

busy withdrawing the guns and stores, which were sent to the garrison of Elvas, as a place of security. On the 17th we quitted our investment of the place, and withdrew to Campo Mayor. On the morning we left it, the French cavalry were out skirmishing with a party of the 11th hussars, who were covering our retreat, and followed us the greater part of the way.

CHAPTER III.

ENCAMPMENT AT ALBERGERIA--ROBLEDA--BATTLE
OF EL-BODON--QUARTERS--SIEGE AND CAPTURE
OF RODERIGO.

WHILE in Campo Mayor, where we remained for some time, a German of the 60th regiment, a Frenchman, and two Italians, belonging to the Chasseurs Britannique, were shot for desertion; the former belonged to our division, the latter three to the 7th. On the morning that the sentence of the first was carried into execution, the division was assembled outside of the town, where they formed three sides of a square. The prisoner was marched past the various regiments, accompanied by the chaplain of the division, and the guard appointed to shoot him. When his devotions were finished, he was blindfolded by the provost marshall, and

placed kneeling on the brink of his grave already open to receive him; he gave the signal, and the next moment he fell pierced by half a dozen musquet balls. The different regiments then marched past the body, receiving the word, *eyes left*, as they passed him.

I was on the general provost guard the evening previous to those of the 7th division being shot. The sergeants came with the company's books to settle their accounts; the two Italians were in paroxysms of agony, crying and wringing their hands; the behaviour of the Frenchman, who had been taken prisoner, had volunteered into the Chasseurs Britannique, and afterwards deserted from them to his countrymen, formed a strong contrast to that of the others; calm and dignified, he seemed to feel no fear of death, nor did any complaint pass his lips, save an occasional exclamation against the injustice of trying him as a deserter, being a Frenchman. In his circumstances, he argued it was natural that he should endeavour to join his friends the first opportunity that

offered. When the sergeant was settling their accounts, the Italians paid no attention to any thing said to them; but he discussed every item with the greatest exactness, and the sergeant wanting a small coin about the value of a farthing to balance, he desired him to procure it before he would sign the ledger; but though thus exact with the sergeant, the moment he received his balance, which amounted to some dollars, he divided every penny of it amongst his fellow-prisoners. When the Italians received their money they sent for brandy, and began to drink intemperately, endeavouring to drown their sorrows and sear their minds; but it had quite a different effect, for they then broke from all restraint in the expression of their feelings, and cried and groaned with agony in such a manner, that they could be heard at a considerable distance from the guard-room. In this state they continued until morning, when they ceased their lamentations, only because nature was exhausted by their former violence;—quite different was the conduct of

the Frenchman; when the brandy was procured, the Italians pressed him to take some, but he thanked them, and refused. "No," said he, throwing a look of mingled pity and contempt on them, "I need no brandy to enable me to face death." He continued to walk about with his arms folded during the whole evening, without seeming in the least disturbed; occasionally indeed his countenance softened, and a tear drop gathered in his eye, but it was not permitted to linger there; and as if ashamed of showing the least want of firmness, he assumed redoubled inflexibility of countenance.

I could not help admiring his manly fortitude and courage. I had no opportunity of speaking to him, without being intrusive; but in silence I watched the expression of his face, with a feeling I could hardly describe.—It was reported that he was a brother of marshal Soult: the truth of this I cannot pretend to affirm. He was, however, certainly a man of a noble mind and independent spirit, elegant in person, and

handsome in features. About midnight he lay down and slept soundly until near the hour of execution; his courage seemed to be now even more exalted. He cleaned himself with the greatest nicety, conversed with his fellow prisoners cheerfully, and endeavoured, although without success, to infuse some courage into the poor Italians. The guard having arrived, he took leave of those prisoners who were confined with him; and to one, with whom he was more familiar than the others, he gave some private injunction, and on parting with him he said emphatically, "Remember I die a Frenchman." He marched off to the place of execution with the same collected intrepidity he had before evinced, and I understood afterwards, that his demeanour on the ground where he was shot, was similar to that displayed while a prisoner; all admired his courage, and were sorry for his fate.

Leaving Campo Mayor we returned by the same route that we had come, recrossing the Tagus at Ville Valhe, and halting at Albergeria, a village near the

place from whence we had first set out to go to Badajos, and not far distant from Cuidade Roderigo, in which the French had a garrison. We remained here in camp for some time, very busy making fascions and gabions to fortify the position which our army had taken. While we lay in this encampment the weather was uncommonly warm, and the bushes and long grass, among which we had raised temporary huts, were rendered inflammable as tinder; the grass on our left had been by accident set fire to, and the flames soon spread in every direction. The whole of the soldiers were turned out to stop its progress; but in spite of their endeavours, it communicated to a wood which lay on the face of a steep hill in our rear, burning with the greatest fury. The night happened to be very dark, and there could scarcely be any thing more grand or awful—the whole mountain was in a blaze of fire—and the noise and crackling of the trees burning, was like the noise of a hurricane; it was a scene which a person could stand and gaze at in mute as-

tonishment, without being able to define the sensations which were raised in his mind. The wind fortunately carried the fire to the rear of our encampment, or it might have been productive of great injury, by blowing up the ammunition, &c.

From this place we removed more in advance to Robleda, a Spanish village. The people seemed to be comfortable, the houses were extremely clean, and here we had a fair specimen of the manners of the Spanish peasantry. All their domestic concerns were conducted with the greatest regularity: they were very punctual in the observance of all the rites of their church, and in catechising their children. They seemed to me to be really pious, and from their prudent industrious habits, happy and contented. The people I was quartered on were uncommonly friendly; being able to speak the language a little, and Dennis being of the same religious persuasion, we were almost considered as members of the family. The inhabitants were mostly all employed in agriculture, and were

very lively and fond of amusement, particularly of singing and dancing; here they had their fandangos and boleras every Sunday evening after mass, dressed in the gay and becoming fashion of their country, and many a ditty was chaunted in praise of general Mina and Don Julian. The village, however, proved very unhealthy to our men, 80 or 90 of them left us to go to the rear sick, during the short time we were in it, most of them with fever and ague, and among them my poor friend Dennis.

We were ordered to march from this to El-Bodon, (in consequence of the French advancing) on the 24th September, and it was with unfeigned regret on both sides, I believe, that we parted with our friendly hosts.

On the 25th, at two o'clock in the morning, we were turned out to the heights above the town, which our brigade, along with one of cavalry occupied. Our position was on a range of heights, over which passed the road leading from Roderigo to Fuente Gui-

naldo. Here we lay under arms until about eight o'clock in the morning, when we perceived, issuing out of Rodrigo, one column of cavalry after another, advancing along the road towards our post, to the amount of about forty squadrons; these were succeeded by twelve or fourteen battalions of infantry, with twelve piece of cannon. Our situation now began to get precarious, being completely separated from the rest of the army, by at least six miles. Still we had no orders to retreat—and to retreat without orders is not the custom of the British army.

One of the regiments was posted on the hill over which the road passed, and when it was seen that the French were bent upon advancing in that direction, two more regiments, the 77th British, 21st Portuguese, and the brigade of cavalry, were sent to reinforce them.

This was scarcely done, when the advanced squadrons of the enemy's cavalry and artillery made a furious attack on this post, and succeeded in taking two piece of Portuguese cannon. The Por-

tuguese artillery behaved bravely, having stood until actually cut down at their guns, which were posted on a rising ground to the right. The 5th regiment was now ordered to charge, and they succeeded in retaking the guns. While this was going on on the right, we were attacked by another body of cavalry in front, which was met and repulsed with determined bravery by the 77th regiment. Our cavalry also were warmly engaged, and charged different bodies of the enemy which ascended on the left. Here we kept our post gallantly, surrounded by about two thousand cavalry—until at last the French infantry being brought up, we were ordered to retreat in squares on Fuente Guinaldo, supported only by the small body of cavalry already mentioned. The French cavalry seeing us preparing for retreat, rushed furiously on, and the various squares were now successively charged, by powerful masses of their cavalry, one in particular, on three faces of the square, but they halted, and repulsed them with the

utmost steadiness and gallantry. The French in those charges suffered severely, having a tremendous fire poured in on them each time; as they rushed on with impetuosity, when they were brought to a dead stop by the points of our bayonets, they were thrown into the utmost confusion, and were brought down by our shot in numbers. The whole now proceeded to retreat in excellent order, at an ordinary pace, keeping exact distances, ready to form up in the event of a charge being made.

We were much annoyed by shot and shell from the heights where the French artillery were posted, some of which falling in the squares, did great mischief, killing and wounding many of our men, and blowing up our ammunition. We had about six miles to retreat in this manner before we reached the body of the army, with the French cavalry hanging on our flanks and rear, some of whom had even the audacity to ride to our front, and having taken part of our baggage, brought it back close past our columns: we could render no

assistance, as our own safety wholly depended on keeping ourselves ready to form square. Here general Picton showed that coolness and intrepidity for which he was so much distinguished; for some time he rode at the head of our square, while a strong body of French hung on our right, waiting a favourable opportunity to charge. The captain who commanded us (both field officers being sick) was throwing many a fearful glance at them, and was rather in a state of perturbation—"Never mind the French," said Picton, "mind your regiment; if the fellows come here, we will give them a warm reception." At length we came in sight of the rest of our army, and the main body of the French hung back, but we were escorted into the very lines by their advanced guard—here, however, they met with a warm reception from some squadrons of our cavalry, which made them retreat. We halted in rear of Fuente Guinaldo, where an intrenched camp had been formed, and remained here that night and next day, during which, the French having brought

forward their infantry, took post on a hill opposite, and we expected an engagement; but lord Wellington, for good reasons, no doubt, deemed it more prudent to retire. When night came, we were ordered to kindle a great number of fires, for the purpose of making the French believe we still remained in our encampment. Two hours after we commenced our retreat, leaving the fires burning brightly, and marched all night; the road we travelled was uncommonly narrow, and various impediments in the way, was continually causing the rear to halt. The fatigue we had undergone the preceding two or three days, and the almost total want of sleep, during that time, completely overcame us; the moment a halt was made, we dropped down on the ground fast asleep, and it was by the greatest exertion that we were able to rouse ourselves to proceed. So overpowering was its effects, that I would have been content to be taken prisoner, or even to suffer death, I dare say, had it been the alternative, had I been allowed to sleep. Indeed

some of the men could not resist its effects, and stepping aside off the road, threw themselves down, and yielded to its influence, although certain of being taken by the enemy, which they accordingly were. Next day we halted in a meadow, where, having our rations served out, we proceeded on to a village, near which our light division and cavalry had a severe skirmish with the French, whom they repulsed. The enemy then retreated to their old position, and we were quartered in a Portuguese village, on the frontiers, within a few leagues of Roderigo, where we remained until January, 1812. This was a miserable dirty place, with a few poor and wretched inhabitants in it. It was designated by the soldiers, the *Hungry Village*; as to answer some purpose which we were then unacquainted with, we had only half rations during the greater part of the time we were in it; to add to the rest, the officer in temporary command of the regiment at that time, was ignorant of his duty, which, in conjunction with a naturally cruel and vindictive

disposition, bid fair to ruin the regiment in the few months he had the command of it. I will not trace his pedigree to the low origin from whence he sprung, because, had he been a good man, it would have only enhanced his merit; nor will I particularize the deformity of his person, which he could not help; but there will be no harm in giving a specimen of his mode of discipline while in command of the regiment, particularly as it forms a strong contrast to that of an officer whom I will have occasion to mention in the course of this narrative.

Having neither the education nor breeding of a gentleman, he felt jealous in the company of the officers, and lived in a retired and sullen manner, gossiping with his barber or his cook, or indeed any of the men; with an affectation of entering into all their concerns, by this and eaves-dropping he became acquainted with little circumstances which another commanding officer would have disdained to listen to, and which he always made a bad use of. The full extent of

his malevolent disposition was not thoroughly known, however, until he got command of the regiment—when he introduced flogging for every trivial offence, in fact, the triangles were generally the accompaniment of every evening parade; in addition to this he invented more disgraceful and torturing modes of inflicting the punishment, but all this was not enough, he ordered that each defaulter should have a patch of yellow and black cloth sewed on the sleeve of the regimental jacket, and a hole cut in it for every time they were flogged; the effects of this soon became visible, as good men were liable to be punished for the slightest fault, the barrier between them and hardened ill-doers was broken down, and as they had lost respect in their own eyes, they either became broken-hearted and inefficient soldiers, or grew reckless of every thing, and launched into crime; those who were hardened and unprincipled before, being brought by the prevalence of punishment nearer a level with better men, seemed to glory in misconduct. In fact, all ideas of honour and

character were lost, and listless apathy and bad conduct was the prevailing features of the corps at this time.

The lieutenant-colonel joined when captain —— had been some time exercising his power in this despotic manner, and being a man of a different stamp, he was not well pleased to find the men of his regiment, whom he had always been proud of, treated in this manner. His first order was to cut off all the badges which captain —— had ordered on the men. The frequent punishment was next done away, and the regiment was again placed on a fair footing, but the effect of their previous ill usage did not so soon disappear.

This village was situated at the foot of a high hill, which was covered with wood, and from which the wolves were in the habit of coming down at night, and prowling about the village in quest of prey. On one post beside the field where the cattle were killed, the sentries were very much annoyed by them, but I believe they did no farther injury than devouring some pigs and an ass, which

had been left out all night. Towards the end of December we were once or twice marched from our village, to within a short distance of Roderigo, for the purpose of intercepting supplies which the French attempted to throw into it, and the weather being extremely cold, we suffered much on the journey. The governor of that garrison, (general Renaud) was taken prisoner about this time, while out on a reconnoitring party, by the Spanish guerilla chief, Don Julian.

In the beginning of January, 1812, we were removed for the purpose of besieging Cuidade Roderigo, and we left this miserable village in the midst of a snow storm, and marched to Morti Agua. Next day we forded the Agueda, and took up our quarters in Ceridillo del Arroyo. The siege now commenced; the light division having succeeded on the night of the 8th January, in storming one of the principal outworks, (the redoubt of St. Francisco,) we opened the trenches the same night, within 600 yards of the town; the outwork which



they had carried forming part of the first parallel. The weather was so severe, and the cold so intense, that the army could not encamp, but the divisions employed at the siege marched from their different quarters and relieved each other, alternately, every four and twenty hours. Our division took its turn of the duty on the 11th, and the frost was so excessive that we were almost completely benumbed, and nothing but hard working, I believe, kept us from perishing with the cold, indeed it was said that some Portuguese soldiers actually died from its effects; still, however, the work went on rapidly, and on the night of the 13th, another outwork (the fortified convent of Santa Cruz,) was stormed by the 1st division, under general Graham. On the 14th, the batteries in the first parallel were formed, and commenced firing from twenty-two pieces of cannon; that same night the fourth division carried all the remaining outworks, and we were established in the second parallel, 150 yards from the town on the 15th, on which day it

fell our turn a second time for the duty. The French kept up a very destructive fire on us during the whole of our operations. While forming the second parallel they threw out some fire balls to enable them to see where we were working, that they might send their shot in that direction; one of them fell very near where a party were working, and by its light completely exposed them to the view of the enemy: a sergeant belonging to our regiment of the name of Frazer, seeing the danger to which they were exposed, seized a spade, and jumping out of the trench, regardless of the enemy's fire, ran forward to where it was burning, and having dug a hole for it, tumbled it in and covered it with earth.

On the morning of the 18th, a battery of seven guns was opened in the second parallel, while those in the first still continued their fire upon the walls. On the 19th our division again took their turn of the duty, but as the breaches were now considered practicable, the other troops destined for the attack

were also assembled, it being lord Wellington's intention to storm it that night.

The attack was directed to be made in five different columns, the two right composed of part of our division, under the command of Major Ridge of the 5th regiment, and colonel O'Toole of the 2d caçadores, were to protect the attack of the third column, (composed of our right brigade comanded by general M'Kinnon) upon the principal breach; the left of this assault, was to be covered by part of the light division, who were at the same time to ascend the breaches on the left, while general Pack's brigade made a false attack on the south of the fort. On the right of the whole, the regiment I belonged to were to descend into the ditch, for the purpose of protecting the descent of general M'Kinnon's brigade against any obstacles which might be thrown in the way by the enemy

Thus arranged, some time after it was dark, we moved down from our encampment towards the town, and our regi-

ment having formed behind the walls of an old convent, each section being provided with a pick axe and rope, we advanced rank entire under a heavy fire from the garrison, to the brink of the trench, where planting the one end of the pick axe firmly in the ground, we threw the noose of the rope over the other, and then descended by it into the ditch. After descending, we moved along towards the breach. Our orders were to remain there, and protect the right brigade; but our colonel finding no obstacles in the way, pushed up the breach, leading on his regiment to the attack; the 5th regiment which also belonged to the covering party, joined us as we ascended, and together we succeeded in establishing ourselves on the ramparts, in spite of the obstinate resistance made by the French. The other troops advancing at the same time, we were masters of the town in half an hour from the commencement of the attack; but the gallant general M'Kinnon was killed by the springing of a mine, just as we gained the ramparts. The last time

he was seen alive was when addressing a young officer who had displayed much courage, "Come," said he, "you are a fine lad, you and I will go together." The next moment the mine sprung. In the morning his body was got a short distance from the place, wounded and blackened by the explosion. He was much regretted, for he was an intelligent, brave and enterprising officer. General Crawford, a brave and much-beloved officer, who commanded the light division, was also mortally wounded in the assault.

The French had behaved well during the siege, and made a tolerable resistance at the breaches the night of the storm; but they appeared either to be panic struck, not expecting us to storm the town so soon, or the individual who commanded wanted ability, for the dispositions made for the defence were a mere nothing, in comparison to those at Badajos, when that town was taken some time after. In mounting the breach, we found great difficulty in ascending, from the loose earth slipping