

and the crimson dress of the British soldiers, crowded in open barks, must have produced a very fine effect. And we, too, gazed on a scene far different indeed, but most peaceful, most lovely. The northern bank of the river from Lisbon to Villa Franca (about six leagues) presents a continued succession of rural beauties; convents, chapels, and quintas, gardens and vineyards, wood and verdure, cattle and groups of villagers, all blended in bright and gay confusion, arrest the eye and address the heart. Here you saw, in their cool and shaded cloisters, small parties of monks, in the dark and picturesque dress of their orders, observing us as we passed along; there some happy family, parents, children, and servants, would hurry to their garden terrace on the water's edge, and salute us with smiles and *vivas*; while a little farther, in the back ground, you might discern some solitary nun, who, from the high and grated casement of her convent, looked out upon the strange and brilliant show, and hastily withdrew. About two leagues above Villa Franca, the breeze died away, and not a breath of air stirred

on the water. Our boatmen took to their poles, and with all their exertion, made little more than a league, when the shades of evening closed in, and we brought-to near the bank. Here we found a Portuguese tent, which had been pitched for some day-guard, but was abandoned for the night; of this my cheerful little mess took possession, and here we ate our cold meat and drank our wine, with all the gaiety of a party of pleasure.

After an hour's labour in the morning, finding we made little or no way by water, we landed and marched to Santarem. The situation of this city is very striking; it is built on bold, elevated ground, hanging directly over the Tagus, the southern bank of which it completely commands. The regiment was quartered for the night in a convent, and I received a billet on a private house. At the door of it, I was met by the owner, a gentlemanlike looking well-dressed man, of about sixty, and of a very mild pleasing address: he led the way to a neat apartment, and a pretty bedchamber. I was covered with dust and dirt, and declined

them as too good ; but how was my confusion increased, when my host himself brought me water in a silver basin to wash, while his good lady presented me with chocolate, bearing it herself on a salver. I feared that they had mistaken my rank from my two épauettes, and I explained to them that I was a simple Lieutenant. No ; they well knew my rank, but did not pay me the less attention: they perfumed my chamber with rose-water, took off my knapsack with their own hands, and then left me to refresh myself by washing and dressing, and to recover from the pleasing astonishment, into which their cordial and polite reception had thrown me. In the evening my party dined here, and the worthy host presented us with some magnums of fine old wine, and the choicest fruit. We made scruples ; he overruled them with true and unaffected hospitality, and we, in return, pressed on his acceptance six bottles of excellent Sauterne, the remains of our small stock of French wine.

Such was my treatment in the first billet I ever entered in Portugal, and such, with

*very few* exceptions, was the character of the reception given by Portuguese of all classes, according to their means, at the commencement of the peninsula struggle, to the British army: rich and poor, the clergy and laity, the fidalgo and the peasant, all expressed an eagerness to serve, and a readiness to honour us. In these early marches the villa, the monastery, and the cottage were thrown open at the approach of our troops; the best apartments, the neatest cells, the humble but only beds, were all resigned to the march-worn officers and men, with undisguised cheerfulness. It is with pain I am compelled to confess, that the manners of my strange but well-meaning countrymen soon wrought a change in the kind dispositions of this people. When they saw many assume as a right all which they had accorded from politeness, and receive their respectful attentions and cordial services as expressions of homage, due to the courage, wealth, and power of the British nation; — when the simplicity of their manners, their frugality, the spareness of their diet, the peculiarities of their

dress, and their religious prejudices were made the subjects of derision and ridicule; — when they witnessed scenes of brutal intoxication, and were occasionally exposed to vulgar insult, from uneducated and overbearing Englishmen; — when, I say, all this occurred, they began to examine our individual titles to their esteem; they were, often, very soon disenchanted; and the spirit which we had awakened in them, manifested itself in various acts of neglect, rudeness, and even resentment. The English are admired not only in Portugal, but over all Europe, as a free, an enlightened, and a brave people, but they cannot make themselves beloved; they are not content with being great, they must be thought so, and told so. They will not bend with good humour to the customs of other nations, nor will they condescend to soothe (flatter they never do) the harmless self-love of friendly foreigners. No: wherever they march or travel, they bear with them a haughty air of conscious superiority, and expect that their customs, habits, and opinions should supersede, or at least suspend, those of all the

countries through which they pass. Among liberal-minded and well-educated Englishmen, there will ever be many bright exceptions to this general picture; and they, perhaps, will be the first to confess, that this portrait of my travelling countrymen has not been too highly coloured.

Santarem, like all other cities in Portugal, has its convents, churches, and chapels, the natural pride of its citizens, and the objects which all idlers and strangers visit. There is little remarkable in any of them. At their university I passed half an hour in conversation with one of the professors. He requested me to read for him a page of Virgil, after the manner of my country. I did so; and returning the book to him, he also read one: no third person could have supposed, that we had been reading the same language. Our pronunciation may, and from habit does undoubtedly sound the richest to an English ear; but theirs is certainly the nearest to the Italian, and perhaps, therefore to the Roman. There are not very many students at this college, and as they are almost all educated for the

church or the cloister, their studies are entirely confined to theology, and their reading to the perusal of sacred biography, such as the lives of the saints, martyrs, and holy men. As the shades of evening closed in, our column formed in the plain below the town, and commenced its march to Golegão, a large village about four leagues distant.

With a small advanced guard I entered Golegão at the head of the regiment, just as early matin-bell was summoning the inhabitants to prayers. The attendance on public worship throughout Spain and Portugal is extremely regular, and no occupation, or manner of life, is suffered to interfere with this sacred duty. To mass go the muleteers before they load their train; and from the door of the chapel the peasants sally forth to their daily labours. The very changing of night into day, a measure rendered necessary by the extreme heat, carried with it the charm of novelty. I was well lodged, and hospitably treated, in a humble but clean cottage, and with the night again set forward.

This march, and the following, our route, which passed by Punhete to Abrantes, led us often for miles along the banks of the Tagus, and through villages built on the very edge of the river. A clear bright silver moon lighted our silent path ; not a lamp burning in any of the cottages ; not a human voice to be heard : not a sound, save the dull tread of our weary men, and the gentle tone in which the waters told their ceaseless flow. The moon-beams which played upon the bright arms of our gallant soldiers, shone also on the glistening nets of the peaceful fishermen, which hung spread upon the rocks near his deserted bark. All within these humble dwellings was repose, and their happy inmates slumbered sweetly, unconscious that the tide of war (harmless and friendly indeed to them, yet bearing on its wave not only youth, ambition, and courage, but, perhaps, even ferocity and crime,) rolled, in the dead of night, past the vine-clad walls of their defenceless cots. The town of Abrantes is well situated ; it stands lofty, and commands the passage of the Tagus, over which,



at this point, a bridge of boats communicates with the southern provinces. We crossed the river, and occupied for one night a camp of standing huts, formed many weeks before by some division of our army, which had halted in that neighbourhood. At sunrise the following morning we were again in motion, and marched onwards to the village of Gaviao. Our road led, in part, through plains covered with gumcistus in flower, the frail leaves of which are remarkable for their delicate whiteness; and in part, over uplands all clothed with heath, but a heath so rich in the variety, the beauty, and the fragrance of its plants, that the traveller forgot, or forgave, the absence of the corn-field, the vineyard, and the cottage.

As the chill dews of evening were descending on our bivouack, near this last village, a staff-officer, with a courier, came galloping into it, and alighted at the quarter of our general. It was soon known among us, that a severe and sanguinary action had been fought by our brother soldiers at Talavera. Disjointed rumours spoke of a

dear-bought field, a heavy loss, and a subsequent retreat. I well remember how we all gathered round our fires to listen, to conjecture, and to talk about this glorious, but bloody, event. We all naturally regretted that, in the honours of such a day, we had borne no share; and talked long, and with an undefined pleasure, about the carnage. Yes, strange as it may appear, soldiers, and not they alone, talk of the slaughter of battle-fields with a sensation, which, though it suspends the lively throb of the gay and careless heart, partakes, nevertheless, of pleasure. Nay, I will go farther: in the very exposure of the person to the peril of sudden and violent death, cureless wounds, and ghastly laceration, excitement, strong, high, and pleasurable, fills and animates the bosom: hope, pride, patriotism, and awe, make up this mighty feeling, and lift a man, for such moments, almost above the dignity of his nature. Such moments are more than equal to years of common life. And where, on the 28th of July, when death was gathering her bleeding victims on the field of Talavera, where then were

we? — That very day we were sailing on the Tagus' ample bosom: our eyes resting on scenes of smiling peace and romantic loveliness, and our hearts beating high and hopefully.

Our drum beat two hours before the dawn of day, and at an early hour we reached Niza; not, however, before the sun had acquired such fierce and burning power, as to strike me down thrice, in a very few minutes. During a short halt, I threw myself on the parched-up grass, and sleep overcame me; my hat fell off, and the scorching rays of the sun shone full upon my naked head: awaked by the sound of the bugle, I suddenly rose, but immediately fell senseless; my brother officers recovered me by the usual means, but on my attempting to stand, the same violent effect was twice more produced.

Three days' rest at Niza quite restored me, and I was enabled to resume all my duties. During this short interval the troops had, luckily for me, halted. On the fourth morning we marched to cross the Tagus at Villa Velha, and pursued our route to Zarzala

Major, the first town on the Spanish frontier, in the road to Placentia. This movement was made, I believe, without any instruction from Sir Arthur Wellesley ; and had for its object the diversion of Soult's force, which was known to have arrived in the neighbourhood of Coria and Placentia ; and which, it was thought, might act offensively against the British, on their retreat from Talavera ; which, encumbered as they were with wounded, could not have immediately followed the battle, or been effected with any extraordinary rapidity. The scenery on this march, after passing the Tagus, is not very remarkable ; but the road from Niza to Villa Velha is truly romantic ; and the river, at that point, forcing its narrow, deep, and angry course between lofty and precipitous banks, which rise into brown and barren mountains, forms a grand and imposing picture. We bivouacked daily. It is a pleasing sight to see a column arrive at its halting ground. The camp is generally marked out, if circumstances allow of it, on the edge of some wood, and near a river or stream. The troops are halted in open

columns, arms piled, picquets and guards paraded and posted, and, in two minutes, all appear at home. Some fetch large stones to form fire-places; others hurry off with canteens and kettles for water, while the wood resounds with the blows of the bill-hook. Dispersed, under the more distant trees, you see the officers: some dressing; some arranging a few boughs to shelter them by night; others kindling their own fires; while the most active are seen returning from the village, laden with bread, or, from some flock of goats, feeding near us, with a supply of new milk. How often, under some spreading cork-tree, which offered shade, shelter, and fuel, have I taken up my lodging for the night; and here, or by some gurgling stream, my bosom fanned by whatever air was stirring, made my careless toilet, and sat down with men I both liked and esteemed, to a coarse but wholesome meal, seasoned by hunger and by cheerfulness. The rude simplicity of this life I found most pleasing. An enthusiastic admirer of nature, I was glad to move and dwell amid her grandest scenes, remote

from cities, and unconnected with what is called society. Her mountains, her forests, and, sometimes, her bare and bladeless plains, yielding me a passing home: her rivers, streams, and springs, cooled my brow, and allayed my thirst. The inconvenience of one camp taught me to enjoy the next; and I learned (a strange lesson for the thoughtless) that wood and water, shade and grass, were luxuries. I saw the sun set every evening: I saw him rise again each morning in all his majesty, and I felt that my very existence was a blessing. Strange, indeed, to observe how soon men, delicately brought up, can inure themselves to any thing. Wrapt in a blanket, or a cloak, the head reclining on a stone or a knapsack, covered by the dews of night, or drenched perhaps by the thunder-shower, sleeps many a youth, to whom the carpeted chamber, the curtained couch, and the bed of down, have been from infancy familiar.

As we forded the river Elga, which, on the road we were marching, divides Portugal and Spain, I promised myself much

pleasure from seeing a town inhabited by Spaniards, whose language, manners, customs, and dress, I knew, differed widely from the Portuguese, and were, from national pride, kept quite as distinct on the frontiers as elsewhere. Our column passed close to the town of Zarza, and took up its ground on a bare, rocky eminence, about a mile in front. Not a soul came out to meet us, not a soul followed us to our bivouack. All was still as at midnight, yet the noon-day sun shone fiercely down. No sooner was my regiment dismissed, than I hastened into the town, and entered it among the first. The streets were deserted, and the houses barred; the church alone stood open, but the plate from the altar and the contents of the sacristy, had been removed. The market-place indeed was fast filling with our Spanish muleteers, and, from their dress and language, you might almost have fancied them inhabitants: but you looked around in vain for women and children to favour this illusion; the sound of their soft and innocent voices was no where to be heard, and in the unmoved features of our

muleteers, you could not trace the anxious feelings of the husband and the father. I passed out of the town by a narrow lane, which led towards some gardens; as I walked slowly on, full of thought, my eye was attracted by the sight of a pair of castanets, which, dropped in the hurry of flight, lay directly in the path: to how much of innocent delight, youthful pleasure, and parental pride, had these little symbols of happier and more tranquil times been witnesses! — Oh! England — thou enviable spot — thou “precious stone set in the silver sea,” from how many of the evils of war do thy rocks and waves protect thee! — I turned aside into a garden, and saw a peasant at the further end of it, who, on perceiving me, fled, and would have concealed himself: I overtook him, and reassuring him by my voice and manner, he became communicative. From him I learnt, that the inhabitants of Zarza had expected the French that morning, and, dreading their arrival, had all fled in the course of the night, some to Alcantara, others to the woods and mountains. I purchased some very fine



musk and water-melons from this peasant, paying him a trifle more than their value, which appeared to excite very strongly both his astonishment and gratitude.

The scene of this morning made a deep and lasting impression on me. It is true that I have since witnessed horrors, which might well have taught me to think lightly of an occurrence, which I afterwards found was not uncommon ; but first impressions are too powerful to be ever forgotten. The greater part of this day, too, the thermometer had been from ninety-five to ninety-eight, another reason for remembering Zarza and the scorching unsheltered bivouack. The next morning our General returned from a conference with Marshal Beresford, who was in the neighbourhood of Pena Garcia and Pena Macor, with a body of Portuguese, and the same evening we retreated across the Elga and re-entered Portugal ; a movement rendered prudent, I believe, by the force and vicinity of the enemy, for we had only six battalions, unsupported by cavalry or artillery. We now retraced our steps to Alemtejo. One of our camps, on

this short retreat, was formed on ground the most wild and picturesque. Half way between Villa Velha and Niza, the road winds through a deep and narrow valley, inclosed on all sides by rudely-shaped and rocky hills; through it flows a small streamlet, descending from the heights in the rugged channel of a wintry torrent, and faintly marking out its course with a silvery thread of the purest water. Here, at night-fall, after being nearly eighteen hours under arms, we halted: the heights ascend on all sides of this little vale so steep and perpendicular, that it is impossible to preserve any regular formation, and the men were dispersed in groups all up the hills. I and my companions spread our cloaks and kindled our fire upon a rocky ledge, close to the top of that ravine down which the rivulet fell, and thus we overlooked the whole encampment. The short dry brushwood, though it made bad fires, sent forth bright and beauteous flames, and the sudden and magic illumination of this rude and warlike scene may be conceived, but, I feel, it is impossible to describe it. The fitful glare which gave to

view the groups of soldiers, here only showing the dark outlines of human figures, and there throwing a fiery light on their arms, their dress, and features, the glow reflected from the stream, and the dark, lofty masses of hill and rock in the back ground, formed a picture such as only the genius of a Byron, or a Southey, could convey to the mind of a reader in the language of description.

We halted at Niza for a fortnight, and hutted in a wood near the town. Here, in a thick well-built bower, with a bed of heath, a large smooth slate, to serve for a table, and a bench of cork, I lived as comfortably, and, from the novelty, far more contentedly, than I should have done in the best-furnished apartments in England.

On the 7th of September we broke up from Niza, and marched into cantonments in Spanish Estremadura. Our route passed by Portalegre, Elvas, Badajos, and Talavera Real. The valley by which you approach Portalegre, is fertile and very beautiful. Quintas, gardens, vineyards, and corn-fields, cover the last six miles on your road to the city, which is airy, well-built, and hand-