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The Campaign of Evesham, June-August, 1265

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THE CAMPAIGN OF EVESHAM, JUNE—AUGUST, 1265.

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THE complicated campaign which had ended in the astounding victory of Lewes seemed to have settled the fate of England for many a year.

In May, 1265, the whole realm seemed to lie at the disposition of Simon de Montfort. Hardly any serious opposition by the Royalists survived. It is true that certain barons of the Welsh March, of whom Roger Mortimer, Lord of Wigmore, was the chief, were still in arms beyond the Severn; and a small band of loyal adherents of the captive King had been keeping up for many months a desperate resistance in the isolated Castle of Pevensey. The young Earl of Gloucester was known to be discontented with some of Earl Simon's more high-handed acts, and to bear a bitter grudge against his overweening sons. But it was not suspected that he would lightly betray the cause for which he had fought so well at Lewes.

About the middle of the month of May Simon started from Gloucester, to make an end of the insurgents in the Welsh March. He was accompanied by several of his most trusty adherents—his own eldest son, Henry, Despencer the Justiciar, John Fitz-John, Ralph Basset and Humphrey de Bohun, the son of the Earl of Hereford. He took with him King Henry and Prince Edward, who, though treated with respect, were never allowed to stir far from his side save under safe custody. It was at Hereford that Prince Edward escaped from his guardians by means of a simple stratagem and a swift horse (May 28th). He fled to Mortimer at Wigmore Castle, and a few days later was joined by the Earl of Gloucester, who formally avowed his breach with Montfort, did homage to

the Prince, and raised his banner. Not only the de Clare tenants in Glamorgan and Gwent, but all the smaller barons of the Welsh border at once took arms in the Royalist cause. So did Shropshire and Cheshire almost *en masse*.

Simon, still lying at Hereford, had now the choice before him whether he would march at once against the Prince and the Earl, whether he would continue the already-begun campaign against the Marchers, or whether he would promptly recross the Severn, and fall back towards his main sphere of influence in eastern and southern England, in order to pick up reinforcements. The armed force that he had with him was so trifling—not over 2,500 men—that the last-named course would have been the most prudent. But he chose the second alternative, underrating, as it would seem, the importance of De Clare's rising, and the influence of the Prince. But as a matter of precaution, he sent a detachment of 300 men-at-arms, under Robert de Ros, to hold Gloucester, the main passage over the Severn, whereby he intended to keep up his communication with London. He also sent off orders to the sheriffs of the south-western counties bidding them raise their levies, and he made the captive King set his seal to documents outlawing the Prince and de Clare.

Montfort seems to have tarried at Hereford till June 13th, a delay which gave his enemies time to draw together in dangerous strength. They seized Bridgnorth and Worcester, broke their bridges, destroyed or removed all the boats on the middle Severn, and spoilt the fords in its course by dredging them deeper. Then on June 13th and 14th they passed down the river bank to Gloucester, and laid siege to it. The town fell almost at once, but de Ros held out faithfully in the castle for fifteen days, in spite of the fact that he had been caught almost destitute of provisions. On hearing of this move, Earl Simon ought to have hastened to relieve Gloucester Castle, and make sure of Gloucester Bridge, without a moment's delay. But he failed to do so. He had departed westward on June 10th to confer with Llewellyn, Prince of Wales. the

bitter enemy of the royalist marcher lords, and was deep in negotiation with him. After long haggling, the Welsh Prince was bought for Montfort's service by a grant of many lands and castles, including some to which his title was more than doubtful. The Treaty of Pyperton disgusted many of Simon's best friends, for to league with the national enemy in time of civil war did not please true patriots. But at least the ardent support of the ambitious Llewellyn was bought. He placed a contingent of several thousand light infantry at the Earl's disposal, and these Welsh spearmen formed the larger part of Simon's fighting force during the rest of the campaign. The treaty was signed on June 19th; on the 22nd the King was made to confirm it with his seal at Hereford. Simon then marched to Monmouth, apparently desiring to place himself between the main body of the rebels, encamped before Gloucester, and the large body of de Clare's tenants who were in arms in Gwent and Glamorgan. At the same time, he would be in a good position for an advance to relieve the garrison of Gloucester Castle, whose full danger he does not seem to have realised. If he had understood it, he would have marched without a moment's delay to its aid.

Simon wasted a short time in capturing the strong castle of Monmouth, one of the chief strongholds of de Clare. But when he next prepared to march eastward towards Gloucester, he found the line of the Wye held by a strong detachment, headed by John Giffard, which Prince Edward had sent out from his camp at Gloucester to act as a "covering force" for the besiegers of Gloucester Castle. Giffard had fortified himself in a strong position commanding Monmouth Bridge, and reconnaissances showed that he was apparently not to be evicted by such a small force as that which Simon had at his command. Another way of winning back to England must be found: the best chance seemed to be to attempt to cross the Bristol Channel by ship. Accordingly the Earl sent a messenger to the citizens of Bristol, who were his good friends, bidding them dispatch vessels to Newport, at the mouth of

the Usk, to carry him across the estuary. At the same time another message was sent to Simon the younger, who was still busy in the siege of Pevensey (June 28th), ordering him to raise the leaguer, collect the full force of the constitutional party, and march to the Severn to attack Prince Edward in the rear. Both these despatches—whether sent by water or by land we know not—reached their destination.

Meanwhile, there must be considerable delay before the Earl's friends could act. He employed the necessary time of delay in making his way to the sea. Leaving Monmouth, he moved first to Usk, a strong de Clare castle, which he stormed, and then seized Abergavenny and Newport, which last was all important to him from its harbour. He was now joined by Llewellyn's promised succours from North Wales, and so, being in greater strength than before, was able to spread his troops abroad, and harry Gloucester's lands in Gwent and Glamorgan. But this operation did him no good in England; to turn the Welsh loose on the marcher lords savoured of want of patriotism, and their intervention was bitterly resented.

Unfortunately for the Earl, Gloucester Castle had fallen on June 29th, and Prince Edward and de Clare, having all the bridges on the lower Severn now in their hands, and seeing that Simon had withdrawn westward, were free to come with their main body to join the corps of observation under Giffard, which had been watching their enemy. They had an immense superiority in numbers, and sought a battle. They retook Usk only three days after it had fallen, and then marched on Newport. Before leaving Gloucester they had equipped three war galleys ("piratical ships" we are told) which they found there, and sent them down the Severn, with a body of chosen men-at-arms on board, to sweep the estuary. This little squadron came upon the ships from Bristol which Simon's friends had sent him, on the same day on which they had reached Newport, and attacked them at the very moment when the Earl's baggage was being taken aboard. The Royalists sunk or captured eleven small merchantmen—

apparently the whole fleet which the men of Bristol had sent over. On the same day Prince Edward fell upon Simon's outposts before Newport, drove them in, and attacked the Earl. His advance was only stopped when the bridge and the town were fired in his face by the retreating enemy; who took refuge beyond the Usk. (July 8th ?)

Simon was thus deprived of his last remaining chance of a prompt return to England, and was thrown back into the wilds of Wales, the only refuge open to him. He could hope to rejoin his friends, and to reach the regions that favoured him, only by making a very long detour. The sole possible course was to retire northward, keeping the Usk between himself and the Royalists, and to regain Hereford, where the town and castle were still held by his friends. In the wild mountainous country between Abergavenny, Crickhowell and Hay his army suffered dreadful privations. The knights, we are told, complained that they could not live on the Welsh diet of mutton and milk, and were lost without their daily ration of bread. Simon appears to have regained Hereford somewhere about the 18th or 20th of July, with a dilapidated and dispirited army, to which he was absolutely forced to grant some days of repose, now that it had reached a base which was safe for the moment.

Prince Edward and Gloucester had followed Simon for some way in his retreat, and the former even pushed on as far as Brecon, whose castle he captured. But finding that their enemy had eluded them, they hastened back through Monmouthshire to Worcester, and prepared once more to hold the passes of the Severn. They placed strong detachments at the fords, which had already been made practically useless, and guarded the broken bridges also. During the last ten days of July Simon made a serious attempt to force his way across—apparently somewhere between Worcester and Bridgnorth. It failed, and he got small consolation out of a minor success, the capture of Leominster and its Royalist garrison. But the Earl had not yet lost hope, as he knew that his partisans

in the east and south must by now be making themselves felt in the Prince's rear. He is said to have encouraged his men by assuring them that the enemy would soon be caught, as in a trap, between his own army and that of his sons. Meanwhile he had succeeded in procuring a few large boats—perhaps they had been floated down the Teme—with which he was preparing to make one more attempt to force a passage.

Meanwhile Simon de Montfort the Younger had wasted much time, by marching to his father's aid along a strange and most circuitous route. Speed should have been his main object, but he preferred instead to gather as large an army as possible, by calling in all his father's partisans, and with this purpose in view passed through all the regions where the cause was strong. He moved from Pevensey to London, from London to Winchester (July 14th), from Winchester to Oxford and from Oxford to Northampton; from thence he at last started toward the actual site of war, and arrived at the Castle of Kenilworth on Friday, July 31st. He came on the field too late, but with an imposing force, quite capable of facing the Prince and de Clare. With him were the young Earl of Oxford, William de Montchensey, Richard de Grey, Baldwin Wake, Adam of Newmarch, Walter Colville, Hugh Neville, and some fifteen other barons or bannerets. The spacious courts of Earl Simon's castle were unable to contain the host, of which the greater part encamped in tents outside, while some lodged in the town.

On reaching Kenilworth, the baronial army was at no very remote distance from the enemy, since Worcester lies only thirty-two miles from the castle. But Simon the younger took no military precautions, neither sending out scouting parties nor even surrounding his camp with a circle of out-posts. Unfortunately for him, he had to deal with an enemy who knew how to use his opportunity. Prince Edward was well aware that he must prevent, at all costs, the junction of the two baronial armies. He must strike at one of them before they could meet. The Earl was protected by the Severn,

and his exact whereabouts, since his last check, was not accurately known. He was the more hard to find of the two enemies, and also the more safe to neglect, since he had the smaller force, and would take some time to cross the Severn even if he were left unopposed. Indeed, if the larger baronial army was first dealt with, the smaller became impotent for harm, because of its want of numbers. It was obvious that a blow at the younger Simon would be more effective, if only it were successful. While the Prince was in this position, news was brought him, by spies or traitors from the camp of the barons, that Simon the Younger had just reached Kenilworth, and was there encamping in complete and careless security. According to one chronicler (Hemingford) the Prince's informant was a woman named Margot, who had ventured into the barons' camp disguised in man's apparel.

Edward's decision was very promptly made. On the afternoon of the very day on which Simon the Younger reached Kenilworth, the Royalists received orders to prepare for a forced march without delay. Thus little time was given for the Prince's design to get abroad, even if there should chance to be spies in his camp, as there were in that of the enemy. The whole force was collected for the blow, not even a screen of pickets being left along the Severn to observe the elder Simon. A small garrison only seems to have been placed in Worcester. The host marched with all possible speed throughout the summer night, guided, no doubt, by local men who knew the roads. At dawn they were halted in the immediate vicinity of Kenilworth, in order to allow the rear to come up. At this moment the noise of a moving multitude was borne to their anxious ears, and it was feared that the barons had been warned, and were already in arms to defend themselves. But pushing on, the Prince's van found nothing but a train of wagons, laden with food and stores for the enemy, which had been moving all night like themselves. They were seized in a moment, and not a wagoner or a man of the escort got away to rouse the still sleeping camp of Simon the Younger.

A few minutes later the Royalists burst into Kenilworth and the host of tents beside it, absolutely unexpected and unopposed. They cut down with small trouble the few who offered resistance, captured many more, and scattered the rest. Wellnigh all the baronial leaders fell into their hands without giving or receiving a stroke. Simon the Younger escaped into the castle half naked, but Oxford, Montchensey, and most of the other men of note were taken in their beds. The baronial army was practically annihilated ; few save those who had chanced to sleep in the castle escaped. What was most unlucky of all was that not a single rider seems to have got off to warn the elder Simon of the disaster.¹

Edward tarried no longer than was necessary at Kenilworth. He was well aware that during his absence from the line of the Severn the old Earl had been left with his hands free, and might already be over the river and marching eastward. Accordingly he resolved to hurry back to Worcester with his whole army. We are told he was much helped in his progress by the fact that he had captured so many horses at Kenilworth that he was able to mount a large proportion of his infantry, who were thus able to keep up with the knights on the return march. (August 2nd.)

While the victorious Royalists were hurrying back toward Worcester, Earl Simon, as Edward had feared, was already on the move. Apparently he had been warned by his outposts, on August 1st, that the fords seemed no longer to be defended. He hastened up, from Hereford as it seems, and on August 2nd was busily transporting his men across the Severn at Kempsey, three miles south of Worcester. They had only a few boats, and the process was a long one. It seems, indeed, that the Earl's small army must have finished its crossing only about the same moment that Prince Edward

¹ The march of thirty-two miles from Worcester to Kenilworth during the hours between the afternoon of July 31st and the dawn of August 1st, seems astonishing. But that troops, even on foot, can do such distances on an emergency has been proved in the manœuvres of this very autumn of 1909.

got back to Worcester. All the intelligence that Simon could procure was that his son had been heard of at Kenilworth, and that the enemy had marched in that direction on the 31st of July.¹ Acting on this meagre stock of information, Simon resolved to turn southward, and to take the road by Pershore, Evesham, and Stratford-on-Avon towards Kenilworth. He apparently started off early on August 3rd, perhaps (as some authorities say) under cover of the night, so that no collision took place in the neighbourhood of Kempsey, though the Prince must have been only three miles away, at Worcester, on that morning. Probably Simon hugged the bank of the Severn for some miles before turning on to Pershore, for the direct road Worcester—Pershore would have been too near the enemy.

On Monday, August 3rd, Simon's force covered the fifteen miles that lie between Kempsey and Evesham, in which town it encamped for the night.² Meanwhile the Prince, though the Earl had a few hours' start of him, was near enough to him to be able to make an effort to cut him off from his march towards Kenilworth, for the detour to the south which had been imposed on Simon had sufficed to compensate the time-advantage which he had gained by an early start. Allowing his men the greater part of the day for rest, after their two forced marches from Worcester to Kenilworth (on the night of the 31st—1st), and from Kenilworth to Worcester (in the day hours of the 2nd), the Prince started off again on the evening of August 3rd. There are two roads from Evesham to Kenilworth, the one by Alcester, the other by Stratford-on-Avon. It was Edward's object to throw himself across both of these paths available to the enemy, but especially across the second, which the Earl was the more likely to adopt,

¹ The best authorities agree that Simon was still quite ignorant of his son's fate, though the Osney Annals say that he knew of it.

² The chroniclers who say that Simon did not start till the night of the 3rd or 4th are certainly wrong. Edward would have attacked him with every advantage, if he had so lingered.

because it was farther from the hostile army, and less likely to be intercepted. We are told that the Prince took a curious precaution at the moment of starting: he marched a few miles out of Worcester on the northern road, as if about to move on Bridgnorth, in order that spies might report to the enemy that he had taken this extraordinary direction, for he had information that there were traitors in his camp. Then, after reaching Claines, three miles north of Worcester, he reversed his marching columns and struck south and eastward across central Worcestershire. Edward's exact route is not specified by any chronicler; we have, indeed, only a single confusing note about it—Rishanger's statement that the Prince crossed an unnamed river, at a point whose name is apparently corrupt.¹

¹ *Transito fluvio juxta oppidum quod dicitur Clinemam, comitem versus iter arripuit.*

The editor of Rishanger has corrected *Clinemam* into *Clive viam*. But this is arbitrary, since Rishanger may have wrongly supposed that Edward crossed the Severn at Claines, whose name is fairly like "Clinema," through misconceiving the situation of that village. But to take him to "Clive," *i.e.* Prior's Cleeve, five miles north-east of Evesham, on the Avon, and to make him cross that river there, seems to me equally unreasonable. And if Edward crossed the Avon to Cleeve, he must also have recrossed it, in order to fight at Evesham, since the battlefield is on the west bank of the river, not the east. But neither Rishanger nor anyone else mentions a *second* crossing of any river. Professor Prothero and Mr. Robert New, both of whose narrations I have on must points found useful in compiling this paper, make Edward, after passing the Avon at Clive, re-pass it again at Offenham, only a mile north of Evesham, without being perceived by the Earl or his men. This is surely incredible; an army, or a division of it at the least, some thousands strong, cannot move unseen within such a short distance of the enemy in full daylight, without being detected. For a host on the march is a long object: it would have taken Edward's force several hours to pass Offenham ford. Is it credible that no scout, forager, or peasant should have seen it, or have passed on the word to Earl Simou, if the passage was made so close to him, during a time extending over hours?

It is impossible to see how it could have passed unobserved. There were some 6,000 men with Montfort, who had to be fed, and their horses also. It is pretty certain that, if forced requisitions were not being made in the neighbouring villages, at least food must have been in

It seems probable that the Royalist army descended on Evesham by three converging routes ; we have, indeed, clear notice that it came on the ground in three sections, the one commanded by the Prince himself, the second by Gloucester, the third by Mortimer, the greatest of the Marcher barons. It is also plain that both the Prince and Gloucester ultimately appeared from the north, and Mortimer from the west. The banners of the latter, when he came in sight, are said by Hemingford to have been seen *ab occidente et a tergo*, which can only mean that he used the southern road from Pershore to Evesham via Wick and Bengeworth, on the left bank of the Avon. As to the other two corps, we know that they came on the field separately, and I cannot help supposing that Edward had divided them, so as to utilise both of the two roads which lead to Evesham from Worcester. They are sufficiently close to leave no danger of the two columns getting out of touch with each other, or of one of them having to fight the baronial army before the other could come up. These two routes are (1) Worcester, Wyre, Chadbury, and (2) Worcester, Flyford, Dunington, Norton. They meet at Twyford, a mile outside Evesham, to the north. Mortimer's division, which ultimately appeared south of the river, and to the west, must have gone on the third possible road, by Pershore, at whose bridge it would cross the Avon, and so march on Bengeworth, with the object of stopping the town bridge, by which alone Simon could escape when the northern roads were blocked by the main army. For there was a chance that he might get the alarm early, and fly south towards Cotswold, where an escape towards London was open to him. There was little danger in dividing the host, since the Royalists outnumbered the Earl's men by seven to two.¹

course of collection in the alternative way, *i.e.* by a market being offered to the peasantry for all that they could bring in. In either case, it seems incredible that no news of the passage of a large force, much of it mounted, should have failed to come to hand, during the long hours that it would have taken Edward to make the circuitous march, close in to the town, which has been attributed to him.

¹ So says the *Chronicle of Melrose* at least.

The town of Evesham, if this plan should succeed, would prove an absolute death-trap for the baronial army. It lies at the southern end of a deep, bottle-necked loop of the Avon, which is only fordable with difficulty in one or two places. There are only two exits from it—one by the town bridge, at the very end of the loop, the other by the high road up Green Hill, where the roads from Worcester on the north-west, and Alcester and Stratford on the north-east, fork outwards, a mile north of Evesham, after the neck of the loop has been passed. If an enemy should get close enough to the bridge to prevent the Earl's army from deploying beyond it and issuing from Bengeworth in fighting order, the only other alternative for the host caught in Evesham would be to fight its way up Green Hill, with the slope against it, in a desperate attempt to get out by the Stratford road. Evesham town would be a good spot to defend, since the river guards it on three sides, and the northern front would not be hard to hold, if hastily barricaded. But for an army not wishing to defend itself on the spot, but to get away at all costs, it was a most unfortunate position. One wonders that Earl Simon did not take care to move off at earliest dawn; but apparently he was still ignorant of what had happened at Kenilworth, and thought that the Prince was absent in that direction.

Simon, at any rate, did not make an early start. His men had taken their morning meal, and he had found time to hear Mass in the abbey, before the order to mount and make ready for departure was given. Apparently a few scouts went out first, for we are told that the first notice which the Earl received of the approach of the enemy was that his fore-riders came hastily back, to tell him that on reaching the crest of Green Hill they had seen a host with banners approaching from the north, several miles away.¹ "It is my son," said Simon, "fear not; but, nevertheless, look out, lest we

¹ So the *Chronicle of Melrose*, which adds that the scouts sighted the Prince when he was still nearly two leagues away. This, if correct, disposes of the whole story of the Royalists having crossed the Avon at Offenham, only a mile off.

be deceived." Nothing was visible from the town, for the view ceases at the sky-line of Green Hill for anyone who looks upward from the streets. But the bell-tower of the abbey (not the present splendid structure erected by Abbot Lichfield in Tudor times, but its predecessor) commanded the whole country-side. Simon ordered his barber, Nicholas, who was noted for his keen sight, to climb the stair, and afterwards followed him in person.¹ The first glance confirmed him in his original delusion, for Prince Edward had ordered that the banners captured at Kenilworth—the white lion of Montfort, the red and gold of de Vere, the three escutcheons of Montchensey, and the rest—were to be borne in his van to disarm suspicion. Some precious minutes were no doubt wasted by the Earl as he gazed on the approaching line of march. But after a space the royal banner of England was distinctly seen waving over the main body, and the Earl recognised his mistake, and saw that he would have to fight, or fly, at a short half-hour's notice. But worse was to come. A moment later a second body was descried pressing on to join the first. This was the Earl of Gloucester's division, coming up, no doubt, by the Wyre-Chadbury road. The red chevrons on the gold banner must have soon shown the Earl who was at hand. Yet still there seemed to be a chance left: the outskirts of Evesham might be held by a rear-guard while the baronial army crossed the Avon and retreated hastily up on to Cotswold. If this idea crossed the Earl's mind it was dashed away in an instant: a third column was descried south of the river, coming on from the west, with the unmistakable blue bars of Mortimer waving over it. It was already so close to Bengeworth that it was clear that there would be no time for the army to file over the bridge, before its head would be arrested by this newly-appearing force. "Now may God have mercy on our souls," cried Simon,

¹ Hemmingford wrongly says that he ascended a hill; but there is no such hill in the neighbourhood save Green Hill, and that cannot be meant.

“for our bodies are in the power of our enemies!” The full horror of the situation had burst upon him; yet he was soldier enough to add, “By the arm of St. James, they come on well! And they have learned it from me!”

It must have been in hurried words that the Earl explained the desperate situation to his captains, when he had descended from the tower. They were surrounded by overpowering strength, and the army could not possibly get away. But there was still a chance for well-mounted horsemen to escape over Evesham Bridge eastward, before Mortimer could come up. Henry de Montfort earnestly besought his father to fly, and swore that he would hold the enemy at bay long enough to give him a good start. The old man laughed the proposal to scorn: he had brought them there, and would not shirk the responsibility. “I have grown old in wars, and my life draws near its end: my ancestors never fled from battle, or wished to fly.” But he told Despenser, and the other barons who stood by, to escape if they would, and maintain the good cause when he should be gone. Not one would flinch from him, and all made ready for battle.

Simon had still a short space before the enemy would close in upon him, for Edward and de Clare took time in arranging their forces on the crest of Green Hill, so as to reach from water to water, and to leave no gap in the mile-broad front, before they should commence to descend upon the town: while Mortimer does not seem to have approached the bridge too closely. He was, no doubt, observing the movements of his friends, and anxious not to precipitate the fight before they were ready; he had to block the enemy's retreat, not to act on the offensive. The Earl employed the time of respite in forming his host in a deep column—the knights at the head, the heavy-armed foot behind, the light Welsh infantry in the rear of all. It was evident that the sole chance was to strike with a heavy impetus at the centre of the Royalist line, with a faint hope of bursting through by the first violence of the stroke. Therefore the best troops were put at the head of

the column, and all was risked on the first desperate charge. King Henry was placed in the centre ranks, so that, if by any chance the attack proved successful, he might be carried through in safety; for the possession of his person was everything to the baronial party; without it they would be too clearly rebels. The allegation that the King was taken on in order that he might die with his captors, if the worst came, need not be taken seriously; such an idea would not be in Montfort's way of thinking.

Accordingly the baronial host marched out upon the high road up Green Hill, undoubtedly upon a narrow front, which probably did not much exceed the breadth of the road itself and the waste on each side of it—very likely with no more than fifty or sixty horsemen abreast. At the moment of contact they would obviously be out-flanked, and it would be easy for the wings of the enemy to close in, and encircle them with fatal effect, if the first impetus failed to carry them through. The crest of Green Hill was probably at that time not covered with hedges and ornamental wood, as at present, but was bare, tilled ground, for it seems to have been part of the common field of Evesham. Where there is now no general view to be obtained, from water to water, because of the foliage, there was probably then a fair panorama of the scene. The sight of the long Royalist line on the crest was not inspiring. Though the first of Montfort's host came on steadily enough, the Welsh infantry in the rear began to melt away before a blow had been struck. Slipping off into the suburban fields and gardens at the side of the road, many of them plunged into the Avon, and swam over as best they might, hoping to elude Mortimer's approaching corps by mere dispersion, and making in the direction of Cropthorne and Fladbury.

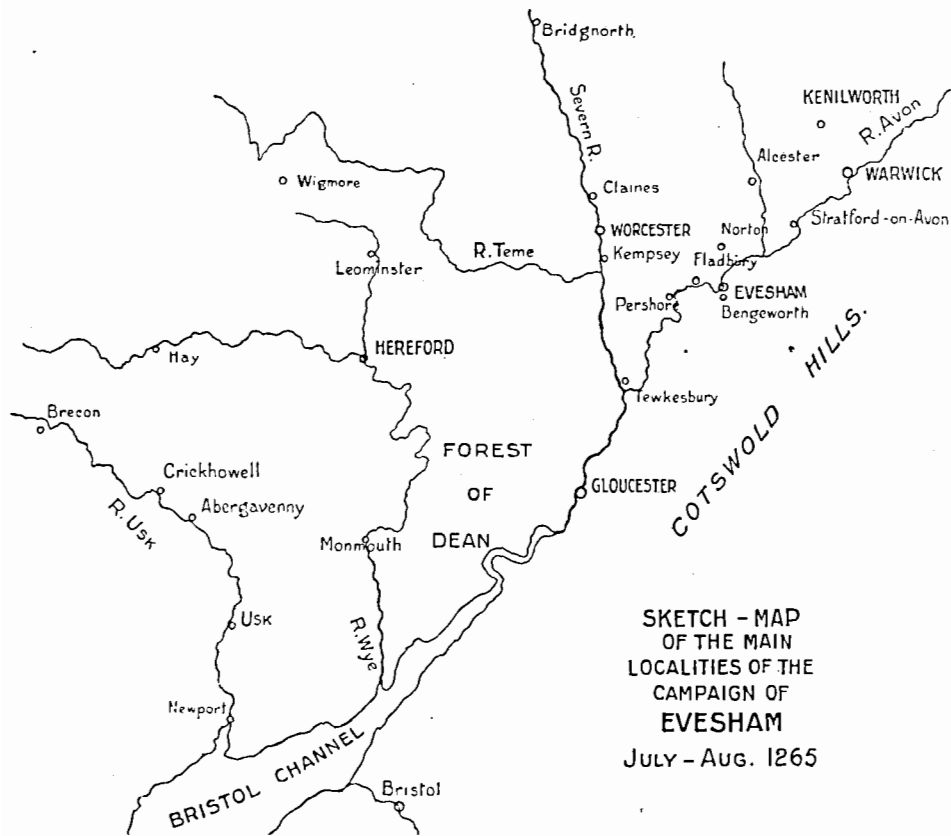
But the phalanx of knights at the head of Earl Simon's column dashed into the midst of the Royalist line, with such a desperate and whole-hearted courage that they almost broke through. The enemy wavered and seemed to be about to break, but Warren of Basingburn rallied them, taunting them

with the memories of Lewes, and stinging them into steadiness. It would indeed have been disgraceful for them to give way, since they had not only an immense superiority of numbers—five to two even when Mortimer's corps was absent—but also the advantage of the ground, for Simon was attacking uphill. When the first charge failed to break through, the Royalists swung round both wings, and attacked their enemy on both flanks, and presently even in the rear.

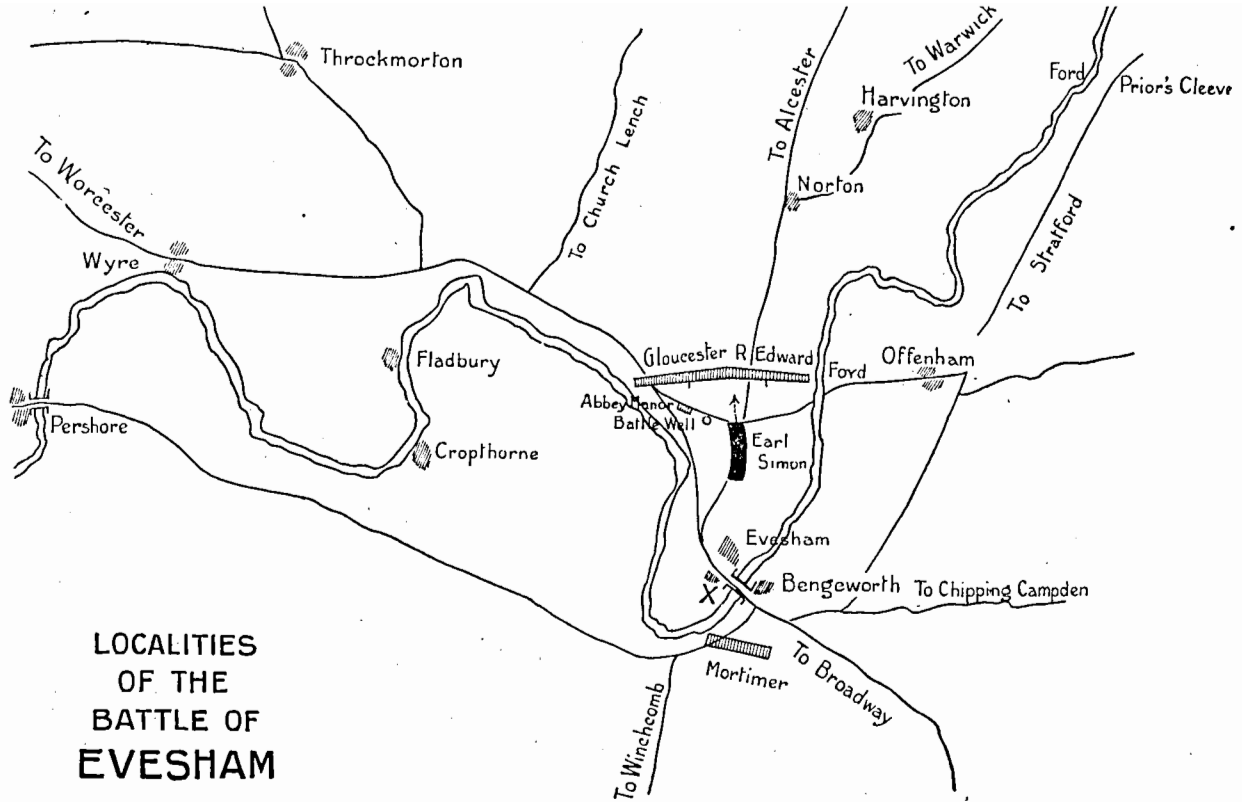
Though thus encompassed, the baronial host—the Welsh excepted—showed no signs of flinching. They kept up the fight for more than an hour, dashing themselves again and again at one or another point of the narrowing circle around them. It would seem that they were gradually thrust westward, more and more away from the high road by which they had sallied out, and at last driven down into the dip below the present Abbey Manor and its shrubberies, since tradition has it that this was where the main slaughter took place, and here lie the well and ditch which are said to have run red with blood. It is more doubtful whether the little modern obelisk, which is supposed to stand on Simon's death-spot, is correctly placed. We should be inclined to think that he probably fell farther down the slope, and not on the crest where the fighting had begun.¹

¹ This, I think, follows from the fact that so many miracles, supposed to have been wrought in after years by prayers to Simon as a saint, are connected with the well at the bottom of the dip where the slaughter took place, where his powers were exercised on behalf of those who bathed in the water or drank of it. Surely this must have been because he was believed to have fallen there. We are told that the well stood under great elms, that it had a stone covering reared over it, and that there was a crucifix with Mary and John. All this, of course, vanished with the Reformation, but the little spring still remains to mark the spot. There are 212 miracles connected with Earl Simon recorded in the fourteenth-century pamphlet published by the Camden Society. Many are trivial, and some grotesque: the good Earl condescended to heal a horse with the staggers, and a much-prized pet peacock which had been accidentally trodden upon.

Those who have not leisure to study the quaint original will find some amusing extracts in Mr. New's already-quoted pamphlet of 1874.



SKETCH - MAP
 OF THE MAIN
 LOCALITIES OF THE
 CAMPAIGN OF
 EVESHAM
 JULY - AUG. 1265



LOCALITIES
OF THE
BATTLE OF
EVESHAM
Aug. 4th 1265

For it was not till all was obviously lost that the old Earl was slain. The column was breaking up; the young Henry de Montfort and many others of the best of the knights had fallen; Simon's own horse had been killed under him. "Is my son slain?" cried the old man. "Then indeed it is time for me to die also," and grasping his great sword with both hands, he flung himself on foot into the thickest of the *mêlée*. For some time he stood hewing away manfully at a full dozen knights, who disputed the honour of encountering him. But a foot soldier of inferior rank came behind him, and dealt him a mortal blow in the back. With the words "*Dieu Merci*" on his lips he fell forward, and was literally hewn in pieces by his adversaries. For they not only cut off his head but his arms, and left him a mutilated trunk. The severed members were sent about the country-side in barbarous triumph, which a Prince like Edward should have suppressed at all costs as he loved his honour. For not only was the old Earl his kinsman, but he had treated him fairly in the days of his captivity when the baronial party had him at their mercy.

But ferocity was the mark of all that the Royalists did that day. In absolute contrast to the conduct of their enemies after Lewes, they gave no quarter whatever. All Simon's companions were slain on the fatal slope—his cousin, Peter de Montfort, Despenser the Justiciar, Ralph Basset, John de Beauchamp, William de Mandeville, Guy Balliol, Robert de Tregooze, Roger de Rivle, wellnigh every man of name in the host. A very few escaped, but these were wounded men who were left for dead in the first heat of the slaughter, and were discovered to have life in them when the corpses were being taken up for burial. Among these were Humphrey de Bohun, heir to the Earldom of Hereford, John Fitz-John, Henry of Hastings, and Guy de Montfort, the Earl's third son. With these exceptions, the whole army was practically exterminated. The Chronicle of Lanercost, which gives the losses of the vanquished with much detail and probably quite correctly, says that the slain included 180 knights, 220 squires,

2,000 of Montfort's own soldiers of inferior rank, and nearly 5,000 Welsh. For of these last the majority shared the fate of their English allies; even those of them who made off and swam the Avon were pursued through the fields, almost as far as Tewkesbury, by Mortimer's division, and cut down in such numbers that very few got away.¹ On the other side, the Royalists lost only two knights of name, though one chronicle says that nearly 2,000 of their infantry were killed or wounded. It is clear that the end of the battle, after Earl Simon fell, was a massacre rather than a fair fight, that no quarter was given, and that the wounded were mostly knocked upon the head. It was not without reason that Robert of Gloucester sang—

“Such was the murder of Evesham, for battle it was none.”

It is worth while mentioning that the last moments of Earl Simon were spent under physical conditions which those who witnessed them never forgot. The morning had been fair, but a tempest was gathering from an early hour, and as the battle was joined there was an unnatural darkness, “priests could not see to read their service books, and those who sat at table could barely perceive the meat before them.” This ended, as was natural, in violent rain, with thunder and lightning, just as the slaughter was over. It was a “Black Tuesday” for England in every sense of the word when de Montfort fell.

¹ It will be remembered that King Henry almost perished in the *mêlée* under the furious hands of the victors. He had already been slightly wounded before his person was recognised, and his frantic cries of “I am Henry of Winchester, your King,” saved his life.