body of an army, we are told, generally communicates itself more or less, to the whole; but such was not the case upon the present occasion. A shout of indignant anger burst from the other troops as the Welsh went by, for it was forgotten that they were not fighting for their country's safety or deliverance, like the rest of that host; but every one made way for them to pass, and filling up the open space as fast as possible, presented a still sterner face than before to the advancing enemy.

One of the chief defences of the centre, however, was now gone. It was like an outwork forced; and a charge of men-at-arms taking place on both sides, the whole line was speedily engaged.

From the firm front of the Nottingham archers, and the terrible, unceasing shower of arrows they kept up, the bands of the Earl of Norfolk turned off in disorder, at the very moment he had led them up almost to the stakes. Hugh de Monthermer, charging while they were yet in confusion, drove them back in complete rout; but the troops of Mortimer sweeping up, changed the fortune of the parties, and Hugh knowing the absolute necessity of keeping firm to the post he occupied, retreated unwillingly to his first position.

It was now that the Yorkshire spearmen, with the young franklin at their head, did gallant service to the cause which they espoused. Advancing with their long lances, they kept the enemy at bay, and, in spite of charge after charge, made by Mortimer and others, maintained their ground against the whole force of the Prince's right wing.

In other parts of the field, however, numbers were gradually prevailing against all that courage and resolution could do. The *mêlée* had begun in all its fierceness, knight fought with knight, man opposed man, hurry and confusion were seen in all parts of the field, while the clang of armor, the blasts of the trumpet, the shouts of the combatants, the loud voice of the commanders, the galloping of horse, the groans of the dying, and the screams of men receiving agonizing wounds, offered to the ear of heaven a sound only fit for the darkest depth of hell.

Charge after charge was poured upon the left wing of De Montfort's army; but Mortimer, Bigod, and the Earl of Pembroke, in vain led down their horse against the gallant band of spearmen and archers. Each time they approached, they were driven back, either by the fierce flights of arrows, the long spears of Pontefract, or the encounter of the men-at-arms.

Once only was the line, between the hedged field we have mentioned and the hawthorn trees, shaken for an instant by overpowering numbers; and then the old Earl of Monthermer, seeing his nephew's peril, galloped down at the head of a strong body of men-at-arms, and aided to repel the enemy.

He paused one moment by his nephew's side ere he left him, saying 'It will be very glorious, Hugh, if we can maintain our ground till night. Farewell, my dear boy; do your devoir, and if we never meet again on earth, God bless you!'

'I beseech you, sir,' replied Hugh, 'take care of your own invaluable life; remember, you are as much aimed at by the enmity of the foreigners, as even De Montfort.'

'I will never fall alive into their hands,' replied the old Earl, 'but I quit this field, so long as there is light to wield the sword.'

Thussaying he rode away to a spot where the battle was thickening, round the banner of De Montfort itself; and his presence there apparently aided to restore the field; for, shortly after, the whole force of Prince Edward withdrew for a short space, like the tiger that has been disappointed of its spring, and hung wavering upon the edge of the slope as if collecting vigor for a new charge.

At the same time, the sky over head, which, as I have before said, had been threatening during the whole morning, grew darker and darker, so as to be more like that of a gloomy November evening, than the decline of a summer's day.

The pause which had taken place seemed a part of Edward's plan for breaking the firm line of his adversary, as it was more than once repeated during the battle; but it was never of long

duration. The next instant his trumpets blew the charge, and down came the thundering cavalry, pouring at once upon every part of De Montfort's army. On the Earl's side, too, after a rapid flight of arrows from the archers, the men-at-arms advanced to meet the coming foe, and again the battle was urged hand to hand.

It were in vain to attempt a picture of the various deeds that were done that day in different parts of the field, for seldom in the annals of warfare has a combat taken place in which such acts of prowess and stern determination were displayed on either part. Edward himself, Mortimer, Gloucester, the Earl of Ashby and his son, Bigod, and Valence, and a thousand others of noble birth and high renown fought, both as generals and soldiers, with personal exertions and valor, which could only be displayed in a chivalrous system of warfare; while on the other, De Montfort, Monthermer, Le Despenser, Basset, St. John, Beauchamp, De Ros, put forth energies almost superhuman to counterbalance the disadvantage of numbers and to wrest a victory from the hand of fate.

In one place Humphrey de Bohun was struck down; and a peasant with an oxcia was preparing to dispatch him, ere he could rise, when William de York came to his rescue, and slew the foot soldier; but even as De Bohun arose and regained his horse, his deliverer was killed by a quarrel from a cross-bow.

In another part the king himself was assailed, and wounded by one of his own son's followers, who had even shortened his lance to pin him to the earth, as he lay prostrate before him, when throwing back his aventail, the monarch exclaimed, 'Oat upon thee, traitor—I am Henry of Winchester—thy king! Where is my son?'

As he spoke, a knight, taller by a head, than any man around him, and clothed from the crown to the heel in linked mail, sprang to the ground beside him, and thrusting the soldier fiercely back, raised the monarch from the ground, exclaiming, 'Mount, mount, my father and away!—Come to the rear, and let your wound be searched. Give me your horse's rein. You at least are free, and that is worth a victory.'

The King sprang on his horse, and Edward led him by the bridle to the rear of his own army.

Almost at the same moment, on the left of De Montfort's line, Alured de Ashby and Hugh de Monthermer met in full career; the former charging at the well known shield of Monthermer with animosity only the more fierce, perhaps, because he knew that it was unjust; the latter meeting him unwillingly, though compelled by circumstances to do his knightly devoir. His very reluctance, however, made him more calm and thoughtful than his fiery assailant; and, aiming his lance right at the crest of his adversary, in order to cast him from his horse, and make him prisoner, rather than kill him, he galloped on with a wary eye. The young lord of Ashby's spear, charged well and heavily struck full upon the shield of his opponent, pierced through the plate of steel, and touched the hauberk, but stopped there, without even shaking him in the saddle, and broke off in splinters; while Monthermer's lance, catching the steel casque just above the aventail, hurled his adversary to the ground, bruised, but unwounded.

Several of Monthermer's followers instantly ran up on foot to seize the discomfited knight, and make him prisoner; but a charge of fresh troops drove them back, and Alured de Ashby remounting his horse, rode away with no light addition to his former hatred for Hugh de Monthermer.

The momentary retirement of Edward from the field now caused another of those pauses in the battle, which have been already mentioned. His forces once more withdrew for a short space, slowly and sullenly; the archers on either side continuing to discharge their arrows, though with but little effect. At the same time, a flash somewhat faint, blue and ghastly, came across the sky, and then the low muttering of distant thunder.

'Ha,' said Robin Hood, who was standing by the side of Hugh de Monthermer at the moment; that trumpet will be but little attended to to-day. Heaven's voice too rarely is.'

'Too rarely indeed,' replied Hugh. 'Have you lost many men, Robin?'

'Well nigh two score, I fear,' answered Robin Hood. 'Poor Brown was rash, and ventured beyond the stakes with his little band of Mansfield men. They are all gone; but we have filled up the gap.'

'Can you still maintain your post?' demanded Hugh.

'With God's will and the help of the blessed Virgin, we shall do very well here,' said Robin; 'but I fear, my lord, for the centre and the right. Look up there, just in the second line, where there are so many gathering at one spot. Some great man is hurt here.'

'My uncle was there a moment ago,' exclaimed Hugh; 'I fear it is he.'

'No, no, my lord!' replied an old knight of the house of Monthermer, who was on his horse close by; my lord, your uncle is safe. I have him since the last charge, though he seems resolved to lose his life.'

'I do beseech you, Sir John Hardy,' said Hugh, 'if we lose the day, look to my uncle, and force him from the battle, should it be needful.'

'You stay on the field then, my lord, I suppose?' asked the old knight.

'I do,' replied Hugh.

'Then I stay too,' replied Sir John Hardy.

'Nay, that is folly,' cried Robin Hood. 'Let each man fight as long as fighting may avail; but when the day is clearly lost, the brave man, who would spill his best blood to win it, then saves the life that God gave him to do God service at another time. But see—all the leaders are gathering to that point! You had better

go my lord and bring us tidings. We will ensure the ground till your return.'

'Command the troop then till I come back, Sir John,' said Hugh, and riding along the front of the line, under a shower of arrows from the enemy, he approached the spot—where, sheltered from the sight of the adversary's lines, by a thick phalanx of foot spearmen and men-at-arms—was collected a group of noblemen of the first rank, seeming to hold a council round the royal standard, which was there erected.

When Hugh came near, however, he saw that the occasion was a sadder one. His uncle, the Lords of Mandeville, Basset, Crespingny, Beauchamp, and Le Despenser, were standing dismounted round the famous Earl of Leicester, who was stretched upon the ground, with his head and shoulders supported by the knee and arm of a monk. Deep in his breast, piercing through and through the steel hauberk, was buried the head of a broken lance, and in his right shoulder was a cloth-yard arrow. He had just concluded what seemed his confession, in extremis; and the good man was murmuring over him in haste the hurried absolution of the field of battle. His countenance was pale; the dull shadow of death was upon it; the lips were colorless and the nostrils were widely extended, as if it caused an agonizing effort to draw his breath; but the eye was still bright and clear, and—while the man of God repeated the last words—it rolled thoughtfully over the faces of all around, resting with an anxious gaze upon those with whom he was most familiar.

'Draw out the lance,' he said, speaking to the surgeon of his household who stood near.

'If I do, my lord,' replied the leech, 'you cannot survive ten minutes.'

'That is long enough,' said De Montfort. 'My boy Henry is gone; I saw him fall, and I would not be muck behind him. Draw it out, I say, I cannot breathe, and I must needs speak to my friends. Le Despenser, make him draw it out; I shall have time enough for all I have to do.'

Unwillingly, and not without considerable effort, the surgeon tore the head of the lance out of the wound; but, contrary to his expectations, very little blood followed. The Earl bled inwardly.

He seemed to feel instant relief, however, saying—'Ah, that is comfort! keep that steel, my friend, as the instrument that sent De Montfort to Heaven. Now mark me, lords and nobles,' he continued in a firm voice—'mark me, and never forget, that at this last hour, going to meet his Saviour in judgment, De Montfort declares that those who accuse him of ambition do belie him. I say now, as I have said ever, that my every act and thought have been for my country's good. I may have been mistaken—doubtless have been so often; but that my intentions were pure, I do most fervently call heaven to witness. So much for that, and now my friends I am fast leaving you. My son, like yonder orb, is setting rapidly: I, for ever—he to rise again. He may yet shine brightly on the cause I can no longer support, but it must be upon another field, and upon another day. Preserve yourselves for that time, my friends, I exhort, I beseech you! Basset, Monthermer, Le Despenser, this battle is lost; but you may yet, as night is coming, effect your retreat in safety. It is no dishonor to quit a well-fought but unequal field. Show a firm face to the enemy; gather all our poor soldiers together; retire as orderly as may be, till night covers you, then disperse, and each man make the best of his way to his own stronghold. Monthermer, you shake your head!'

'I have sworn, De Montfort,' said his old friend, kneeling down and grasping his hand, 'not to quit this field so long as there is light in yonder sky to strike a stroke, and I must keep my vow.'

'You are going, my noble friend,' said Lord Ralph Basset—'you are going on a journey where you must have companions. I am with you, Leicester, and that right soon.'

'Good bye, De Montfort,' said Lord Le Despenser. 'Go on; I will not make you wait. We shall meet again in half an hour.'

A faint smile came upon the lip of the dying man. 'Must it be so?' he asked. 'Well, then, range your men! Upon them altogether! and let the traitors, who have betrayed their country, make such a field that Evesham plain shall be sung and talked of so long as liberty is dear to the hearts of Englishmen. 'Hark, they are coming!' he continued, in a faint voice, with his eye rolling languidly from side to side.

'No, my lord, that is thunder,' said the surgeon.

'Ha!' replied De Montfort, vacantly, 'thunder!—I am very thirsty.'

Some one ran and brought him a little water from the stream. It seemed to refresh him; and raising himself for an instant upon his arm, he gazed round with a countenance full of stern enthusiasm, exclaiming aloud, 'Do your devoir! and with these words he fell back into the arms of the priest, a corpse.

A dozen voices replied, 'We will!' and each man springing on his horse, regained the head of his band. Just as Edward's troops were once more in movement to advance, the word was given along the whole confederate line, the trumpets blew to the charge, and the army, which had held in firm position up to that hour, rushed forward to meet the adversary like a thunder cloud rolling down a hill.

The sun, at the same moment, touched the edge of the horizon, shining out beneath the edge of the stormy canopy that covered the greater part of the sky, and blending its red descending light with the thunder-drops which were now pattering large and thick upon the plains of Evesham. The whole air seemed flooded with gore, and the clouds on the eastern side of the heavens, black and heavy as they were, assumed a lurid glare, harmonizing with the whole scene, except where part of a rainbow crossed the expanse, hanging the banner of