Sir James Carmichael-Smyth

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Context

Since 1804 Napoleon had been trying very hard to establish a European empire using the power he had gained establishing his military dictatorship in France. Although Napoleon had lost the battle of Trafalgar and had been exiled to the Island of Elba he returned in 1815, causing Russia, Prussia and Austria to declare war, and assembled a new army to attack with. His plan consisted of invading Belgium and capturing Brussels where the Battle of Waterloo was fought. He sent some troops to fight Wellington’s Army while he himself commanded the French forces against Blucher. The two main commanders: Napoleon and Wellington, had been quite the rivals. They had been similar in age and both had good strategies, each also held a formidable number of victories in other battles. When Napoleon first escaped from Elba the French Unit of soldiers, which was sent to capture him quickly turned to him as the commander, the same happened with the majority of the army, with all of the soldiers knowing Napoleon as a master tactician. Still a majority of soldiers did not change sides as they were receiving large commissions from the Royal Army. Although Napoleon did not have the whole of the French Army in his hands he still was a formidable foe and if he was to take anything and expand his army, he might have become a much more significant threat which would ultimately lead to a large scale war, so as soon as he escaped from Elba England, Russia, Austria and Prussia declared war on France in order to protect their own countries. They had been all very aware that if Napoleon’s Army grows they will have to face another recourse exhausting war and the war they have won a few years prior was still very clearly imprinted in their mind.
The Battle

Wellington decided to make a stand at Waterloo providing the Prussians could support him. The battle took place on the 18th June 1815, Napoleon sending troops against the allied held farmhouse at Hougourmont as a diversion. This diversion soon drew in more and more troops and became a battle in itself, Napoleon then attacked the allied centre with D'Erlon's massed infantry, this attack only being beaten back by the charge of the allied heavy cavalry. The French then attacked and captured the farm house of La hay Sainte and thinking the allies were retreating attacked with all their cavalry, Wellington's troops formed square's and beat the charges back. With the sighting of Prussian troops near by, Napoleon sent his old guard into the attack but these too were defeated and victory belonged to the allies.

Waterloo cost Wellington around 15,000 dead or wounded and Blücher some 7,000 (810 of which were suffered by just one unit: the 18th Regiment, which served in Bülow's 15th Brigade and had fought at both Frichermont and Plancenoit. Napoleon's losses were 24,000 to 26,000 killed or wounded and included 6,000 to 7,000 captured with an additional 15,000 deserting subsequent to the battle and over the following days.
James Carmichael-Smyth, who was born in London, as the first son of James Carmichael-Smyth, a famous and successful physician in Scotland and a Fellow of the Royal Society and a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians, and educated at Charterhouse School in London and the Royal Military Academy, served as an engineer officer in South Africa and in Holland. He was on Wellington’s staff at Waterloo. Knighted in 1821, he was appointed Governor of The Bahamas towards the end of 1829, a time when the heated question of the abolition of slavery was being debated both in the Imperial and in local colonial circles. Smyth, a sincere sympathiser with the cause of the slaves, was a keen abolitionist, and bucked the members of the Bahamian Legislature and influential whites more than once. After his 4 years as the Governor of Bahamas he was assigned to be the Governor of British Guiana which he was a governor of for 5 years and dying there at an age of 59 having been the governor of Bahamas from 1833 to 1838 when he died on the 4th of March 1838.
Especially keen to abolish corporal punishment for female slaves, Smyth tried, un成功fully, to persuade the House of the Assembly to legislate against it. Early in 1830, Smyth became aware of a case of alleged cruelty towards several female slaves among a group of seventy-seven runaways from the estate of Lord Rolle in Exuma. The slaves, who had stolen a boat and fled to Nassau, were seized in Nassau Harbour and tried as runaways.

Justice Lees, not only tried the slaves in the General court, he also committed them to the workhouse where they were severely flogged as runaways. Smyth suspended Lees from the Council and also Mr. Duncombe, the chief Magistrate, who had passed the sentence. Additionally, two other magistrates who had signed the warrant for the punishment of the female slaves were suspended.

Smyth was a very kind-hearted man who sympathised with all the terrors that women and Africans faced in those times, and was disgusted by how they were treated and had an ambition for the abolishment of their treatment.

The matter came to a head over the Wildgoos affair. Wildgoos, a member of the House of Assembly, owned a retail liquor store in Nassau and was a slave owner. One of Wildgoos' female slaves received thirty-nine (39) lashes by an attendant of the town goal and was also confined there for a period. Additionally, Wildgoos caused a slave belonging to his mother to be similarly treated but in Smyth's opinion, Wildgoos' greatest sin was his visit to the prison about a month later to see his own slave whipped again without being released from prison.
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