

Saving the Guns at the Battle of Maiwand

by

Richard Caton Woodville, Jr.

***Saving the Guns at the Battle of Maiwand* depicts the hasty withdrawal of “E” Battery, “B” Brigade, Royal Horse Artillery, from the field at Maiwand, Afghanistan in 1880.**



The Second Afghan War. On July 27, 1880, a British force of 2,500 under Brigadier General G. R. S. Burrows met an Afghan force of 12,000 under Ayub Khan outside the village of Maiwand, west of Kandahar in southern Afghanistan. Surrounded on three sides, the British were routed with significant losses, in some regiments exceeding sixty percent.

“E” Battery, “B” Brigade, Royal Horse Artillery, commanded by Major Blackwood, held the center of the British line. After four hours of combat, the Battery fired one last salvo of grape shot into the Afghan final assault and then began to limber up. Lieutenant Fowell was wounded. The left flank section, under Captain Slade, was overrun and both guns captured. The remainder of the Battery withdrew in haste, the Afghans reaching within yards of the retreating guns. The Battery suffered fourteen dead and thirteen wounded.

For valor at Maiwand, the Battery earned two Victoria Crosses: **Sergeant Mullane**, who saved wounded driver Pickwell Istead, and **Gunner James Collis** who helped save a limber of wounded men. **Captain Slade** received the Companion of the Bath honor. The Battery was also awarded eight Distinguished Conduct Medals.

The Artist

Richard Caton Woodville, Jr. was the most popular and prolific Victorian battle artist of his generation. Born in London in 1856, he was the son of a famous American artist, Richard Caton Woodville. After studying at the Royal Academy of Dusseldorf from 1872-1875 and the Royal Academy in London, Woodville became a special artist for the *Illustrated London News*. His exhibitions of famous British battles brought him many tributes, including the favor of Queen Victoria.

Woodville traveled widely to conduct first-hand research. He covered the Russo-Turkish War in 1877 and the war in Egypt in 1882. He rode with the U.S. cavalry to cover the Sioux Indian War of 1890-91. He joined the Royal Berkshire Yeomanry Cavalry in 1879 and eventually retired as a Captain in 1914. In addition to his Victorian battles collection, Woodville painted contemporary images from the Great War and many images of the American West. His memoirs, *Random Recollections*, were published in 1914. Richard Caton Woodville, Jr. died in 1927 in London.

Saving the Guns at the Battle of Maiwand hangs in the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool.