

their efforts were in vain, nothing could withstand the charge of the gallant 71st; they even attacked the cavalry, who had forced their way into the town, single-handed, and in a short time, in spite of all resistance, they cleared the village. This regiment during the Peninsular war, was always remarkable for its gallantry. The brave Cadogan well knew the art of rendering his men invincible; he knew that the courage of the British soldier is best called forth by associating it with his country, and he also knew how to time the few words which produced such magical effects. We were now once more in possession of the place, but our loss as well as that of the French, had been very great. In particular places of the village where a stand had been made, or the shot brought to bear, the slaughter had been immense, which was the case near the river, and at the small chapel on our side of the town; among the rest lay one poor fellow of the 88th light company, who had been severely wounded, and seemed to suffer excruciating agony,

for he begged of those who passed him to put him out of torture. Although from the nature of his wound there was no possibility of him surviving, yet none felt inclined to comply with his request, until a German of the 60th Rifle battalion, after hesitating a few moments, raised his rifle, and putting the muzzle of it to his head fired the contents of it through it. Whether this deed deserved praise or blame, I leave others to determine. The French enraged at being thus baffled in all their attempts to take the town, sent forward a force composed of the very flower of their army; but they gained only a temporary advantage, for being reinforced by the 79th regiment, although the contest remained doubtful until night, we remained in possession of it, with the exception of a few houses on the rise of the hill at the French side.

The light brigade of our division was now withdrawn, and the 71st and 79th regiments remained as a picquet in it during the night; next morning it was again occupied as before. On the 4th, both

sides were busily employed burying the dead and bringing in the wounded; French and English promiscuously mixed, and assisting each other in that melancholy duty as if they had been intimate friends. So far did this friendship extend, that two of our lads who spoke French, went up that night after dark to the enemy's picquet, and having conversed and drank wine with them, returned unmolested to their company. During this day the French generals reconnoitred our position, and next morning, (the 5th) they made a movement to their left with two strong columns; this caused a corresponding movement in our line, and it was scarcely made, when they attacked our right, composed of the 7th division, with all their cavalry, and succeeded in turning it; but they were gallantly met by some squadrons of our dragoons, and repulsed. Their columns of infantry still continued to advance on the same point, and were much galled by the heavy fire kept up on them by the 7th division; but in consequence of this movement, our commu-

nication with Sabugal was abandoned for a stronger position, and our army was now formed in two lines, the light division and cavalry in reserve; this manœuvre paralyzed their attack on our line, and their efforts were now chiefly confined to partial cannonading, and some charges with their cavalry, which were received and repulsed by the picquets of the 1st division in one instance; but as they were falling back, they did not perceive the charge of a different body in time to form, and many of them were killed, wounded and taken prisoners. Colonel Hill, who commanded the picquets, was among the latter; the 42d regiment also under Lord Blantyre, gallantly repulsed another charge made by the enemy's cavalry. The French then attempted to push a strong body of light infantry down the ravine to the right of the 1st division, but they were driven back by some companies of the Guards and 95th Rifles.

While on the right this was going on, the village of Fuentes was again attacked by a body of the imperial guard,

and, as on the 3d, the village was taken and retaken several times. At one time they had brought down such an overwhelming force, that our troops were fairly beat out of the town, and the French formed close column between it and us; some guns which were posted on the rise in front of our line, having opened upon them, made them change their ground; and the 88th regiment (Connaught Rangers) being detached from our division, led on by the heroic General M'Kinnon, (who commanded our right brigade) charged them furiously, and drove them back through the village with great slaughter. Some time previous to this, General Picton had had occasion to check this regiment for some plundering affair they had been guilty of, and he was so offended at their conduct, that, in addressing them, he had told them they were the greatest blackguards in the army;—but as he was always as ready to give praise—as censure, where it was due, when they were returning from this gallant and effective charge, he ex-

claimed, "Well done the brave 88th!" Some of them who had been stung at his former reproaches, cried out, "Are we the greatest blackguards in the army now?" The valiant Picton smiled, and replied "No, no, you are brave and gallant soldiers, this day has redeemed your character."

At one time during the contest, when the enemy had gained a partial possession of the village, our light troops had retired into a small wood above it, where they were huddled together without any regularity, a French officer, while leading on his men, having been killed in our front, a bugler of the 83d regiment starting out between the fire of both parties, seized his gold watch; but he had scarcely returned, when a cannon shot from the enemy came whistling past him, and he fell lifeless on the spot. The blood started out of his nose and ears, but with the exception of this, there was neither wound nor bruise on his body; the shot had not touched him.

We had regained possession of the village a short time after, and got a

little breathing time; a few of our lads and some of the 79th were standing together, where a poor fellow lay a few paces from them weltering in his blood. As he belonged to the 79th, they went over to see who he was; the ball had entered the centre of his forehead, and passed through his brain, and to all appearance he was completely dead; but when any of the flies which were buzzing about the wound, entered it, a convulsive tremor shook his whole body, and the muscles of his face became frightfully distorted; there could scarcely be imagined any thing more distressing, or more appalling to the spectator.

Within the walls of the old chapel, where our men and the French had got under cover alternately, as they were pursuing or pursued, there lay a mixture of various nations, wounded, dying and dead, and presented a sight which no language could describe, raving, groaning, calling for assistance and drink. They must have had a hardened heart who could have beheld it without feel-

ing deeply. One noble looking fellow of the imperial guard lay wounded through both legs, and one of his arms shattered, he had been plundered and stripped half naked. One of our light company, of the name of James Cochran, as much distinguished for bravery in the field as for a mild and humane temper, (for they are not incompatible) seeing the poor fellow lying in this plight, unable to help himself, and the flies irritating his wounds—threw his own blanket over him—brought some water, and left it and some bread with him; but what was his mortification on returning that way, to find that he was again plundered of all, and left as before. The poor fellow, however, seemed to feel the most lively gratitude for what Cochran had done, and wished to force some money on him, which had escaped the search of his plunderers.

After the various taking and retaking of the village, night again found us in possession of it. On the 6th no attempt was made to renew the attack, and as



on the 4th, the army on each side were employed in burying the dead, and looking after the wounded. On the 7th we still remained quiet; but on this day the whole French army were reviewed on the plain by Massena. On the night of the 7th, some companies of our regiment were detached on picquet to the ravine on the left of the town, and during the night, I was placed one of the outpost sentries. The French picquets occupied the opposite side, and the distance between us was but trifling. The night was very dark, and the place where I was posted was amongst bushes and trees, near the river's edge. All was still, save the river gurgling over its rocky bed, or when a slight breeze set the leaves in motion, and the *qui vive* of the French sentinels could be distinctly heard.

I had been some time posted, ruminating on the awful responsibility attached to my post, as it was probable the enemy might make an attack during the night. I was straining my



eyes through the thick darkness towards the spot where I imagined the French sentry was placed, at the same time, eagerly listening. In the midst of this anxiety I was alarmed by the noise of something rustling among the bushes near the river. The thought struck me instantly that it must be the French picquet advancing on my post; my first impulse was to fire in the direction of the noise, but I recollected that there was a possibility of giving a false alarm, and I felt myself in a strange dilemma—I could not fire until I ascertained that it was an enemy, and before that could be done I might be surprised and killed. The noise ceased, but still I was all attention, for this did not give me confidence; sticking my ramrod in the ground, I put my ear to it, but could hear nothing. I now assumed more courage, and almost persuaded myself I had been deceived. At that moment, a burst through the bushes in my front, accompanied by a horrid yell, robbed me of all presence of mind. In

the desperation which fear sometimes inspires, I dashed forward against the object of my alarm with my charged bayonet, and plunged it in the foe; he fell, and for a few seconds, I had not power to move. Silence was now only broken by the smothered groan of my dying victim; and recovering myself a little, I stooped to ascertain whether it was really a French grenadier I had slain, but found it was only a poor ass.

On the 8th the French sentries were withdrawn at day light, the main body of the enemy having retired during the night, to the woods between Fuentes and Gallegos. On the 9th they broke up, and retired from their position; and on the 10th they had recrossed the Agueda without having accomplished the relief of Almeida. On the morning of the 11th, however, about one o'clock, *a. m.* the garrison having blown up part of the fortifications, made their escape past the troops who blockaded them, in consequence of the darkness of the night; some say the carelessness of the

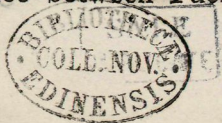
regiments on that duty. One regiment in particular was blamed, but the excuse might be more properly sought for in the masterly dispositions which the governor (General Brenier) had made, both for the escape of the garrison, and the subsequent retreat.

## CHAPTER II.

MARCH TO BADAJOS—OPERATIONS OF THE SIEGE—

THE SIEGE RAISED—RETIRE TO CAMPO MAYOR.

WE were again quartered in Fuentes, but the place was sadly altered; the inhabitants had fled, many of the houses were destroyed, and all of them plundered; although the dead had been in general buried, there still remained some bodies lying about swelled and blackened by the heat of the sun, the ground was strewed with uniform caps and clothing, and the streets were dyed with the blood of the combatants; the whole place wore an air of desolation and wretchedness. We were only a few days there when we received orders to march along with the 7th division, for the purpose of laying siege to Badajos, a fortified town on the Spanish frontier, in the province of Estremadura. The distance between Fuentes and Badajos



might be about 40 leagues, Portuguese, (150 miles;) we proceeded by Alfeyates, Penamacore, and Castello Branco, there we were quartered in a Franciscan convent for two days, from thence we marched to Villa Valhe, where boats were ready for us to cross the Tagus, This was a romantic spot, the side on which we lay previous to passing, was a plain, the opposite one a mountain, which rose abrupt and precipitous, clothed with trees and bushes to the top, throwing its dark shade on the bosom of the river, which rolled along at its base, deep, dark and rapid; here it was reported lord Wellington had lost his two orderly dragoons some days before. He had received information that the French army under marshal Soult was coming down in great force on Beresford's army, and he was so anxious to get forward, that when he came to the river, and found the bridge of boats not thrown across, he plunged in, followed by his orderly dragoons, (certainly a most hazardous attempt;) the current was so strong that

the dragoons with their horses were carried away and drowned, his lordship only escaping by the superior strength of his horse.

Having crossed the river, we proceeded by a winding road cut in the face of the hill to Niza; this was a most distressing march, being up hill the whole way. Passing Alpalhao, we reached Porto Legre two days after. From this we marched to Arronches, and from that to Campo Mayor, situated about ten miles from Badajos, where we remained for some days while preparations were making for the siege. This was a very handsome town, walled, but very slightly fortified; one building in particular, a small chapel, called Capella des Ossos, is worth noticing; it had been erected to commemorate some massacre. The whole interior was built up with skulls and thigh bones, laid across, and two skeletons, one on each side, were built into the wall.

On the 25th of May we marched towards Badajos, which the French had gained possession of in the beginning of

the campaign, through the treachery of the Spanish governor, at the very time lord Wellington had promised relief, and given orders to hold out.—When we first came in sight of the town, its spires appeared above the hill which rises on the Campo Mayor side of it, as if the town lay immediately beneath, but we found it was still a great way off; we then took a circuitous route to the left of the town, and having crossed the Guidiana, encamped about three miles from it, on the slope of a small hill which skirted the Elvas road; here we constructed huts in the best manner we could, with bushes and branches of trees.

On the night of the 29th, the stores and ordnance having arrived, we marched down towards the town, for the purpose of breaking ground; it was fortunately very dark, and as we kept the greatest silence, the French were not aware of our approach. When we reached the place where it was intended we should open the trenches, we formed a line across the front of the town, where 2000 intrenching tools had been



laid. We were then told safety depended on expedition, for if the French discovered our presence before we had worked ourselves under cover, a warm salute might be expected. The officers were dependent on our exertions for safety; and it was remarked in what kind and familiar tones some of those spoke, who in greater security would have acted the blustering tyrant. I cannot understand what makes many officers so supercilious, haughty and morose to their men, when, by a little good humour, or friendly feeling displayed, I have no doubt they might not only make themselves beloved, but have their orders much better obeyed.

We now commenced work vigorously, and in six hours were under cover, without the French having discovered our presence. The operations of the siege were now carried on with great vigour on both sides of the river Guidiana; the opposite one was conducted by the 7th division against fort St. Christoval, an outwork that protected the advance to the bridge. By the 2d of June we had

two batteries playing on the walls, and four were opened by the 7th division on fort St. Christoval. The guns were partly served by Portuguese artillery, who behaved extremely well. The troops were told off in two parties, relieving each other every twenty-four hours. A communication was kept up between the several trenches, and a covered-way formed, which prevented the men from being so much exposed in going to, and returning from the camp; but still we suffered severely from the enemy's shot and shell, with which they now plied us hotly, having their guns constantly ready to fire at even a single individual, if he put his head above the trench; and the shells fired from the garrison were thrown so as to make them fall in it. At night we could see them by the light of the fuse, and were often enabled to get out of their way; in the day, we ran more risk, although we could still distinguish them from shot, by the whistling sound they made coming through the air.

The second or third night after the

trenches were opened, Dennis and I were down on the working party, captain S., already mentioned, was one of the officers. They were telling off a covering party, who were to go out in front, to prevent any sudden surprise by the enemy making a sortie, when the word "shell!" was given. All eyes were instantly turned on it, watching its direction, that they might run in the opposite one. Captain S., although so valiant on parade, seemed to have no predilection for a *glorious death* more than his neighbours; and he, in company with a brother captain, headed the retreat. They had not gone many paces, when notice was given of another shell falling in the direction they were running. By this time the first had fallen short of the trench, and a retrograde movement took place; but the captains were now in a bad plight, for the crowd was so condensed in the direction they had to go, that there was no getting through. The shell was giving intelligence by its quickened revolutions, that it was falling,



but there was no means of escape, the whole were fairly wedged in, and had fallen on each other; and had the shell burst among them it would have made dreadful havock. As I threw myself down by the side of the trench, I perceived Captain S—— running about like a chicken in a coop seeking an opening by which he might escape, but finding none, he wormed his head into the crowd, which had fallen in his front, and thus remained. The shell fell in a direction that placed me in imminent danger; it burst, however, without doing any injury. On one occasion when Dennis and I were on duty in the trench, and at one of the batteries with some others, at the formation of an embrasure, we had nearly completed it, but it still required opening and facing off towards the enemy; this was a very hazardous business, as we were sure of a volley of cannon shot, the moment we mounted the parapet. “Come, my brave fellows,” said the superintending engineer officer, “which of you will volunteer to go outside, and form the em-

brasure?" Dennis and I were standing close by him, and jumped upon the top of the breast work. We were followed by two more, but had scarcely appeared, when a cannon shot striking the parapet close where I stood, covered me with earth. "Never mind," said Dennis, "to miss is as good as a mile."—He scarcely had finished, however, when he was served in the same manner—no way dispirited, he exclaimed, "time about is fair play." One of the lads who worked with us began to show symptoms of fear, "Don't be afraid," said Dennis, "you'll never die till your time come." His eloquence did not seem to take effect. "Go into the trench," said Dennis, "we will do without you." The lad was in the act of doing so, when a shot struck him, and he fell mortally wounded. Soon after our dinners having come down, we were relieved by others, and called in. The mess I belonged to had sat down round the camp kettle, and were beginning to help themselves, when the cry "shell!" was given; all were to their feet in an instant. We

found by the noise that it was coming in our direction. The others endeavoured to make their escape; but whether from a belief in Dennis' doctrine of predestination, I cannot at present recollect, but instead of running from it, I threw myself down flat in the embrasure. I had scarcely done so, when the shell fell within two yards of me. "Now," thought I, "there is no chance of escape," and during the few seconds of suspense, while the last part of the fuse was whizzing in my ear, previous to its communicating with the powder with which the shell was charged, reflections (which would have occupied an hour at another time,) on home, parents, death, and my future fate, whirled through my mind, like a wild and giddy dream. The shell burst, and for a few moments, I was bereaved of recollection;—coming to myself I scrambled out from amongst the stuff with which I was covered. "Are you kilt?" asked Dennis, running up to me with an expression of real concern: looking to myself to see whether I was

wounded, I replied, "No;" but I had been well frightened. "That's right my boy," said he, "I don't believe the shot's made that will kill any of us. Many's the long yarn about this business I'll be after telling to the ould women of Ireland yet."

On the 6th the breach in fort St. Christoval being considered practicable, a detachment of the different regiments composing the 7th division, was selected to storm it; being at night we could not see the attack farther than the flash of their fire arms, which, from our encampment, looked like an exhibition of fireworks; but we understood that from the nature of the impediments thrown in the way, although they had advanced under a heavy discharge of shot and shell from the town, and musquetry and hand grenades from the garrison, they were unable to succeed, and were ordered to retire. The firing was continued upon the breach for three days longer, and a second attempt was made to carry it on the evening of the 9th, with another detachment of the 7th division. This at-

tack was made with the utmost gallantry, and they advanced intrepidly to the foot of the breach, but the same obstacles presented themselves as on the first attempt, and after having suffered most severely, without being able to effect a lodgement, they were again ordered to retire. The loss in officers and men was considerable.

The men of our division unaccustomed to failure in any enterprise, and perhaps rather conceited, were inclined to attribute the failure of these attempts to the troops composing the 7th division, being mostly foreigners; but in this opinion it is likely they were wrong, as in the subsequent storming of the town, in the ensuing year, the obstacles thrown in the way were sufficient to resist even the bravest British troops. A day or two after this affair, intelligence having been received that Soult was advancing with a large army, for the purpose of relieving Badajos, Wellington deemed it prudent to raise the siege, converting it into a blockade. From this until the 17th we were