

BATTLE OF WATERLOO.—JUNE 18, 1815.

During the first part of the action, the Duke of Wellington stood in the angle formed by the crossing of two roads, and on the right of the highway, beneath a solitary elm, afterwards known as "the Wellington Tree." After being mutilated and stripped by relic-hunters, who visited the battle-field, it was pur-



THE WELLINGTON-TREE.—SKETCHED ON THE FIELD OF WATERLOO.

described by Mr. Children, the eminent chemist, who narrates the circumstances in the following interesting accredited document:—

“Brussels, Sept. 30th, 1818.

“On Sunday morning last, I visited the field of battle, accompanied by Francis Brassine, one of the guides from Mont St. Jean, who attend travellers, to point out the positions of the French and Allied Armies. My daughter had seated herself to take a sketch of the tree, when Francis called to us to proceed; and on my explaining the reason of our stopping, he exclaimed, “*Ma foi! en bon tems! car demain il va tomber!*” And so it was: the earth was already cleared away, and the roots prepared by the axe to receive the saw, which, the following day, was destined to bring it to the ground. The eager but unfortunate desire of thousands to possess a morsel of the tree had completely removed the bark, through its whole circumference, for nearly three feet in height, and in many places considerable portions of the wood had been cut off. In this state it would have been impossible to preserve the life of the tree, even had the owner, who occupies the farm of Papilote, been willing to suffer it to stand. The injury done annually to his corn, which was trampled under foot by the visitors to the tree, determined him to make the tree a sacrifice. Anxious that it might remain, though in death, a triumphant memorial of the great events it had witnessed, I directed my guide to treat with the farmer for the sale of it, and became the purchaser of the tree. It is now on

its way to England, and I trust the purposes to which it is destined will not be thought unworthy of this illustrious, though silent, record of the skill and gallantry of the greatest general and bravest troops that ever fought and conquered. “Although it has thus fallen to my lot, to be the temporary possessor of this treasure, I hope I shall not be accused of having become so unworthy; and that I may be allowed to express my regret that proper measures were not taken to preserve the tree till removed by age and natural decay.

(Signed) “JOHN GEORGE CHILDREN.

Amongst the most remarkable relics of this tree are a chair, now in Windsor Castle, presented to his Majesty George IV., by Mr. Children, and here engraved; it is placed in the guard chamber, near a memorial of the great Nelson—a portion of the mast of the *Victory*. Another chair was given by Mr. Children to the Duke of Wellington, in which we have heard he mostly sat for his portrait; and a third chair, is in the possession of his Grace the Duke of Rutland, at Bevoir Castle. There is also in the British Museum a very curious portion of the tree, having an iron chain inside it, which must have been wound round it when a sapling, and over which the wood had subsequently grown. Mr. Children himself had a cabinet made of this wood to contain minerals now in the possession of his son-in-law and daughter; and many of his friends possess smaller articles manufactured from the tree.

Speaking of this tree, some one mentioned to the Duke of Wellington that it had been nearly all cut away, and that people would soon doubt if it had ever existed. The Duke at once said that he remembered the tree perfectly, and that, during the battle, a Scotch sergeant had come to him to tell him that he had observed it was a mark for the enemy's cannon, begging him to move from it. A lady said, “I hope you did, sir.” The hero replied, “I really forget, but I know I thought it very good advice.”

The late Lord Ward, in a letter to the Bishop of Landaff, the year after the Battle of Waterloo, says:—“The term ‘Battle of Waterloo’ must have been adopted for the sake of euphony, as no part of the battle reached that village, the struggle having taken place nearer to Brussels.” Lord Ward visited the tree near which the Duke stood for so many hours with his staff, and found it pierced with at least a dozen balls, and observes, “It is quite marvellous how he escaped. After the battle the Duke joined in the pursuit, and followed for some miles. Colonel Harvey, who was with him, advised him to desist, as the country was growing less open, and he might be fired at by a raggler from behind a hedge. The Duke shouted out: ‘Let them fire away—the battle is over, and my life is of no value now!’”

One of the three letters written by the Duke from the field was a brief note, which, having enumerated some who had fallen, ends thus emphatically:—“I have escaped unhurt: the finger of Providence was on me.” What the impulse was which dictated these extraordinary words, we leave to the opinion of those who read them. . . . When the dreadful fight was over, the Duke's feelings, so long kept at the highest tension, gave way, and, as he rode amidst the groans of the wounded and the reeking carnage, and heard the rout of the crushed and the shouts of the victors, fainter and fainter through the gloom of night, he wept, and soon after wrote the words above quoted from his letter.



THE WELLINGTON CHAIR, IN THE GUARD-CHAMBER, WINDSOR CASTLE.