

formed back of ravines that intersected the extensive plain and rendered the advance of the American artillery almost impossible, and a heavy rail-fence.¹

“Swartwout’s sudden and successful dash was quickly followed by an attack on the enemy’s left by the whole of the fourth brigade, and a part of the first, under Colonel J. A. Coles, who advanced across ploughed fields, knee-deep in mud, in the face of a heavy shower of bullets and shrapnel-shells. At the same time General Covington, mounted on a fine white horse, gallantly led the third brigade against the enemy’s left, near the river, and the battle became general. By charge after charge, in the midst of difficulties, the British were pushed back almost a mile, and the American cannon, placed in fair position by General Boyd, under the direction of Colonel Swift, did excellent execution for a few minutes. The squadron of the second regiment of dragoons was early on the field, and much exposed to the enemy’s fire; but, owing to the nature of the ground, was unable to accomplish much. At length Covington fell, severely wounded, and the ammunition of the Americans began to fail. It was soon exhausted, and the fourth brigade, hard pushed, fell back, followed by Colonel J. A. Coles. This retrograde movement affected the third brigade, and it too fell back, in considerable disorder. The British perceived this, and followed up the advantage gained with great vigor, and were endeavoring by a flank movement to capture Boyd’s cannon, when a gallant charge of cavalry, led by Adjutant-General Walbach, who had obtained [secretary of war] Armstrong’s permission to accompany the expedition, drove them back and saved the pieces. The effort was renewed. Lieutenant William Wallace Smith, who commanded one of the cannon, was mortally wounded, and it fell into the enemy’s hands.

“The conflict lasted about five hours, in the midst of cold, and snow, and sleet, when the Americans were compelled to fall back. During that time victory had swayed like a pendulum, between the combatants, and would doubtless have rested with the Americans had their ammunition held out. Their retreat was promising to be a route, when the flying troops were met by six hundred men under Lieutenant-Colonel Timothy Upham, of the Twenty-first Regiment of Infantry, and Major Malcomb, whom Wilkinson had sent up to the support of Boyd. These checked the disorderly flight, and, taking position

¹“The British army, on this occasion, was slightly superior in numbers, counting its Indian allies, to the Americans, and had the double advantage of strong position behind ravines and of freshness, for the Americans had undergone great fatigue. They were formed in what Wellington called *en échelon*, or the figure of steps, with one corps more advanced than another, as follows: Three companies of the Eighty-ninth Regiment were posted on the extreme right, resting on the river, with a 6-pounder, and commanded by Captain Barnes. On their left, and a little in the rear, were flanking companies of the Forty-ninth and a detachment of Fencibles, with a 6-pounder, under Lieutenant-Colonel Pearson. Still further to the left and rear were other companies of the Forty-ninth and Eighty-ninth regiments, and a 6-pounder, under Lieutenant-Colonel Morrison, whose left rested on a pine forest. In front of all were voltigeurs, under Major Herriott, and some Indians under Lieutenant Anderson.”