

ADVERTISEMENT.

The following Narrative contains, it is believed, the only connected and authentic account, which has yet been given, of the expedition directed against Washington and New Orleans, towards the close of the late American war. It has been compiled, not from memory alone, but from a journal kept by the author whilst engaged in the enterprise; and as the adventures of each were faithfully noted down as they occurred, and such remarks made upon passing events as suggested themselves to his mind at the moment, the public may rely with confidence upon general correctness of the details. The issues of the expedition were not, indeed, of the most gratifying nature, but it is hoped that a plain relation of the proceedings of those to whom it was intrusted, will not, on that account, prove uninteresting; whilst nothing can be more evident than that the portion of our history which it embraces ought not to be overlooked because it is little conducive to the encouragement of national vanity. It was chiefly, indeed, upon this account, as well as with a view to redeem from an oblivion which they hardly merit, the actions and sufferings of a few brave men, that the Narrative now submitted to the public was written.

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THE BRITISH ARMY

AT

WASHINGTON AND NEW ORLEANS.

CHAPTER I.

A REVOLUTION must occur in the condition and sentiments of mankind more decided than we have any reason to expect that the lapse of ages will produce, before the mighty events which distinguished the spring of 1814 shall be spoken of in other terms than those of unqualified admiration. It was then that Europe, which during so many years had groaned beneath the miseries of war, found herself at once, and to her remotest recesses, blessed with the prospect of a sure and permanent peace. Princes, who had dwelt in exile till the very hope of restoration to power began to depart from them, beheld themselves unexpectedly replaced on the thrones of their ancestors; dynasties, which the will of one man had erected, disappeared with the same abruptness with which they had arisen; and the influence of changes which a quarter of a century of rapine and conquest had produced in the arrangements of general society, ceased, as if by magic, to be felt, or at least to be acknowledged. It seemed, indeed, as if all which had been passing during the last twenty or thirty years, had passed not in reality, but in a dream; so perfectly unlooked for were the issues of a struggle, to which, whatever light we may regard it, the history of the whole world presents no parallel.

At the period above alluded to, it was the writer's fortune to form one of a body of persons in whom the unexpected cessation of hostilities may be supposed to have excited sensations more powerful and more mixed than those to which the common occurrences of life are accustomed to give birth. He was then attached to that portion of the Peninsular army to which the siege of Bayonne had been intrusted; and on the 28th of April beheld, in common with his comrades, the tri-coloured flag, which, for upwards of two months, had waved defiance from the battlements, give place to the ancient drapau blanc of the Bourbons. That such a spectacle could be regarded by any British soldier without stirring up in him strong feelings of national pride and exultation, is not to be imagined. I believe, indeed, that there was not a man in our ranks, however humble his

station, to whose bosom these feelings were a stranger. But the excitation of the moment having passed away, other and no less powerful feelings succeeded; and they were painful, or the reverse, according as they ran in one or other of the channels into which the situations and prospects of individuals not unnaturally guided them. By such as had been long absent from their homes, the idea of enjoying once more the society of friends and relatives, was hailed with a degree of delight too engrossing to afford room for the occurrence of any other anticipations; to those who had either no homes to look to, or had quitted them only a short time ago, the thoughts of revisiting England came mixed with other thoughts, little gratifying, because at variance with all their dreams of advancement and renown. For my own part I candidly confess, that though I had just cause to look forward to a return to the bosom of my family with as much satisfaction as most men, the restoration of peace excited in me sensations of a very equivocal nature. At the age of eighteen, and still enthusiastically attached to my profession, neither the prospect of a reduction to half-pay, nor the expectation of a long continuance in a subaltern situation, were to me productive of any pleasurable emotions; and hence, though I entered heartily into all the arrangements by which those about me strove to evince their gratification at the glorious termination of the war, it must be acknowledged that I did so, without experiencing much of the satisfaction with the semblance of which my outward behaviour might be marked.

EXPECTED EMBARKATION FOR AMERICA.

Such being my own feelings, and the feelings of the great majority of those immediately around me, it was but natural that we should turn our views to the only remaining quarter of the globe in which the flame of war still continued to burn. Though at peace with France, England, we remembered; was not yet at peace with the United States; and reasoning, not as statesmen but as soldiers, we concluded that she was not now likely to make peace with that nation till she should be able to do so upon her own terms. Having such an army on foot, what line of policy could appear so natural or so judicious as that she should employ, if not the whole, at all events a large proportion of it, in chastising an enemy, than whom

none had ever proved more vindictive or more ungenerous? Our view of the matter accordingly was, that some fifteen or twenty thousand men would be forthwith embarked on board of ship and transported to the other side of the Atlantic; that the war would there be carried on with a vigour conformable to the dignity and resources of the country which waged it; and that no mention of peace would be made till our general should be in a situation to dictate its conditions in the enemy's capital.

Whether any design of the kind was ever seriously entertained, or whether men merely asserted as a truth what they earnestly desired to be such, I know not; but the white flag had hardly been hoisted on the citadel of Bayonne, when a rumour became prevalent that an extensive encampment of troops, destined for the American war, was actually forming in the vicinity of Bordeaux. A variety of causes led me to anticipate that the corps to which I was attached would certainly be employed upon that service. In the progress of the war which had been just brought to a conclusion, we had not suffered so severely as many other corps; and though not excelling in numbers, it is but justice to affirm that a more effective or better organized battalion could not be found in the whole army. We were all, moreover, from our commanding officer down to the youngest ensign, anxious to gather a few more laurels, even in America; and we had good reason to believe that those in power were not indisposed to gratify our inclinations. Under these circumstances we clung with fondness to the hope that our martial career had not yet come to a close; and employed the space which intervened between the eventful 28th of April and the 8th of the following month, chiefly in forming guesses as to the point of attack towards which it was likely that we should be turned.

ENCAMPMENT NEAR PASSAGES.

Though there was peace between the French and British nations, the form of hostilities was so far kept up between the garrison of Bayonne and the army encamped around it, that it was only by an especial treaty that the former were allowed to send out parties for the purpose of collecting forage and provisions from the adjacent country. The foraging parties, however, being permitted to proceed in any direction most convenient to themselves, the supplies of corn

and grass, which had heretofore proved barely sufficient for our own horses and cattle, soon began to fail, and it was found necessary to move more than one brigade to a distance from the city. Among others, the brigade of which my regiment formed a part, received orders on the 7th of May to fall back on the road towards Passages. These orders we obeyed on the following morning; and after an agreeable march of fifteen or sixteen miles, pitched our tents in a thick wood, about half-way between the village of Bedart and the town of St. Jean de Luz. In this position we remained for nearly a week, our expectations of employment on the other side of the Atlantic becoming daily less and less sanguine, till at length all doubts on the subject were put an end to by the sudden arrival of a dispatch, which commanded us to set out with as little delay as possible towards Bordeaux.

It was on the evening of the 14th that the route was received, and on the following morning, at daybreak, we commenced our march. The country through which we moved had nothing in it, unconnected with past events, calculated in any extraordinary degree to attract attention. Behind us, indeed, rose the Pyrenees in all their grandeur, forming, on that side, a noble boundary to the prospect; and on our left was the sea, a boundary different it is true in kind, though certainly not less magnificent. But, excepting at these two extremities, there was nothing in the landscape on which the eye loved particularly to rest, because the country, though pretty enough, has none of that exquisite richness and luxuriance which we had been led to expect as characteristic of the South of France. The houses, too, being all in a ruinous and dilapidated condition, reminded us more forcibly of the scenes of violence and outrage which had been lately acted among them, than of those ideas of rural contentment and innocence which various tales and melodramas had taught us to associate in our own minds with thoughts of the land of the vine.

MARCH TOWARDS BORDEAUX

Regarded, however, in connexion with past events, the scene was indeed most interesting; though to a stranger fresh from England—a man, we will suppose, of retired and peaceful habits, I can readily imagine that it would have been productive of much pain; for on

each side of the road, in whatever direction we cast our eyes, and as far as the powers of vision extended, we beheld cottages unroofed and in ruins, chateaux stripped of their doors and windows, gardens laid waste, the walls demolished, and the fruit-trees cut down; whole plantations levelled, and vineyards trodden under foot. Here and there, likewise, a redoubt or breastwork presented itself; whilst caps, broken firelocks, pieces of clothing, and accoutrements scattered about in profusion, marked the spots where the strife had been most determined, and where many a fine fellow had met his fate. Our journey lay over a field of battle, through the entire extent of which the houses were not only thoroughly gutted (to use a vulgar but most expressive phrase), but for the most part were riddled with cannon-shot. Round some of the largest, indeed, there was not a wall nor a tree which did not present evident proofs of its having been converted into a temporary place of defence, whilst the deep ruts in what had once been lawns and flower-gardens, showed that all their beauty had not protected them from being destroyed by the rude passage of heavy artillery.

Immediately beyond the village of Bedart such spectacles were particularly frequent. It was here, it may be remembered, that in the preceding month of December there had been fighting for four successive days; and the number of little hillocks now within our view; from under most of which legs and arms were beginning to show themselves, as well as the other objects which I have attempted to describe, sufficiently attested the obstinacy with which that fighting had been maintained.

In the bosom of a man of peace it is very conceivable that all this would have excited feelings exceedingly painful; in ours, such feelings were overborne by others of a very different nature. If we gazed with peculiar interest upon one hovel more than upon another, it was because some of us had there maintained ourselves; if we endeavoured to count the number of shot-holes in any wall, or the breaks in any hedge, it was because we had stood behind it when "the iron hail" fell thick and fast around us. Our thoughts, in short, had more of exultation in them than of sorrow; for though now and then, when the name of a fallen comrade was mentioned, it was accompanied with a "poor fellow" the conversation soon returned again to the exploits and hair-breadth escapes of the survivors. On

the whole, therefore, our march was one of deep interest and high excitement, feelings which did not entirely evaporate when we halted, about two hours after noon, at the village of Anglet.

MARCH TOWARDS BORDEAUX – ANGLLET

We found this village in the condition in which it was to be expected that a place of so much importance during the progress of the late siege would be found, in other words, completely metamorphosed into a chain of petty posts. Being distant from the outworks of Bayonne not more than a mile and a half, and standing upon the great road by which all the supplies for the left of the British army were brought up, no means, as may be supposed, had been neglected, which art or nature could supply, towards rendering it as secure against a sudden excursion of the garrison as might be. About one hundred yards in front of it felled trees were laid across the road, with their branches turned towards the town, forming what soldiers, in the language of their profession, term an abatis. Forty or fifty yards in rear of this a ditch was dug, and a breastwork thrown up, from behind which a party might do great execution upon any body of men struggling to force their way over that impediment. On each side of the highway again, where the ground rises into little eminences, redoubts and batteries were erected, so as to command the whole with a heavy flanking fire; while every house and hovel lying at all within the line of expected operations was loop-holed, and otherwise put in a posture of defence. But upon the fortification of the church a more than ordinary degree of care seemed to have been bestowed. As it stood upon a little eminence in the middle of the hamlet, it was no hard matter to convert it into a tolerably regular fortress, which might serve the double purpose of a magazine for warlike stores and a post of defence against the enemy. With this view the churchyard was surrounded by a row of stout palings, called in military phraseology stockades, from certain openings in which the muzzles of half a dozen pieces of light artillery protruded. The walls of the edifice itself were, moreover, strengthened by an embankment of earth to the height of perhaps four or five feet from the ground, above which narrow openings were made, in order to give to its garrison an opportunity of levelling their muskets; while on the top of the tower a small

howitzer was mounted, from which either shot or shell could be thrown with effect into any of the lanes or passes near. It is probably needless to add that the interior arrangements of this house of God had undergone a change as striking as that which affected its exterior. Barrels of gunpowder, with piles of balls of all sizes and dimensions, now occupied the spaces where worshippers had often crowded; and the very altar was heaped up with sponges, wadding, and other implements necessary in case of an attack.

I have been thus minute in my description of Anglet, because what has been said of it will apply more or less exactly to every village, hamlet, or cluster of cottages, within the compass of what were called the lines. It is true that neither here nor elsewhere, excepting at one particular point, and that on the opposite side of the river, were any serious intentions entertained of broaching or storming the place; and that the sole object of these preparations was to keep the enemy within his works, and to cut him off from all communication with the surrounding country. But to effect even this end, the utmost vigilance and precaution were necessary, not only because the number of troops employed on the service was hardly adequate to discharge it, but because the garrison hemmed in was well known to be at once numerous and enterprising. The reader may accordingly judge what appearance a country presented which, to the extent of fifteen or twenty miles round, was thus treated; where every house was fortified, every road blocked up, every eminence mined with fieldworks, and every place swarming with armed men. Nor was its aspect less striking by night than by day. Gaze where he might, the eye of the spectator then rested upon some portion of one huge circle of fires, by the glare of which the white tents or rudely constructed huts of the besiegers were from time to time made visible.

While things continued thus, the condition of the peaceful inhabitant of this district could hardly fail to be one of extreme discomfort. Of these the greater number had indeed fled on the advance of the British army, leaving their houses and effects a prey to the conquerors; but there were some who, having probably no place of refuge to retire to, remained in their homes, and threw themselves upon our mercy for protection. It is not requisite that I should now inform the reader of the strict discipline which Lord Wellington

preserved in every division of his army; his first step, on entering France, had been to inform the people that against them no violence was intended; and the assurance thus given, was in no instance, at least wantonly, violated. But, however orderly the conduct of an invading force may be, their very presence must occasion a thousand inconveniences to those upon whom they are quartered; not the least distressing of which is, perhaps, the feeling of degradation which the consciousness of being in the power of armed foreigners can hardly fail to produce. Then there is the total destruction of all domestic comfort, which the occupation of a man's house by large bodies of soldiers produces; the liability to which the females, in particular, are exposed to insult from the common troopers; and the dread of vengeance from any delinquent on whom their complaints may have brought down chastisement, all these things must and do create a degree of misery, of which the inhabitants of Great Britain may thank God that they know nothing except by name. In the vicinity of Bayonne, moreover, the country people lived in daily and nightly expectation of finding themselves involved in all the horrors and dangers of a battle. Sorties were continually looked for, and however these might terminate, the non-combatants felt that they must be equally the sufferers. Nay, it was no uncommon ground of complaint among them, that even the total defeat of our forces would bring with it no relief, because, by remaining to receive us, they had disobeyed the proclamations of Marshal Soult, and were consequently liable to punishment as traitors.