THE BATTLE OF EDGEHILL[1],

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It was on the evening of the 22nd of October that Charles arrived at Edgecot, a little village in Northamptonshire, about four miles from Banbury, which town was garrisoned by the Parliamentary troops. A council of war was summoned, at which, as there were no tidings of Essex's army, it was determined that Sir Nicholas Byron should, with his brigade, storm the castle of Banbury, on the morrow, while the rest of the army continued their march towards London. The council broke up, and the officers returned to their quarters, which, as the troops were spread over a large area of ground, were in many instances at some distance from head quarters. Rupert's quarters were at Mollington, a village partly in Warwickshire and partly in Oxfordshire, about four miles off. The position of his tent is to be seen in an old map of Warwickshire, which also furnishes much important evidence on the subject before us, as well as on many others of historical and antiquarian interest. Some say that Rupert slept at Mr. Spencer's seat at Wormleighton, but of this I can find no real evidence. When night had closed in, the watch fires of Essex's army lighted up the country in front of the little town of Kineton, and shewed to these videttes the near approach of their opponents. Tidings of the close proximity of the two armies was sent at once to Rupert, and about midnight the King received a message from the Prince "that the rebel army was within seven or eight miles (the distance was really ten miles), that their head quarters were at a village called Kineton, on the edge of Warwickshire, and that it would

[1] Read in the Historical Section at the Meeting of the Institute at Leamington, August 8th, 1888.

be in his Majesty's power, if he thought fit, to fight a battle the next day." Word was therefore sent to counter order the march to Banbury, and the different divisions of the army were instructed to march the next day to the Edge Hills.

It was not till eight the next morning that the King left Edgecot, and as the distance was nearly ten miles, noon was passed before he arrived at the Edge Hills, and saw the enemy drawn out in the plain below. Early in the morning Rupert's advanced guard had occupied the hills, and the sight of them, as they lined the hillside, gave to Essex the first intimation that his road to London was stopped by the King's forces. As the soldiers on the hills increased in numbers, Essex drew out his forces in front of Kineton, the advanced guard taking up a position about a quarter of a mile below the village of Radway, having with them some of the artillery. When the King arrived at the Hills, he made a careful examination of the enemy's forces with a telescope, from the point called Knoll End. The spot were he stood has been raised into the shape of a crown, and was planted with a clump of trees early last century by one of my ancestors. The enemy were near enough to be able to distinguish the King, and immediately fired their guns at the place were he stood. The shot fell short, beneath him, into a field since called Bullet Hill. The firing of the cannon was followed by cheers from Essex's soldiers. The position of the King on the brow of the Edgehill was a peculiarly strong one. The hills rise gently from Kineton to Radway, to the height of 100 feet; the rise from the village for the next 300 yards is very considerable, and from that point to the top of the hill the ascent is precipitous, the hills rising abruptly about 280 feet. A council of war was held to determine the next step to be taken. Lord Lindsay, the General, strongly advised that they should remain on the hills and await the enemy's attack. This advice was opposed by the fiery Rupert, whose success at Worcester over some of Essex's best troops made him inclined to hold the enemy cheap. The King was appealed to for his decision. He was anxious to engage the enemy at once.

There was also great difficulty in obtaining provision,

as the country hereabouts was so much under the control and influence of Lord Brooke; so many false reports too had been spread abroad respecting the fierce and bloody disposition of the Cavaliers—of the cruelty they inflicted upon the inhabitants of which robbery was one of the least. The King also had with him a number of proclamations, offering a free pardon to all who would lay down their arms. These he wished to distribute amongst the enemy's soldiers, many of whom, he was assured, were anxious and ready to desert the Parliament and join him. Charles, therefore, gave the order for marching down the hill to attack the enemy, an order which made Field-Marshall Lord Gough, when surveying the battle field from the hills some few years back, exclaim that Charles was not only no general, but a——fool. The position even in these days of rifles and powerful ordnance would be difficult to take; in the days of the Civil Wars it was simply impregnable. The line of battle was formed in the following order. On the right wing was Rupert with his cavalry; Carnarvon in his rear forming the reserve. Next to him were the brigades of Digby, Astley, Willoughby, and Aston; while the left wing was commanded by Wilmot, the Commissary-General.

The Edge Hills above the village of Radway in those days, were not clothed with wood as is now the case, but were for the most part entirely open ground, like that part of the range above the village of Tysoe. There was, however, a small park round Radway Grange, surrounded, as was the custom in those times, with a thick belt of trees. The occupant of the Grange was John Washington.[1] There also appears to have been a wood of some extent on the brow of the Hill above the house. The King's standard, near which the King stood, was on the spot now occupied by Edge Hill Tower, which was built by the writer's ancestor and opened in March, 1751, and from this spot Charles took a careful survey of the enemy's position before he descended the hills. The wood and the park, surrounded by the belt of trees, obliged Charles, as

[1] Most probably the John Washington who emigrated later on to America with his wife and two sons, and who was the direct ancestor of George Washington. He was a descendant of Sir L. Washington, of Sulgrave, who married Miss Ligh, heiress of Radway. The chain of evidence in reference to this subject I shall publish shortly.

he marched with his centre down the hill, to diverge somewhat to the left. He, therefore, passed the village of Radway, on the left of the old churchyard, and while his troops marched on to meet the enemy, he took his stand on a knoll of ground to the left hand, about 100 yards on the south of the present church. It was three o'clock when the King descended the hills. The bells were ringing for the afternoon service, the Vicar of Radway being then Jeremiah Hill, who seems to have been in hiding during the Commonwealth, and was restored to his own again in 1662.

The afternoon was far advanced, and the sun had only two hours more to shine before sinking beneath the horizon. Essex's army was ready for resisting the attack. Starting from the right wing, his line of battle was composed as follows: First stood the regiments of Balfour, Mildmay, Stapleton, Constable, and Colonel Essex; then Ballard, Lord Brooke, Hollis, and near to them towards the left, Wharton, Mandeville, Cholmondeley, Lord Essex's regiment, Fairfax, and Ramsay; Fielding's regiment being in the rear. Essex's position, in the centre, was a strong one. He had taken advantage of a ridge between Radway and Kineton for drawing up his line of battle. The ridge was naturally covered with furze and bush, thus affording shelter for the troops. And while, too, all was open field elsewhere on the plain, along the ridge the only hedgerow, that was to be found hereabouts, ran parallel with Essex's troops. At the foot of the ridge there was a small brook. These advantages of position were to be found also on Essex's right wing, though to a less degree; while the left wing, being on open ground, and that falling off towards the little River Dene, presented no advantage to the Parliament troops, but was, on the contrary, adapted for the advance of cavalry. To strengthen, as he supposed, this wing, and to prevent his position on the ridge from being outflanked, Essex extended his line in this direction, tactics as faulty as those of Marmont which ended in his defeat at Salamanca, when a Wellington, not a Charles, was in command.

Arriving on the plain, Rupert fiercely charged the enemy's left wing, and as soon as they joined the battle, Sir Faithful Fortescue, with the troops that had lately

arrived from Ireland, discharged their pistols on the ground, and, wheeling around, joined Rupert's cavaliers. The enemy's left was instantly routed. Rupert's impetuous charge was delivered with such effect that his opponents fled with loose rein to Kineton, some never stopping till they arrived at Stratford, where they announced the defeat of Essex. Rupert himself did not draw rein till he came to a spot near to the road between Kineton and Chadshunt, still called Rupert's headland. At the head of Rupert's force, the King's Bodyguard, which consisted of some 200 gentlemen, were allowed to charge. They were anxious to answer the jeers of the common soldiers, who thought but lightly of these gaily dressed cavaliers, by showing that they were really to lead the attack. The folly of the King in giving way to their request was shortly seen. Wheeling round when he had arrived at the headland, Rupert's troops fell upon the baggage of the Parliament army, and carried off Lord Essex's carriage.

Near to the old ford over the brook at the bottom of Bridge-street, Kineton, where a new road was made a few years ago, some skeletons were found, which, from the position wherein they were discovered, makes it more than probable that they were the bodies of some who were defending the ford against the assaults of Rupert's soldiers. After a while the cavaliers were disturbed in their pillaging operations by the near approach of Hampden's regiments, who, on hearing the guns of the combatants, hastened to join their companions in arms. The advanced guard, with some guns they had brought with them, opened fire upon the cavaliers, who then retreated from Kineton. Had Rupert held his force well in hand, and, having driven back the enemy's right, had formed on the flank of Essex's centre, and charged it with the same impetuosity with which he had defeated the right wing, Essex's centre must have been completely rolled up, and Edgehill not Naseby would have been the decisive battle of the Civil War. Whether this would have been an advantage to the country or not, it is not for me to say: I have only now to do with describing the battle. While Rupert was attacking the enemy's left, Commissary-General Wilmot proceeded to

attack the left wing. At the first onset he appears to have driven back the foe, but when he arrived at certain hedgerows and enclosures which had been lined with Essex musketeers, his advance was stopped. Clarendon states that these enclosures were near to Kineton, while most of the Parliamentary authorities make out that they were within the lines occupied by Essex's soldiers. The farm houses of Battle farm and Thistle farm were probably not in existence at that time, as except in the case of an old house or two still remaining, where once there had been a village, single farm houses were seldom to be met with in the old open fields till many years after the battle of Edge Hill.

Tradition says, as I have remarked, that there was only one hedgerow between Radway and Kineton, and that hedgerow, which still exists, is on the spot occupied by Essex's centre. The ditches too which are mentioned, must have been on the lower ground, somewhat to the rear of Essex's army, where some natural watercourses are still to be found. Willmot, therefore, in the first instance seems to have driven back the enemy, but was afterwards checked in his advance. Some authorities following Colonel Fiennes and others, state that he was driven back to the hills, while others say that he lost but little ground. This and other disputed points have lately been elucidated by the deep draining and deep cultivation of the land. The actual area on which the battle was contested, can now be shown with considerable clearness. I have carefully traced out the area on which bullets, cannon balls, and other relics of the fight have been found by this deep cultivation, so that I can point out to within a hundred yards or so, the area on which the combatants contended. That Wilmot was driven back to the village of Radway can now be clearly disputed, as no remnant of the fight in the shape of bullets, skeletons, or cannon balls have been found beyond this the immediate confines of the two parishes, and no bullet marks are to be seen on the wall of the old house. That a number of his raw recruits, when his force was galled by the fire of Essex's musketeers and he was obliged to give ground, fled to the hills is more than probable, just as some of Essex's troops fled to Stratford when driven back by Rupert, and as the Belgians

fled to Brussels from Waterloo, but that there was not any fighting between the two forces beyond the first field or two in Radway parish, as now enclosed is quite apparent. Simultaneously with these two attacks of the two, the king's centre moved forward to attack the centre of Essex's army. Now when the king descended the hill and proceeded to attack Essex's centre, he not only gave up his impregnable position on the hills, but, as Essex's centre was posted upon the before mentioned ridge, after crossing the Radway brook, the king had to ascend the rising ground to attack the enemy, and to attack them too as they stood under the cover of the broken ground. Notwithstanding this, at the outset, he seems to have driven back the enemy's centre, and advanced through the bush and furze till he came to the before-mentioned hedgerow, in front of which the fighting must have been excessively severe. Here the largest amount of the *debris* of the fight are found; here was the grave in which the common soldiers were buried. Just at this time, the attack of Wilmot, on the king's left, began to fail, and he was driven back some little distance. This, Major Ross, who is writing accounts of the battles of the Civil Wars, as military studies, rather disputes. He has not, however personally examined the ground. The discovery of bullets in this direction shows that there was heavy fighting on that spot, to which I assert he was driven back. The enemy was, therefore, able to attack the king's centre in an oblique direction with his cavalry. Rapin states that the attack of the king's centre by Balfour and the cavalry was from Essex's left wing on the side left exposed by Rupert. This view Major Ross endorses, and the number of bullets, skeletons, &c., found in this direction, leads much to the same conclusion.

The King's centre was now in danger of being utterly routed. The standard bearer, Sir E. Varney, was killed, and Secretary Chambers, attended by six troopers, was carrying off the standard in triumph. Just then Captain Smith, of Skilts, a Warwickshire squire, was riding with his groom near the spot, when a boy cried out "They are carrying off the standard." Putting on an orange scarf which had belonged to a dead trooper, and calling to some infantry soldiers to follow him, he attacked Chambers,

running him through with his sword, And though afterwards wounded in the neck with a poleaxe, he pierced and killed another of his assailants, and the rest ran away. Then, mounting one of the Roundhead's horses, and calling on a foot soldier to hand him the Standard, he rode off with it. Soon after, meeting with some of the King's horse soldiers that had rallied, he delivered the Standard to Robert Hutton, who took it to the King; and the next day Smith was knighted for his gallant act. The King seeing that matters were going ill for him in the centre, left his position near the present church, and, with the courage he always showed in adversity, went forward to rally his troops. For a time the King himself was in great danger of being captured, as he had no body-guard with him. He was, however, soon surrounded by some of his own soldiers, and the danger passed away. Lord Lindsay endeavoured to rally the Royalists, but, advancing too far in front of his own regiment, was shot in the thigh and taken prisoner, as was also his son, Lord Willoughby, who tried to save his father. It was Lord Lindsay who, before he entered the battle, uttered these well-known words to God: "O Lord! Thou knowest how busy I must be this day. If I forget Thee, do not Thou forget me. March on, boys." The contest must have been excessively severe. The number of bullets that have in the last few years been ploughed up or found in digging the new drain, is, after the lapse of so many years, very large.

The King's troops contested the ground inch by inch, and at the end were only driven back some 400 yards from the front of Essex's position as barely any traces of the battle have been found on the Radway side of the brook, or where the brook turns up towards the hill beyond a straight line drawn in the direction the brook has hitherto run. Rupert's troops having, as we have seen, been disturbed in their acts of plundering by Hampden's advanced guard, retired in straggling order to the battle-field. On their return, according to Rupert, Balfour's troops at once returned and formed safely in Essex's rear. The King who retained at this crisis his full presence of mind, endeavoured to collect a sufficient body of the straggling soldiers to charge the enemy on their

flank. He was, however, able to get only a few together. And the success of their efforts seem to show that had they charged in sufficient number the issue of the day would have been different. But the men and their horses were weary. Now was seen the folly in allowing the Body Guard to leave the King. Now was seen the misfortune of Carnarvon's troop disobeying their orders and charging with Rupert's Cavalry. Had they remained in reserve to act when required and cover the flank of the centre, a victory, not a drawn battle would have been the result. As it was Essex's troops would not leave their good position on the ridge amongst the bushes, so the two forces for the few remaining minutes of daylight stood looking at each other; but night, the friend of weary and dismayed armies, parted them. Then the King ordered his cannon nearest to the enemy to be drawn off, and with his whole forces spent the night upon the field. His carriage, which had descended the hill from Knoll End late in the evening, down a trackway still known as King Charles's road, drew up at a spot called the King Leys Barn, where the writer's great grandfather planted a clump of trees to mark the spot. The trees were cut down in 1863 to enlarge the farm-yard, but the spot is still to be identified. This spot is half-way between the hills and the position occupied by the army of the Parliament, and only 600 yards in the rear of the brook. As the King's carriage came down the hill it would draw up not in the front, but somewhere near the rear of his forces.

We have here another fact to show the King's centre was not driven back to any great extent. That many of their enemy, unused to warfare, fled for refuge to the top of the hill when the battle was somewhat against them, we know was the case, as one-third are said to have fled the field. But that the King was driven back to the hills either in the centre or to the left, is from these facts simply impossible. The next morning the King walked to the village of Radway, where he breakfasted at a cottage, in which was preserved the old table, on which his meal was served. The cottage was pulled down in 1882. Neither party was anxious to resume the battle; the Parliamentarians had a wholesome dread of Rupert's cavalry, while the King found that Essex's infantry,

which had been for many weeks longer in training than his own—for his own troops had only been formed into an army after his arrival at Shrewsbury, September the 20th,—were better soldiers than his own. A small troop of the King's cavalry, however, went forward, under Captain Smith, and brought off four guns which had been left close to Essex's position. Towards noon the King sent his herald, Sir William Neve, with a proclamation of pardon to those who would lay down their arms. This proclamation he was not allowed to distribute. He brought back, however, tidings that Lord Lindsay had died of his wounds, as there was no surgeon to attend him. In the afternoon Essex drew off his forces towards Kineton, and from thence marched to Warwick. The King, seeing this, went back with his two sons to the hospitable quarters of Mr. Chauncey, of Edgecott. On the Tuesday morning, Rupert's cavalry followed the retiring army almost to Warwick, and found that they had left many of their wounded and some of their carriages at Kineton. On the Wednesday the King's army was numbered, when it was found that the numbers were greater than he expected, those that had run away in the midst of the battle having rejoined regiments. The number of soldiers on each side was somewhere about 10,000. The dead, which amounted to about 1,200, were buried on the field of battle, in a field just in front of the oft mentioned hedgerow, in the parish of Kineton, by Mr. Fisher, the vicar. The officers were buried by themselves, about 200 yards distant, in a north easterly direction. The army, finding themselves masters of the situation, marched to Edgecott, and from there to Banbury, where they stormed the castle. The statement of the numbers killed is given by the Rev. Mr. Fisher.