

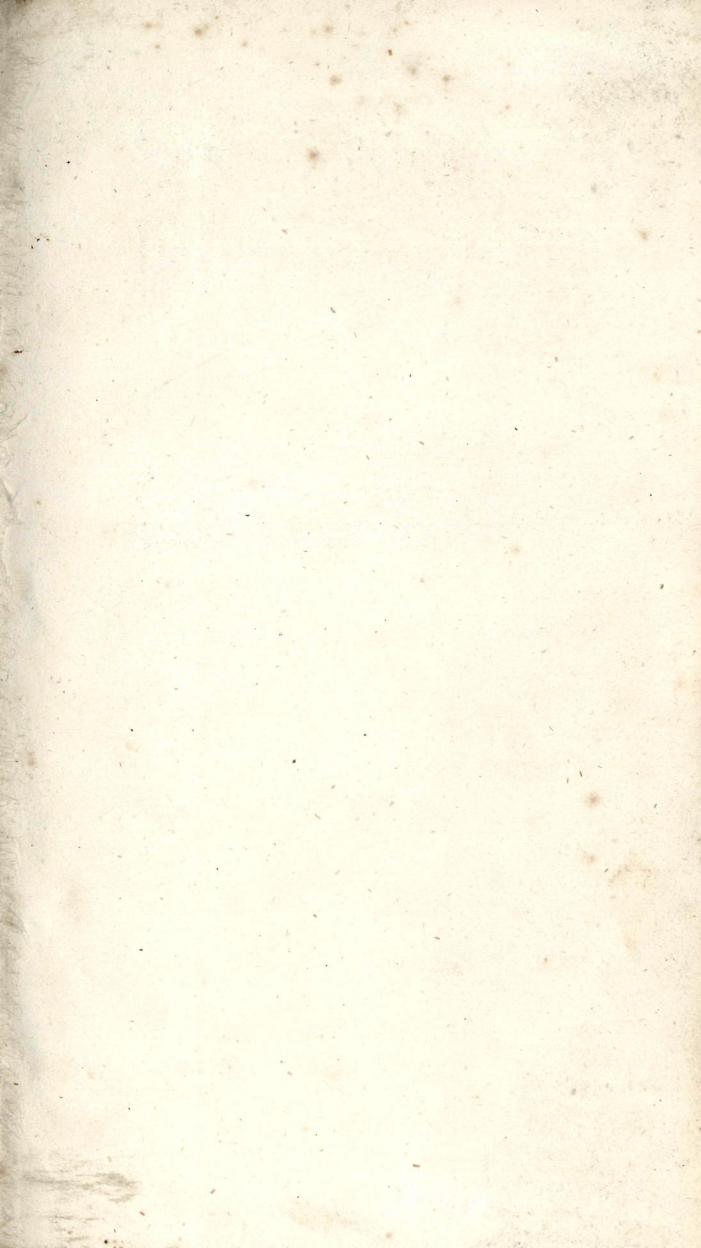


THE WAR  
IN THE  
PENNINSULA

VOL I



4 Dg



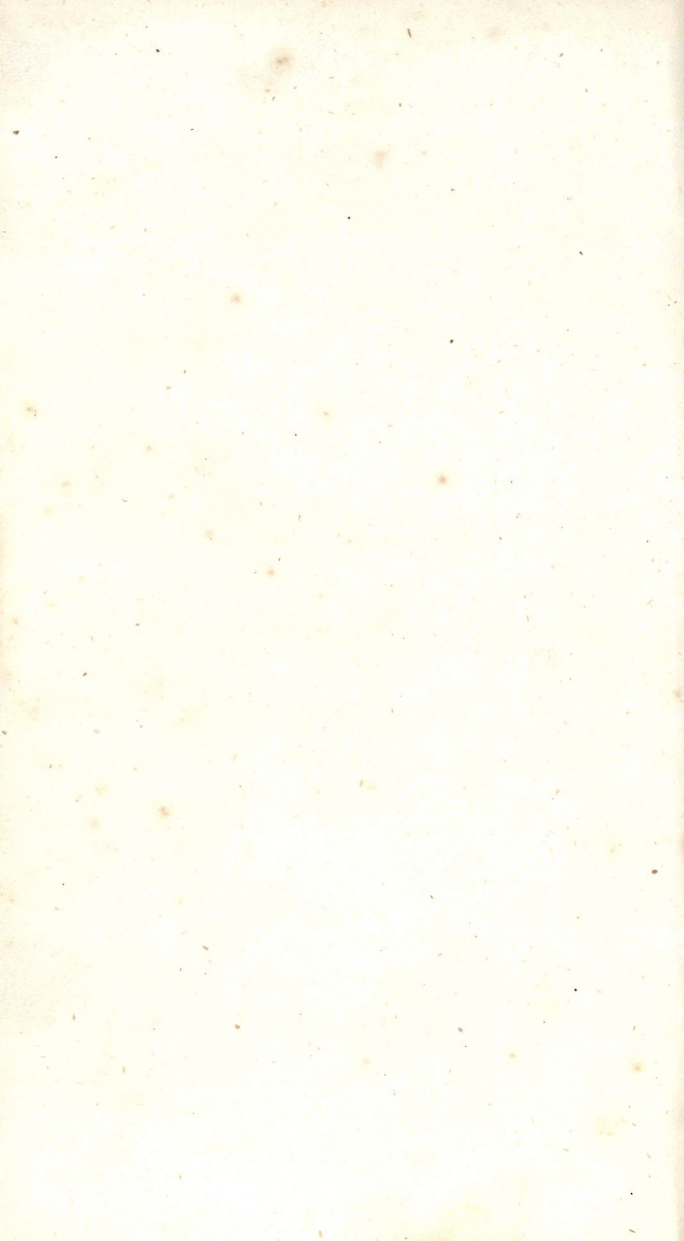


2903

---

RECOLLECTIONS.

---



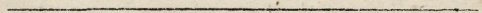


A-2903

12  
143622

The War in the Peninsula

CONTINUATION



RECOLLECTIONS

**RECOLLECTIONS.**



OF A SOLDIER

GLASGOW

W. B. M'ARTHUR, PRINTER

LONDON, TAYLOR & FRANCIS

PRINTED BY W. B. M'ARTHUR

1825

---

I WILL A ROUND UNVARNISHED TALE DELIVER—  
OF MOVING ACCIDENTS BY FLOOD AND FIELD,  
OF HAIR-BREADTH 'SCAPES IN THE IMMINENT DEADLY BREACH,  
AND WITH IT ALL MY TRAVEL'S HISTORY.

*Shakespeare.*

---

*Wm. Woodburn Esq  
1/2 Calif*  
The War in the Peninsula.

---

A

CONTINUATION

OF THE

RECOLLECTIONS

OF THE

EVENTFUL LIFE

OF A SOLDIER.

---

GLASGOW:

W. R. M'PHUN, TRONGATE.

LONDON, KNIGHT & LACEY.

EDINBURGH, EDWARD WEST & CO.

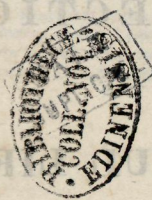
~~~~~  
1825.

The War in the Peninsula.

CONTINUATION

OF THE

RECOLLECTIONS



OF A SOLDIER.

OF A SOLDIER.



GLASGOW:

W. R. M'PHUN, PRINTER,

LONDON, KNIGHT & LACEY.

W. Lang, Printer, 59, Nelson-Street.

1833.

## CHAPTER I.

ENCAMPMENT AT SABUGAL—HENRY G—— AND  
CAPTAIN S—— —A COURT MARTIAL—QUAR-  
TERED AT FUENTES DE HONORE—DETAIL OF  
THE BATTLE—OUTPOST SENTRY—THE FRENCH  
ARMY RETREATS.

**T**HE night we passed in the encampment at Sabugal was uncommonly dark, and at intervals the rain fell in torrents, fires had been kindled in the hollow trunks of some large chesnut trees, which burning up as high as the branches, illuminated them to the very top. The flickering lurid glare which these fiery columns threw on the naked bodies of the slain, the indistinct objects in the back ground, and the groupes of soldiers which flitted around them, presented a scene, at once sublime and picturesque; it looked like the midnight orgies of some supernatural beings.

Next morning we fell in at daylight, and in a short time after, pursued our

march by the same route the French had taken the preceding day. The ground was covered with gum cistus, which had been previously burned, either through accident, or to serve some purpose, among which they had left visible marks of their confused flight, in the torn pieces of clothing and broken arms which strewed their line of march. They continued their retreat without halting until they reached Cuidade Rodrigo, a fortified town on the Spanish frontier, at which place having crossed the Agueda, they made a stand and concentrated their force. In consequence of this, our army also halted, and in a few days after, our regiment was quartered in a Portuguese village within some miles of them.

On the advance to this place, I became acquainted with a lad of the name of Henry G——. While on guard with him one day, I perceived him reading a book, which, on inquiry, I found to be Cromek's Remains of Nithsdale and Galloway Song, which he had borrowed from an officer's servant. Books of any

kind were rare amongst us at that time, but one of this description had too much nationality in it, not to be considered a valuable prize in a foreign land. We read the book together, and a similarity of feeling and sentiment, subsequently led to a friendship which continued unimpaired while we remained in the Peninsula. In his romantic turn of mind and acute sensibility, he bore a strong resemblance to my former friend and shipmate, William. He had read a great deal, but like myself, he had read with little discrimination. The effects were nearly the same in both, a propensity to day-dreaming and castle-building. Many a weary mile have we travelled together, almost unconscious of progression, charming the sense of hunger away by anticipating our future honour and preferment, and in forming romantic schemes of rural retirement, when our campaigns were ended, and we had acquired wealth and fame. This peculiarity of disposition, although it might sometimes occasion us uneasiness, where others, less sensitive, felt but little, yet

on the whole, in a life like ours, where the scene was continually shifting, it rendered our minds more elastic; and the continual play of fancy which was thus excited, diversified the lights and shadows so much, that even now, I am at a loss to say, whether at that time I felt more pain or pleasure. We had only been a few days in quarters, when my friend Henry was near being innocently involved in an affair, the consequence of which would have ruined a mind like his for ever. The captain of his company was a man of a strange disposition, which rendered him an object of dislike to both officers and men. A fellow of infinite jest, he rarely spoke but in a humorous strain; but there was "a laughing devil in his sneer," and like the cat, when she has secured her prey, he always felt most inclined to sport with the individual on whose destruction he was bent. It would be endless to enter into a detail of all the methods by which he tormented his company, those who served under him will remember them well; suffice it to say, that I have



known many officers possessed of bad qualities, but none who possessed fewer good ones than captain S——.

On the march, he was in the habit of riding his mule among the ranks, very much to the annoyance of his company, and one day during the previous advance, the column was marching through fields which were fenced in by broad thin stones. The other officers finding they could not get through conveniently with the regiment, had taken a lane to the right of the column, but he continued to move on; finding, however, that his mule could not get through the openings made, he desired Henry to overturn one of the stones. Henry made the attempt, but finding his strength inadequate to the task, and seeing himself getting behind the regiment, he passed through and rejoined his company. The captain had now to take the same road with the other officers. When he overtook the column, foaming with rage, he commenced in a measured affected style, to abuse Henry, ending with his usual phrase of encouragement, “*I’ll get you*

*a sweet five hundred."* From that day forward poor Henry was marked out as a butt for his caprice and tyranny. Not long after, when two men of the company were ordered to be confined on a charge of selling their necessaries, one of whom happened to be Henry's comrade, and captain S—— thinking this a favourable opportunity for carrying his promise into effect, ordered him to be confined also. A court-martial was ordered, and the prisoners warned for trial. Whether by some sinister manœuvring, or that it fell his regular turn, captain S—— was president. The evidences were examined, the proof shown sufficiently clear against the other two, but none was adduced against Henry.

The president trusting, I suppose, to his influence with the other members, proceeded (without taking any notice of the total want of evidence against Henry) to recommend the persons to acknowledge the crime laid to their charge, and throw themselves on the mercy of the court. Poor Henry was so struck with the

flagrant injustice of this proceeding, that he could scarcely muster courage sufficient to say that he had heard no evidence against him. The president did not allow him to finish what he had to say, before he opened on him with a string of the most abusive epithets; and, then addressing himself to the members of the court, "Gentlemen" said he, "this is one of the most insolent dogs in my company. You may take my word for it, he is guilty—he confessed to me that he was, before I confined him, which I can prove." The members sat mute, as is generally the case, while under the influence of a superior officer's rhetoric; and Henry had bade farewell to hope, when one of the officers, who was but a young subaltern, bursting through the blind deference too often cringingly paid to power, even in matters where discipline is not concerned, and giving way to the words, which a natural love of justice prompted.—"We have no right," said he, "captain S——, sitting here, as we do to try the case, according to the evidence laid before us, to

presume that the prisoner is guilty in the absence of all evidence. Nor are we entitled to pay attention to any representation which you may feel inclined to make prejudicial to his character. Sitting where you do as president of this court, either sufficient evidence must be produced against the prisoner, or we are bound to acquit him."

Captain S—— turned the scowl of his dark grey eyes upon him, wherein the disappointment of baffled revenge and rage, at what he (without doubt) considered the officer's impudence, were distinctly visible: but the subaltern bore the look intended for his annihilation, with the utmost indifference—there even seemed to be a smile of contempt playing on his countenance. Captain S—— then proceeded to bring forward evidence to prove Henry's connection with the crime for which the prisoners were tried—principally for the purpose of proving, that he had confessed his guilt; and according to the president's opinion, this evidence was perfectly conclusive. The officer al-

ready mentioned, seeing that Henry was nearly sinking under the influence of his feelings, said, "Don't be afraid my man, justice will be done you—I believe you to be innocent, at least, I have heard nothing yet to induce me to think otherwise; take time, collect yourself, and if you have any questions to ask the evidence, or any witnesses to call in your defence, to disprove what has been stated, speak out fearlessly." Encouraged by the officer's kind and manly conduct, and with his assistance, Henry cross-questioned the evidence, and brought forward witnesses that not only disproved all that had been stated against him, but fixed a suspicion on the minds of those present, that the president had not only confined him without cause, but had suborned witnesses for the purpose of bringing him to punishment. Captain S—— seeing that his designs were frustrated, sullenly gave up the point, and poor Henry was acquitted: but had it not been for the independent character of the officer above-mentioned, he might not have

escaped punishment. Courts martial were at that time much too frequent to expect that justice would be always administered impartially by them. This is not the case at present, they are now comparatively rare: the authorities, seemingly, feel inclined to discourage them, or at least to discourage the brutal punishment which was usually their consequence: indeed, too much praise cannot be bestowed on the present commander in chief, for the humane and effective policy which has been gradually introduced into the army: the situation of the soldier at present, is very different from what it was twenty years ago. From the specimen Henry had got of captain S——'s disposition, he thought it the wisest plan to get transferred from his company, which he effected shortly after.

To proceed with my narrative; a few days after this occurrence our regiment was moved to the village of Fuentes de Honore, a few miles nearer Almeida: great part of the way we moved through a wood of oak trees, in

which the inhabitants of the surrounding villages had herds of swine feeding: here the voice of the cuckoo never was mute; night and day its simple notes were heard in every quarter of the wood.

The village we now occupied was in Spain, and formed a striking contrast to those of Portugal; the inhabitants and their houses wore an air of neatness, cleanliness and comfort about them, unlike any thing we had as yet seen in the country; their dress and language were also different. The sight of the village itself was beautiful and romantic; it lay in a sort of ravine, down which a small river brawled over an irregular rocky bed, in some places forming precipitous falls of many feet; the acclivity on each side was occasionally abrupt, covered with trees and thick brushwood. Three leagues to the left of our front lay the villages of Gallegos and Espeja, in and about which, our light division and cavalry were quartered. Between this and Fuentes lay a large wood, which re-

ceding on the right, formed a plain, flanked by a deep ravine, being a continuation of that in which the village lay; in our rear was another plain, (on which our army subsequently formed) and behind that, in a valley, Villa Ferrosa, the River Coa running past it.

We had not been many days here, when we received intelligence that the light troops were falling back upon our village, the enemy having recrossed the Agueda in great force, for the purpose of relieving Almeida, which we had blockaded. On the morning we received this intelligence (the 3d of May, 1811) our regiment turned out of the town, and took up their position with the rest of the division on a plain, some distance behind it. The morning was uncommonly beautiful, the sun shone bright and warm, the various odoriferous shrubs which were scattered profusely around, perfumed the air, and the woods rang with the song of birds. The light division and cavalry falling back, followed by the columns of the



French, the various divisions of the army assembling on the plain from different quarters, their arms glittering in the sun, bugles blowing, drums beating, the various staff-officers galloping about to different parts of the line giving orders, formed a scene which realized to my mind all that I had ever read of feats of arms, or the pomp of war; a scene which no one could behold unmoved, or without feeling a portion of that enthusiasm which always accompanies “deeds of high daring;” a scene justly conceived and well described by Moore, in the beautiful song—

Oh the sight entrancing,  
 When morning's beam is glancing  
 O'er files arrayed,  
 With helm and blade,  
 And plumes in the gay wind dancing;  
 When hearts are all high beating,  
 And the trumpet's voice repeating  
 That song, whose breath  
 May lead to death,  
 But never to retreating.

Our position was now taken up in such a way, that our line ran along the frontiers of Portugal, maintaining the

blockade of Almeida by our left, while our right kept open the communication with Sabugal, the place where the last action was fought.

The French advanced on our position in three columns, and about three o'clock in the afternoon, detached a strong body of troops against Fuentes, which was at this time occupied as an advanced post by the 60th regiment, and the light company of our division. Their skirmishers were covered in their advance by cavalry, in consequence of which, ours were obliged to fall back for greater safety, to some stone fences on the outskirts of the village, while a party of our German hussars covered their retreat. The cavalry now commenced skirmishing, the infantry keeping up an occasional fire. It was rather remarkable that the cavalry on both sides happened to be Germans. When this was understood, vollies of insulting language, as well as shot, were exchanged between them. One of our hussars got so enraged at something one of his opponents said, that raising his

sword, he dashed forward upon him into the very centre of their line. The French hussar seeing that he had no mercy to expect from his enraged foe, wheeled about his horse, and rode to the rear; the other determined on revenge, still continued to follow him. The whole attention of both sides was drawn for a moment to these two, and a temporary cessation of firing took place; the French staring in astonishment at our hussar's temerity, while our men were cheering him on. The chace continued for some way to the rear of their cavalry. At last, our hussar coming up with him, and fetching a furious blow, brought him to the ground. Awakening now to a sense of the danger he had thrown himself into, he set his horse at full speed to get back to his comrades; but the French who were confounded when he passed, had recovered their surprise, and determined on revenging the death of their comrade; they joined in pursuit, firing their pistols at him. The poor fellow was now in a hazardous plight, they were every moment gaining

upon him, and he had still a long way to ride. A band of the enemy took a circuit, for the purpose of intercepting him; and before he could reach the line he was surrounded, and would have been cut in pieces, had not a party of his comrades, stimulated by the wish to save so brave a fellow, rushed forward, and just arrived in time, by making the attack general, to save his life, and brought him off in triumph.

The overwhelming force which the French now pushed forward on the village, could not be withstood by the small number of troops which defended it; they were obliged to give way, and were fairly forced to a rising ground on the other side, where stood a small chapel. The French now thought they had gained their point, but they were soon undeceived; for, being reinforced at this place by the Portuguese caçadores, our lads came to the right about, and attacked them with such vigour, that in a short time they were driven back to their old ground. While retreating through the town, one of our

sergeants who had run up the wrong street, being pushed hard by the enemy, ran into one of the houses: they were close at his heels; and he had just time to tumble himself into a large chest, and let the lid down, when they entered and commenced plundering the house, expressing their wonder at the same time concerning the sudden disappearance of the "Anglais," whom they had seen run into the house. During this time, the poor sergeant lay sweating, and half smothered; they were busy breaking up every thing that came in their way, looking for plunder; and they were in the act of opening the lid of his hiding place, when the noise of our men cheering, as they charged the enemy through the town—forced them to take to flight. He now got out, and having joined his company, assisted in driving the French back. No other part of the line had as yet been attacked by the French, they seemed bent on taking the village of Fuentes in the first place, as a "stepping stone," and the main



body of each army lay looking at each other. Finding that the force they had sent down, great as it was, could not keep possession of the place, they sent forward two strong bodies of fresh troops to retake it, one of which, composed of the Irish legion, dressed in red uniform, was at first taken for a British regiment, and they had time to form up, and give us a volley before the mistake was discovered. The village was now vigorously attacked by the enemy at two points, and with such a superior force, that in spite of the unparalleled bravery of our troops, they were again obliged to give way, and were driven back contesting every inch of the ground.

On our retreat through the village, we were met by the 71st regiment, cheering, led on by Colonel Cadogan; they had been detached from the line to our support. The chace was now turned, and although the French were obstinately intent on keeping their ground, and so eager, that many of their cavalry had entered the town, and rushed furiously down the streets, all