as if leaving a place with which I had been long acquainted.

After halting one day here, we proceeded on the main road as far as Cavallos. Here we received information, from men going sick to the rear, that our army was retreating, after having fought an action at Busaco. This intelligence was soon confirmed by cars coming in with the wounded—those who had suffered slightly were walking, while others, whose wounds were more severe, were either sitting or lying on the cars, which from their construction were ill calculated for conveying sick or wounded men. They were about five feet long, and two and a half broad; but, instead of being boarded at the sides, there were stakes placed in holes about eighteen inches apart; the wheels were about two feet in diameter, rather octaganal than round; and, as they were not girt with iron, it was quite a common thing to have a piece broken out of the circumference, and, of course every time the wheel turned, the whole car would be violently shook. This was drawn by a pair of

oxen, yoked by the head. A peasant, with a long stick and a sharp nail in the end of it, walked before them, and every now and then run his goad into their shoulders to hasten their pace. This generally produced an awkward zig-zag trot for a few yards, when the jolting occasioned by the inequality of the wheels would cause the most excruciating torture to the poor fellows who were in them, and force them to groan with agony. In this manner they had to travel to Lisbon, a distance of forty or fifty miles, before they reached an hospital, exposed to the inclemency of the weather, going at the rate of two miles an hour. The wounded continued to pass the remaining part of the day, and during the whole night.

The continual creaking of their wheels was intolerable. I know of nothing in this country I could liken it to, unless the grating of an iron door on rusty hinges, but it is worse than that still. The Portuguese never put any grease on their wheels; for they think the noise of them frightens away the devil. The conse-

quence is, that the axletree often takes fire with the friction, and burns completely through. I never after could bear the sound of those cars. The hideous grating noise was always associated, in my mind, with the pallid faces, and piercing groans of the wounded, which we that day saw passing.

Next morning, we got orders to march across the country to Alcobaço, where we were to join the third division of the army, commanded by General Picton. This was a beautiful little village, with a very large convent in it, occupied by either the Dominican or Augustine monks (the former I believe, one of the richest orders in Portugal).

When we entered the village, we found it empty of inhabitants; for they had fled with precipitation when they heard that our army was retreating, leaving every thing behind them, but what money or jewels they could carry about their persons. We were quartered in one of the passages of the convent. The monks had all left it, with the exception of a few who remained behind, to superintend the removal of some of their precious articles.

I forget how many hundred monks there were cells for in the convent, but an idea of its size may be given, when it is understood that a whole division of the army consisting of not less than five thousand men were lodged in the galleries alone, without filling them. Attached to it was a spacious chapel, the whole inside of which was decorated in the most superb style. The walls covered with valuable paintings, and in it a magnificent organ.

In the convent was the library, which contained a selection of many thousand volumes of the most rare and valuable books, with philosophical apparatus of every description. I could not but feel grieved, when I saw the poor monks that were left wandering like ghosts about the deserted premises, with a melancholy abstracted air. One I observed in particular: when he cast a glance around the library, as if he was taking a last farewell of all that constituted his happiness, the big tears came into his eyes, and rolled down in succession over his cheeks; but, seeing he was observed, he hastily brushed them

away with the sleeve of his tunic, and left the room; but not without casting a "longing, lingering look behind." It was the last, I believe; for the French got possession of it in two days after, and before they retreated they burnt it to the ground, a deed worthy of the darkest age. Goths or Vandals could not have done more.

The kitchen of the convent, which was on the sunk floor, presented a scene of plenty, which was not very favourable to the opinion of their severe abstinence. Certainly, if the good fathers lived as well every day as they seemed to do while we were here, they could not boast much of fasting; for there was a profusion of every delicacy which could be thought of in their larders and kitchen. In the latter, they had cisterns filled with water, in which they kept fish, brought alive from the coast for their use. Their cellars were filled with pipes, almost without number, of the choicest wines, and the gardens belonging to the convent contained the rarest and finest fruit, besides vegetables and plants of every description.

To judge from what we saw, they ought to have been the happiest fellows imaginable. Good eating, good drinking, fine grounds to walk in, and plenty of books! What could they wish for more! It is likely, however, that their usual mode of living was not so luxurious as we were inclined to think from what we saw of their kitchen; but I suppose they considered it better to use what they could of their dainties, than leave them to the French; and, to tell the truth, the poor monks did not seem to have any great appetite while we were there; for any of our men who entered the kitchen were liberally supplied with any thing that was cooked.

Previous to the regiment being dismissed, the colonel cautioned us against taking anything which had been left by the inhabitants. Before the division came in, I believe this order was punctually obeyed, and our men walked peaceably up and down the streets, the same as they would have done in a village at home; but, when the other regiments, composing the division, arrived, the scene was soon

changed; for they scarcely took time to take their knapsacks off, before they commenced breaking up the doors, and plundering every thing they could lay their hands on.

Some of our men, considering, I suppose, that they might as well have a share of the spoil as the others, joined in the throng; but they had a lesson to learn which some of them paid for rather dearly. They were not aware, or they had forgot, that there was a provost marshall * attached to each division. "And, when they thought, good easy men, full surely their harvest was a ripening," he came upon them with his guard. The knowing ones made good their retreat as well as they could; but our *innocent boys* (as the Irish regiments in the division called them), not being acquainted with his person or power, kept their ground, and were so warmly received that they did not forget either him or his kindness while in the division; but *innocent* as they were,

* The provost marshall is invested with power to inflict summary punishment, on all soldiers whom he may find plundering, or straggling from their regiment.

they were not the only sufferers; for many of the most knowing of the *old* hands were punished also. In fact, the provost's drummers never ceased flogging from that time until night.

An inspection was made next day of the division, to ascertain whether they had any plunder in their knapsacks; and anything found more than the regulated compliment of necessaries was taken from them. The town fell into the hands of the French the following day, and it may be thought that it would have been better to allow us to take the things left than that they should fall into the hands of the enemy; but nothing is more subversive of discipline in an army than the habit of plundering, exclusive of the men, through covetousness, burdening themselves in such a way that they cannot march. Whether the means used to prevent it, were the best and most efficient I do not pretend to say; but there can be no doubt as to the necessity of preventing it as much as possible.

In the course of this day, the monks who had been left took their departure in

chaises, and took not a few boxes of doublons with them. The greater part of the pipes of wine in the cellars were staved, to prevent them falling into the hands of the enemy. We left the convent that afternoon, and, having marched as far as Torres Vedras, encamped outside of the town.

When I say encamped, I do not mean that we pitched tents; for the army were not supplied with tents, until the last campaign in 1813-14. At this time, the blue canopy of heaven was all our covering, the earth our bed, and a single blanket our bed-clothes.

A newly ploughed field, on the face of a hill, was our portion. We got out our blankets, and lay down, expecting to get a comfortable nap, although the weather was rather cold; but, towards morning, it began to rain so heavily that we were soon wet to the skin. Some, who had a little wisdom in their heads, got up, and packed up their blankets; but others lay still, until they were literally floated with water and mud, which came rolling in streams down the ridges, in such a a way

that they could scarcely be distinguished from the soil around. They were then obliged to get up, dripping, and squeeze their blankets in that wet and dirty state into their knapsacks. The rain got heavier, the longer it continued, and we stood huddled together, shivering with cold and wet. At last, an order came for us to march into Torres Vedras; but such a march I never saw, even in the worst of times afterwards. We were novices in the business, and not yet weather-proof. Had it not been that the town was so near, we would have occupied three or four miles of a line of road, we were so straggled. The ground was of a clayey nature, and, with the rain that fell, it had become like bird-lime. Our feet stuck fast at every step, and our shoes were actually torn off, and many of them were left lying in the clay. Some were walking barefoot; others in their stockings, without shoes; and more had one shoe on, and another carrying in their hand. We were a set of drenched and miserable looking creatures, and the officers were in as bad a plight as ourselves.

At last we reached the town and got into houses; but the village was too small, and we were crowded in such a way that we had scarcely room to sit down. In the course of the day, however, arrangements were made; and some of the regiments sent to other villages, so that we were better accommodated.

During the time we were in the Peninsula, the troops suffered much from exposure to rain, and nothing could render a soldier so uncomfortable as having wet clothes about him; nor, I believe, hurt his health more, when first exposed to it. I have often wondered that no means were taken to prevent this. Many of the officers had oil-skin cloaks that completely covered them. Some such thing for the men, would have been neither expensive nor heavy to carry, and would have been the means of saving many lives. I am led to remark, at the same time, that laced boots would have been much superior to shoes in travelling bad roads; or, if shoes were used, some better contrivance than the common gaiter strap might substituted, which would prevent them

from being torn off the feet. Much more attention ought also to be paid to the quality of the shoes themselves; for, in general, they are of the very worst kind; and it was no uncommon thing for our store shoes to be in tatters before we had worn them a week.

After a stay of a few days here, we removed to Cadaciera in the same line of position, which extended from the Tagus to the sea. We had not long taken up our quarters in the village, where our whole brigade was, when a peasant entered it, driving a flock of sheep before him. In a moment, a race was made amongst them by some of the soldiers. Others, stimulated by their example, followed; and, in a few minutes, officers and men promiscuously could be seen scrambling for the mutton. Dennis joined the throng, and had seized one of them, at the same moment that an officer of the Irish regiment in the brigade made a grasp at it. "Give me that sheep, sir," said the officer in an authoritative tone. "Arrah, be aisy, honey," said Dennis. "Kill a Hessian for yourself, if you

plase."* The officer relinquished his claim, and pursued another. The poor Portuguese shepherd stood like a statue, not knowing well what to do. At last, when he found himself relieved from all his charge, he went away, lamenting and muttering curses on the "*ladrones Englese*," to make his complaint to the general.

Soon after, a wine store was found out, and, as plundering was the order of the day, the contents of it were soon lessened. This depredation was discovered by the men becoming intoxicated. The most severe investigation and search took place, and those with whom any of the stolen property was found were confined, tried by a court martial, and flogged; but it was not the most guilty that suffered.

While we remained on this position, we were obliged to be under arms two hours before day-light, and remain until clear day; and, for a few days after, these

* A common expression amongst Irishmen. I asked Dennis what it meant. He said that, during the rebellion, a number of Hessian soldiers had been landed in Ireland, and an "United Man," having shot one of them, was busy plundering him, when one of his comrades came and asked share. "Kill a Hessian for yourself, my gay fellow, was the reply."

two hours were pretty well occupied by punishment.

I cannot adduce any reasonable excuse for this wanton breach of honesty; for we were regularly supplied with rations at the time; but I imagine that most of the men were led into it by the example set by others, without taking time to think anything about the impropriety of the action. The soldier could scarcely think that there was any harm in the deed which his officers joined in. I have often smiled with contempt, when I have heard officers, who were secured by their commission from corporal punishment, expressing their opinion that it was the only means to keep the *blackguard rascals* they had command of in order; when, by their own conduct, or by participating in what was stolen, they were worse than the men they blamed. Yes, I have seen an officer quietly eat what one of his men was flogged for procuring, without making any effort to save him. It was strange, how partially the faults of officers were looked over, when the poor devils, who had the misfortune to be private

soldiers, were made scape-goats for the sins of the whole. No excuse, certainly, can be alleged for a depredation of the kind now related; but I am very certain that flogging is neither a good preventative nor a remedy.

I never knew a bad man amended by it; and I have known many a good man, who had committed some trifling crime, and was punished for it, lose all respect for himself, and in a sort of desperation, considering that he was already degraded as far as he could be, plunge recklessly into crime.

Let me ask one simple question at the advocates for corporal punishment—Would they recomend it to be practised on officers? Why not? Do they think that the one is not stimulated by the same feelings and passions as the other? Do they say that the officer, from his better education and habits, does not require it? This, I know, in most cases will not hold good; for, while men can get into the service as officers, either by interest or purchase, without any preparatory education, it will be found that

they, in many cases, are even more ignorant than the men they command; but, suppose for a moment that they were so, would this not prove clearly, what I have before advanced—that the only plan to make men good soldiers, is to induce them to cultivate their minds, and give them a character to uphold. Surely, if the officer's education and habits makes corporal punishment unnecessary, it ought to have the same effect on men, made of the same materials; but it is a melancholy fact that, in the British army, there does not exist any sufficient incentive to make one private soldier distinguish himself more than another.—The man who is hardened in crime, and he who inadvertently may commit one, are generally treated in the same manner.

I have known a man, who had maintained an unimpeachable character in the regiment he belonged to for twelve years, receive five hundred lashes for the first crime he had been found guilty of, viz. eating part of his dinner while on sentry. Terror seems to be the only engine of rule in the army; but I am fully per-

suaded in my own mind that, if a more rational method was taken, the character of the soldier in quarters would be as exemplary as in the field.

All the well-behaved men in a regiment cannot be made non-commissioned officers; but many distinguishing rewards or honours could be conferred in a gratifying manner on the soldier, whose superior moral conduct or improvement in his education, deserved them. This would be attended with the most happy results.

I hope these remarks will not be considered ill placed or injudicious; they are the result of long experience.

To go on with my relation:—When settled in a place for any time, the brigade assembled on Sundays for divine service. We were always in full marching order on these occasions; and not uncommonly had a field-day after it. If a person was to judge from the hitching of knapsacks, and wry faces that were making, during this ceremony, they would have thought the soldiers would rather have dispensed with it; but, I dare say, the anticipation of the drill that was to follow, prevented

them from feeling much benefit from their devotions.

The first Sunday after the outrage already related, when the chaplain left his station, General Picton took his place not to *pray* but to give us a *sermon.*

This was the first time he had addressed us. I felt anxious to examine the features of a man who had been so much the public talk on account of his reputed cruelty at Trinidad. I could not deny that I felt a prejudice against him, and his countenance did not do it away; for it had a stern and gloomy expression, which added to a very dark complexion, made it no way prepossessing; but, when he opened his mouth, and began to pour forth a torrent of abuse on us for our conduct, and his dark eye flashed with indignation, as he recapitulated our errors, "hope withering fled, and mercy sighed farewell." He wound up the particular part of his speech addressed to us with—"*You are a disgrace to your moral country, Scotland!*" That had more weight than all his speech. It sunk deep in our hearts. To separate a Scotchman from

his country—to tell him he was unworthy of it—is next to taking away his life.

But General Picton was not the character which we, by prejudice, were led to think him. Convinced of the baneful effects of allowing his men to plunder, he set his face sternly against it, but in other respects he was indulgent; and, although no man could blame with more severity when occasion required, he was no niggard of his praise when it was deserved. Nothing could surpass his calm intrepidity and bravery in danger; and his presence in battle had the effect of a talisman, so much had his skill and valour gained the confidence of the men under his command. Few men had more prejudice to struggle with, in a public capacity, and long was the sun of his fame obscured by envious and lowering clouds. It at last burst forth in all its splendour; but he was scarcely warmed by its genial rays, when he fell in the field of battle, verifying the words of the poet, "that the paths of glory lead but to the grave."

CHAPTER XV.

ALCOENTRE—GENERAL—ANECDOTES—OUR ADVANCED POSTS ATTACKED—THE FRENCH DRIVEN BACK—REVIEWED BY LORD WELLINGTON—ADVANCE—RIO MAYOR—ALCANEYDE—PORTO DE MOS—CRUELTY OF THE FRENCH—LERIA—POMBAL—LEAVE THE MAIN ROAD TO TURN THE LEFT FLANK OF THE FRENCH.

From Torres Vedras, we removed to Alcoentre, a small village some miles in rear of Rio Mayor; and we were kept pretty busy while in it, strengthening our position, making batteries, breast works, abattis, &c.

The general of the brigade was quartered in the same village; and, as he had or seemed to have a great antipathy to every thing Scotch, our regiment of course was included, and he found means to annoy us a good deal. Perhaps, he believed, with many people in England, that the Scotch were untutored savages,

who run wild about their native hills, eating raw oats like horses, with nothing but a kilt to cover their nakedness, and that they had no right to receive any other treatment, when they entered the army, than what is usually given to any wild animal when caged. "Rousing up with a long pole" seemed to be his hobby. When exercising in the field, our regiment could do nothing right. When our guard turned out to salute him, they were either too late, or they did not present arms properly; and he would order the sergeant to drill them for an hour; and, while he stood bye, he would ease his stomach of the load of Billingsgate, which he had brought ready prepared for the occasion. "D——d Scotch—brutes—savages—dirty—stupid—barbarous," &c.

I have often been led to think that he studied expletive on purpose. He pretended he could not understand a word that any of us said—that we spoke Gælic, and his aid-de-camp was called to interpret, although he had no right to understand what was said more than himself; for, I believe, he also was an Englishman.

As a sample—he once took a fancy to the wooden cases which the Portuguese use instead of stirrup irons, and ordered his Scotch servant to get a pair for him; for, although he disliked the Scotch, he employed them as his servants. The man procured them; but they were not fellows. "Well, sir," said the general, "have you got those things?" Yes, sir, but they are no marrows." "Marrows! marrows! what's that? what's that?" and, calling his aid-de-camp, he asked him what "the Scotch savage" said. "He means, sir, that they are not fellows." "Poh! poh! you surely do not pretend to understand what is no language." "That is his meaning in his own language, sir." "Nonsense, sir, you are as bad as he; go and read your dictionary."

He was very strict in duty affairs, particularly in details, which perhaps another general would not have troubled his head about. He was very fond of surprising the sentinels at the outposts, by taking circuitous routes, and keeping under cover of the bushes. On one occasion, however, he met his match, if the story

reported was true: but, as I only had it from report, I will not pledge myself for its truth.

One of the men on picquet was planted as outpost sentry on the road leading to Rio Mayor. "Now, George," said the corporal to him, as he was leaving him, "mind that the general is out in front, keep a good look out, or he may surprise you, and you know the consequence. Be sure you challenge in time." "Leave that to me," said Geordie. A short time after (it was dusk when he was posted) he heard some one coming up the road very cautiously, as if they wished to avoid observation. At last, when about to turn the road, the individual who was on horseback clapped spurs to his horse, apparently for the purpose of passing him before he could challenge. There was no time to lose, and many a poor fellow might have been so confused at being taken unaware, that he would have neglected to challenge before the person was on him. Not so with Geordie. The moment he saw him quicken his pace, he challenged. The challenge was either

not heard or purposely unheeded. Another challenge was given, the General continued his gallop without answering. "You'll no tak me in that way, my gentleman," said Geordie; and, as he gave the third and last challenge, he came to the present, and made a bullet whiz past the General's ear. The horse was drawn in immediately. "What do you mean, to shoot your general, you rascal?" "I dinna ken wha folk are in the dark; but, whether you're a General or no, my orders are to fire at ony body that attempts to pass me without answering when I challenge. It's the General's orders; and, I ken what I would get if I didna obey them." "Well, sir, I am your General; and I wish to pass into the town." "I'm no sure about ye—ye may be some French spy for onything I ken; and ye maun just stay whar ye are till the sergeant o' the picquet comes; he'll no be lang now, for the report o' my piece would alarm them." At that moment the picquet arrived, and the General was allowed to proceed; but, from that time, he did not trouble the outpost sentries so much.