

# Adriaan Munter

Nederlands Instituut voor Militaire Historie, The Hague: No reference number. Letter, dated 22nd July 1815, by Private Adriaan Munter, 4th Militia Battalion, to his parents, brothers and sisters (translated from Dutch):

I have not had the honour since my departure to send a letter to you and to tell you something of my unusual way of life, and the dangers I have encountered. But now it is my intention, as we have bivouacked in cantonments and have a brief period of rest, to write to you. I can tell you that I am still alive and well and that I have not been wounded. I hope the same is true of you, my beloved parents; if it were different it would be my deepest regret.

However, beloved parents, you might not know what bivouacking is! It is simply the life of a man in the wild! One lies in the open field or in woods, day and night. One makes a tent out of branches and some straw, or whatever one can obtain. When this is done, one starts to cook. If that is not the case, we help ourselves to a piece of bread and a sip of water. Yet cantoning is quite a different thing: this is being quartered in a town or a village with the local civilians, sometimes with 10 to 12 men together. It can also be that the entire company is housed in a barn. If you get something to eat from the people, then that is fine; if not, you have to cook for yourself. We receive 1½ pound of bread per day, 1 pound of meat, a little rice and some peas and salt. This is the way we live, my dear parents. In order to return to my intended message, this will serve its purpose as an opening.

We left Haine Sainte Pierre on the 15th June and did not know where we were going. We knew that the French outposts were only 2½ hours in front of us. In the evening we arrived with the entire division on a large field and had to bivouac there. We heard some cannon shots, but did not know what these meant. The next morning we marched on and arrived in the afternoon at a new bivouac. The cannon fire became heavier and we heard that the Prussians had been engaged with the French.

On the 16th June the French attacked our 1st Division with an overwhelming number of men; we only had a small number of troops and very few cavalry at our disposal, so that many of our men were sabred and we had to retreat. On the 17th there was heavy fighting; the 18th was a Sunday and I will never forget that day in my life. Throughout the entire day and night there was heavy cannon fire. We had to retreat regularly, until we came to a village called Waterloo. There the Prussians and English were encamped. The knave and tyrant (Napoleon) assembled 100,000 of his best soldiers there and an artillery park of 500 guns. He had promised his troops that the fighting would be decided by 7 o'clock in the evening and that the enemy would be beaten; but it went differently. From 3 until 6 o'clock we were exposed to a heavy cannonade, which cost many lives. It rained balls and shells and it was as if heaven and earth had perished. Then we engaged the enemy in square; this is a terrible word. Although we were up to our knees in mud, the courage of our soldiers was remarkable. We engaged the bloodhounds with the musket and the victory was in the balance. Our youthful commander [Colonel van Molencate], a loyal supporter of our brave and loving King, was hit in the arm to the regret of our

troops. The command was taken by the brave General Casse [sic]. The aforementioned commander left the battlefield, but first spurred on his men to give their blood for king and country.

About half past seven the French fled, after they had attempted to assail us and slash our throats. They first did not want to yield, but under the shouts of “Oranje Boven” they tried to get away. When they reached a height they again halted and recommenced the terrible slaughter. We fought like lions; the general shouted: “keep courage, children” and this gave us new courage so as to continue. In the end the French fled in disorder. Muskets, cartridge boxes, knapsacks and yes, even their bonnets were thrown away. At the close the entire battlefield was covered with 30,000 to 40,000 dead and wounded. Sometimes the living lay beneath the dead; it was a terrible sight. The tyrant was beaten and left 300 cannon on the battlefield. Under the protection of God’s banner the youthful Netherlands soldiers had decided the battle. Praise be to God that he gave us courage and bravery.

We pursued the enemy to Paris, but there was no longer a soldier loyal to Bonaparte to be seen. I heard a Frenchman say that Bonaparte had told his generals that: “If the Netherlanders had not been there, we would have won the battle.” Thank God that this did not happen, because then the murderer would have buried our country in blood once more. We bivouacked in Paris for a day and 12 in the Bois de Boulogne; on the 17th July we were quartered in the village of Labar, where we remain and where we are very well. This village is 3 hours from Paris. There are rumours that soon we will march to Holland. See here, beloved parents, brothers and sisters, what I wanted to tell you. I need a winter’s evening to tell you everything in detail, and I hope that this will soon happen. Greetings from your loving son, A.H. Munter.

P.S. My address is with the 3rd Division, 1st Brigade of the 4th Militia Battalion Infantry.

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