

Some episodes in the life of James Goodall Elkington, an army surgeon in the Peninsula Days, together with extracts from his Journal, by Lieutenant Colonel H.P. Elkington, RAMC

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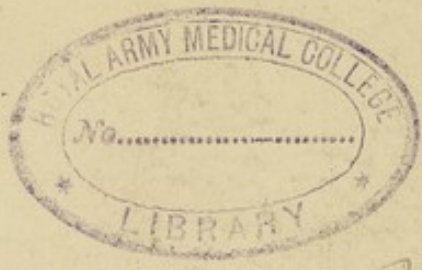
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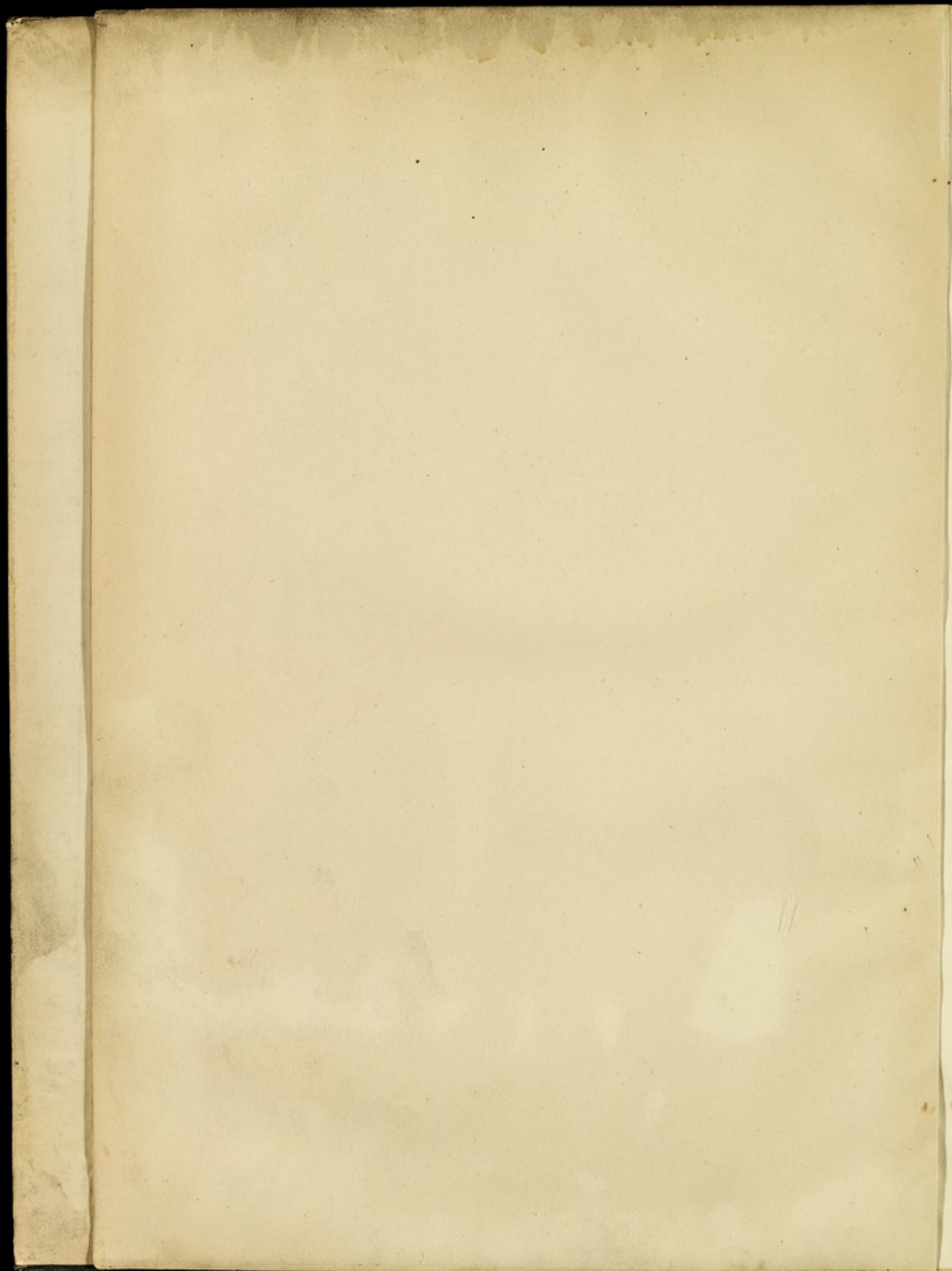
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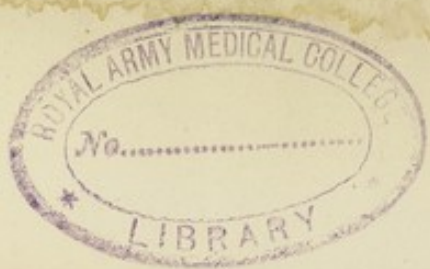
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JAMES GOODALL ELKINGTON.
Surgeon 30th Regiment.
Shortly after his return from Waterloo.

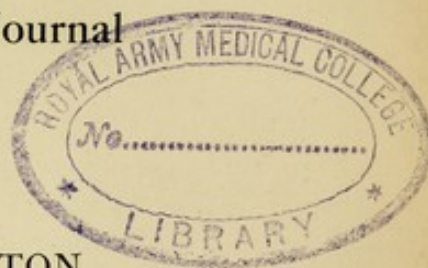
Some Episodes in the
Life of James Goodall Elkington

An Army Surgeon in the Peninsular Days,
together with Extracts from his Journal

BY

LIEUTENANT-COLONEL H. P. ELKINGTON

Royal Army Medical Corps



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1911

Some Episodes in the
Life of James Goodall Kingston
by
The Rev. Dr. James Goodall Kingston
Author of "The Rev. Dr. James Goodall Kingston"

SOME EPISODES IN THE LIFE OF JAMES GOODALL
ELKINGTON, AN ARMY SURGEON IN THE PENIN-
SULAR DAYS, TOGETHER WITH EXTRACTS FROM
HIS JOURNAL.¹

BY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL H. P. ELKINGTON.

Royal Army Medical Corps.

JAMES GOODALL ELKINGTON was born on October 2nd, 1784. After serving as an apprentice to a surgeon in Bath from 1800 to 1805, he went to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and obtained his diploma from the College of Surgeons on January 15th, 1807. He then appeared before the Medical Board in Berkeley Street, and received his warrant as hospital mate on August 8th, 1807.

His first duty in the Army was that of assistant to the apothecary at Chelsea.

On September 7th he received a sudden order to report without one moment's delay to General Beresford, through Deputy-Inspector McGrigor at Portsmouth, for foreign service. He embarked for Cork in a transport on September 19th, which he did not reach until October 27th, owing to contrary winds. On November 10th, as the expedition was countermanded, he was ordered to return to England, and left in a supply transport with ten sail of transports under convoy; he arrived at Spithead on November 20th. Here the troops found orders to return immediately to Cork, as they had been directed back to England by mistake. On November 24th he embarked on board the "Centaur" at Spithead with General Beresford and his staff; they arrived off Cove on December 4th, and started for Madeira on the 6th. He was attached to the Light Companies of the 3rd, 25th, 63rd, and 11th Regiments.

"CAPTURE OF MADEIRA.

"December 24th.—At 6 a.m. the 'Centaur' was cleared for action, and at 10 a.m., with the ships of war, passed the Brazen Head and came in sight of the town of Funchal. The situations of the different ships of war being pointed out, the 'Centaur' came to anchor with a spring on her cable at 11.30 a.m., with her broadside bearing on the Governor's

¹ This journal was compiled by him in after years from the diaries he kept while in the Field, all of which are in my possession.—(H. P. E.)

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house and the Grand Battery 350 yards distant. A flag of truce sent on shore with the terms which were to be accepted or refused in half an hour. At noon the flag returned with the acceptance of the terms, the Portuguese flag was lowered, and the English flag hoisted with the usual salutes. The 3rd and 11th Regiments landed and took possession of the Forts.

"The Medical Staff on the expedition were:—

"*Deputy-Inspector*.—W. Hogg, Esq.

"*Physician*.—G. A. Morewood, M.D.

"*Surgeon*.—Carrol (relieved by Messrs. Wooldridge and Taggart).

"*Deputy Purveyor*.—Matthew Emerson.

"*Apothecary*.—John Lewis.

"*Hospital Mates*.—J. G. Elkington, R. S. Morrison, L. W. Whitstone, H. McCreery, J. Thomas, W. Daunt.

"January, 1808.—The Nuns of the Incarnation Convent were removed to the Convent of Santa Clara to make room for a general hospital; the procession was very grand and had a singular effect, many of the females not having passed the walls for forty and fifty years before. They were mostly old, with one or two interesting young women.

"Madeira is principally celebrated for its wine, which is excellent and abundant. The effect of the new wine, if drunk to excess, is very prejudicial, and many of the soldiers died in the wine-houses. A suspicion was entertained that these men were poisoned, but the most minute *post-mortem* examination could not detect any such cause. Great determination of blood to the brain was clear in every case, and this was the cause of death.

"February 18th.—Orders arrived from England for my proceeding to the West Indies; was in daily expectation of embarking, but there was no vessel, and as often as the fleets arrived, a gale of wind came on which obliged them to proceed on their voyage.

"March 3rd.—Received orders to establish a Lock Hospital for the women of the Island at the factory; this measure proved as beneficial as it was humane, and completely answered the purpose intended. I continued in charge of it during my stay in the island.

"April 19th.—The 'Albion,' sloop of war, arrived with despatches for General Beresford, relating to the giving up of the Island to the Portuguese again.

"April 26th.—The 'Leander,' the ship in which General Miranda sailed to the Spanish Main, having arrived in distress with invalids of the 37th Regiment on board, I was directed to visit it and report on the health of the men, which I represented as unfit to proceed on their voyage to England without medical assistance; at the same time observed to Deputy-Inspector Hogg that being senior mate I should wish the charge. He kindly agreed to recommend it to General Beresford.

"April 27th.—Directed in general orders to take charge of the invalids of the 37th on their passage to England; embarked immediately.

"April 29th.—Weighed anchor and sailed. . . . The whole voyage which was very quick, but squally, was attended with a heavy swell; and the vessel, having been much strained, was obliged to be pumped every half-hour. She was as rotten as a pear; pierced for eighteen guns but having only three, the remainder having been thrown overboard in the gale which drove her to Madeira.

"May 13th.—Heavy fog. At 5.30 a.m. struck on the Mag Rock off Prawle Point, coast of Devon. Fired guns of distress; at 6.30 a.m. a shore boat came off; left the ship with the women and children, and the soldiers least able to assist themselves; conducted them to Kingsbridge by water and delivered them over to Surgeon Matthews, 3rd Regiment, in Barracks there.

"May 14th.—Left Kingsbridge for Plymouth, where I found the 'Leander,' having been got off the rock, had arrived.

"May 27th.—Having called daily on General England since my arrival and received as often orders and counter-orders, at length the General procured a convoy to the eastward and we were directed round to the Thames.

"May 31st.—Made the Isle of Wight and were run foul of by a Portuguese brig that carried away our only boat.

"June 4th.—Landed at Blackwall and reported arrival with the detachment at York Hospital."

On July 12th, 1808, he was gazetted Assistant Surgeon to the 2nd Battalion, 24th Regiment, which he joined at Guernsey. In April, 1809, the regiment embarked for the Tagus, where they disembarked on the 26th, and marched to Santarem. On May 18th they moved towards Sobura Formosa, but on arrival at Cardigos were ordered to halt; here they remained for five weeks, the headquarters of that portion of the army, under General Mackenzie, being at Corticada. On June 28th they moved onwards to Castello Branco, where the brigade was joined by that of General Donkin. Here the division was inspected by Sir Arthur Wellesley. They left on July 1st, arrived at Toralba on the 20th, and on the 22nd marched out and bivouacked in a wood near Talavera.

"1808, TALAVERA.

"July 23rd.—The army advanced at 3 a.m., supposed to attack the enemy, but at 1 o'clock returned, with the exception of our division that was in advance about a league on the Madrid road. I was directed to remain with the sick at Talavera, and establish a hospital. Went with my baggage to Talavera, but in the evening Dr. Ferguson directed Assistant Surgeon Rule, 87th Regiment, to relieve me. I joined my regiment in a wood one league in advance near the ruins of an old convent and within sight of the enemy's camp on the opposite side of the River Alberche.

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" July 24th.—The division was under arms shortly after midnight. At 3 a.m. we advanced; each man received a pint of wine. At 5 a.m. reached the Alberche, but found the enemy had retreated during the night, crossed the river and passed the French Camp, marched through Cazalegas and recrossed the river one league beyond. The Spanish army was now in advance.

" July 25th.—Halted. July 26th a continued cannonading in our front. In the evening we crossed the Alberche and took up a position in front of Cazalegas to cover the retreat of the Spanish army that had been repulsed and were falling back in the greatest possible confusion and disorder, the whole night passed in alarms, expecting the advance of the enemy every moment.

" July 27th.—The line, consisting of two divisions under General Sherbrooke, was under arms 2 a.m., in front of Cazalegas. At 9 a.m. we retreated, as the enemy were rapidly advancing, recrossed the Alberche, and took up our old position in the wood. At 2 p.m. firing commenced, and the division began its retreat towards the main body of the army that occupied the position near Talavera, and for the last hour of the retreat we were cannonaded by the enemy, but, being in line, without much loss. At 9.30 p.m., the French attacked the hill that commanded our position on the left with great force and carried it; but it was regained and the enemy driven off with great loss. An attack was also made on the Spanish line on our right; this also was repulsed.

" July 28th.—The French 8 a.m., after heavy cannonading, again attacked the hill, but were repulsed with severe loss. At 2 p.m. they attacked the whole line and endeavoured to turn our left, but at every point were defeated, and as soon as the night approached the enemy retreated.

" July 29th.—At daybreak I went to Talavera to attend the wounded, the whole town being full of them. Our hospital was established in the convent of St. Jeronimo. Captain Evans died of his wound, a gunshot fracture of the cervical vertebra. The duties of the Army medical men were now very severe.

" August 3rd.—This morning the army marched towards Oropesa. Ordered to remain at Talavera with my wounded. At noon Lieutenant-Colonel McKinnon, of the Guards (Commandant), called all the officers together, and, after telling them that he expected the French army would shortly enter the city, he directed the whole of the Assistant-Surgeons, with Staff-Surgeon Higgins, to remain in charge of such wounded as could not get away, and that every one able to march should leave the city immediately. The whole left us in the evening to shift for ourselves. I had charge of 188 men of my own regiment, with the following wounded officers: Lieutenant-Colonel Popham, Captain Collis, Lieutenants Grant, Skene, and Allen. The whole of the British hospital may be calculated at 1800. We had a certain quantity of money and some provisions (but

as the French did not come on as rapidly as Colonel McKinnon led us to suppose, we soon fell short in the latter).

"August 6th.—At 11 a.m. we observed the advance of the French cavalry. They shortly after entered the town under the command of General Beaumont. They plundered everywhere; but respected the British hospital.

"August 7th.—At 8 a.m. the advance of the infantry under Marshal Victor arrived; they pillaged the whole town and many wounded English officers. I secured my kit, horse, and mule by keeping them in the hospital.

"It was reported that we were to be sent to Madrid as fast as possible, and that the surgeons were not to be considered as prisoners of war.

"August 13th.—Marshal Mortier's Corps arrived. The Marshal visited the British hospitals and expressed himself as extremely satisfied with their cleanliness, which, he said, he wished was equalled in the French establishments of the same kind."

On August 22nd he was taken ill with "fever," which lasted till September 19th, and he notes in his journal that this fever was so prevalent and fatal that out of 500 British sick, ninety-two died in sixteen days. On October 28th, three months after the action, he left with the wounded for Madrid, being given a passport. On arrival at Madrid, on the 30th, the passports were taken away from the officers and all were confined as prisoners in two rooms in the Retiro. The party consisted of Sir William Sheridan (Guards), Staff-Surgeons Higgins and McDougle, Captains Coleman, 31st, and Collis, 24th; A. and G. Beamish, 31st; Assistant-Surgeons Rule, Herriot, Curby and himself, and, notwithstanding a written application from Sir William Sheridan, they could not obtain permission even to walk in the Retiro Garden.

"ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE.

"November 7th.—George and A. Beamish, Herriot, Curby, Rule, and myself, having procured a rope, attempted to escape, and descended from the window into the garden, but one of the sentries was alarmed, and after two hours spent in endeavouring to get out of the gardens, we fell into a picquet and were conveyed to the Guard Room, from whence we were removed to the common dungeon (George Beamish and Rule had fortunately got clear and returned to their rooms). We remained a fortnight in this place, very cold, there being six windows, iron grated, without glass, and were supplied with black bread and water only; but having money and a canteen cooking machine, we procured many comforts and passed our miserable confinement in tolerable good humour.

"November 21st.—The Spanish prisoners made at Ocaña arrived 12,000 in number, and above 300 officers not one wounded."

On November 26th he was ordered to leave Madrid with twelve English officers and 100 English soldiers, together with 200 Spanish officers and 2,000 Spanish privates. They evidently had some exhausting marches, and were all confined together, officers and men, in immense barns. This state of affairs continued until after they passed Segovia, where a new Colonel for the convoy joined, a Colonel Krutzer, of the 2nd Regiment of Nassau, who directed that the officers should have billets every night. In recounting the march, he notes in the journal:—

"Many Spanish prisoners were shot, some as a warning to deter others from attempting to escape, and all that could not march, owing to weakness or disease, were immediately shot. This plan was followed during the whole of our route to Bayonne, and I may safely say that in this manner nearly 200 were butchered in our convoy."

The convoy passed through Valladolid, Burgos, Tolosa, and reached Bayonne on December 20th, where they reported themselves and the officers were given passports and a route to Verdun, to which they travelled by coach, arriving on January 14th, 1810. While at Verdun he was treated as comfortably as a prisoner of war could expect to be.

"1810.

"The number of English officers (prisoners) was very great—nearly 600. Since the departure of General Wisson, Governor of Verdun, their situation had much improved; he had rendered it by his extortion and cruelty almost insupportable. Being called to account by the Minister of War, he shot himself. His successor was also degraded, and was followed by a Baron de Beaucherre, a mild gentleman, who 'conducted everything to the satisfaction of all parties.' Every fifth day by 10 a.m. we had to write our names in a book, this was called 'The Appel,' and every 24th of the month we were mustered by the commissary in the riding house. These two forms observed, the rest of the time was our own. (Photo of passport while at Verdun.)

"Our day was commonly spent in walking round the ramparts, or to one of the neighbouring villages, as we had the circuit of two leagues, about six English miles. The club-room also took up much of our time. Here was a good room with every newspaper, and furnished with chess and backgammon boards, a good billiard table and a card room, where there was often very great play, but no game of chance with dice was allowed: in short, the whole concern was well conducted. An excellent set of comedians made many of our evenings pass rapidly. The exchange

on England was generally much below par, but money was always to be got for good bills, and the English seemed always well supplied. By their extravagance they had doubled the price of every article and greatly enriched the town. The living was cheap and good. Thus had I conceived I was to have been only a short period here, I could not have wished to have passed my time in a better quarter; but being uncertain as to the duration of our confinement, it became every day more tiresome and irksome. We had been for some time buoyed up with the hopes of a general exchange of prisoners, Mr. Mackenzie having arrived at Morlaix for that purpose; but this, as all other negotiations with the French Government, fell through.



PHOTOGRAPH OF PASS ISSUED TO SURGEON J. GOODALL ELKINGTON
 WHILE A PRISONER OF WAR AT VERDUN.

"The surgeons left with the wounded at Talavera had sent one memorial to the Minister of War (before my arrival), without effect. We now determined to forward a second, which I drew up as follows: 'The undersigned medical officers of His Britannic Majesty's Service, having been for the sake of humanity left in charge of the English and French wounded on the retreat of the British army from Talavera, became prisoners of war. Whilst performing their duties at Talavera they received the commendations of Marshals Mortier, Victor and

Sebastiani. They humbly request to be allowed to return to their country, throwing themselves on the known clemency of the Emperor [this last sentence created opposition, but it was my opinion that, to gain our point, it was fair to use any flattering expression]."

This memorial, fortunately, reached the Emperor shortly after his marriage with the Archduchess of Austria, and on May 13th they received passports for Morlaix. He left Verdun on May 17th, after a stay of four months; passed through Paris, where he remained a few days sight-seeing, and eventually reached Morlaix on June 3rd (*viâ* Versailles, Alençon, Mayenne, and Rennes), where he and several others hired a vessel, reached Plymouth on June 8th, and, after reporting his arrival, he was granted leave of absence. On July 8th he received an order to rejoin his regiment, but on representing that his claims for loss on exchange and for his baggage had not yet been settled he was granted further leave.

"August 14.—Received orders, or rather entreaties, from the Medical Board to repair immediately to Portsmouth to embark for Lisbon, a general action being shortly expected.

"August 15th.—Arrived at Portsmouth, reported myself to Staff-Surgeon Fraser, in the absence of Dr. McGrigor, and applied for a passage to Lisbon—answer, no vessel ready!

"August 24th.—Received orders to embark on board the *Rialta* Transport, letter D., a dirty old collier brig just taken up, and on board which thirty-three officers were placed, with a few soldiers to act as servants. Our berths were between decks; the prospect of a pleasant voyage was therefore small.

"September 16th.—Landed at Lisbon."

On September 25th he left Lisbon for Coimbra, but on arrival at Pombal he met and dressed many wounded, and heard of the retreat of the army after the battle of Busaco, and that his regiment, the 24th, was retiring to Leiria, where he joined them.

"RETREAT FROM BUSACO.

"October 2nd.—I went to the quarters I had occupied a few days before on my way up, but it exhibited a serious change; the owner of the house, a priest, had fled, the apartments were filled with stragglers, English, Portuguese soldiers, and muleteers; most of the furniture taken away or broken up. . . . During the day's march the whole road was covered with the retreating army, baggage, ammunition, and stores of all kinds; added to which the inhabitants with their property, some in cars, others carrying their children and property; nuns, priests, aged, sick, and infirm—in short, the whole population—in full flight; terror in every countenance—a sight more distressing has been but seldom witnessed,

On the road articles of furniture and clothing, that the weary fugitives could carry no further, were lying in all directions. Fortunately the weather was fine and remained so till we nearly reached 'The Lines' of Torres Vedras, when it became very wet and windy, and much embarrassed our movements, in a country where the roads are at all times bad.

"October 5th.—The division bivouacked near Carvallos. Here I was nearly taken prisoner. The regiment fell in, as usual, an hour before daybreak, and whilst the men were under arms I lay down with the bridle of my horse round my arm and fell asleep. The troops marched off without the least noise, the enemy being on this side of Leiria. I slept for some time, when the movement of my horse awoke me and I found myself alone. I immediately mounted, and proceeded as fast as possible to the rear, keeping the high road in sight, and as soon as I reached a commanding spot, having a good glass, I minutely examined the high road, and at a distance discovered the rear guard of the cavalry of our army retiring. I made the best of my way and was soon in safety. Another half-hour's sleep would have made an awkward change in my situation.

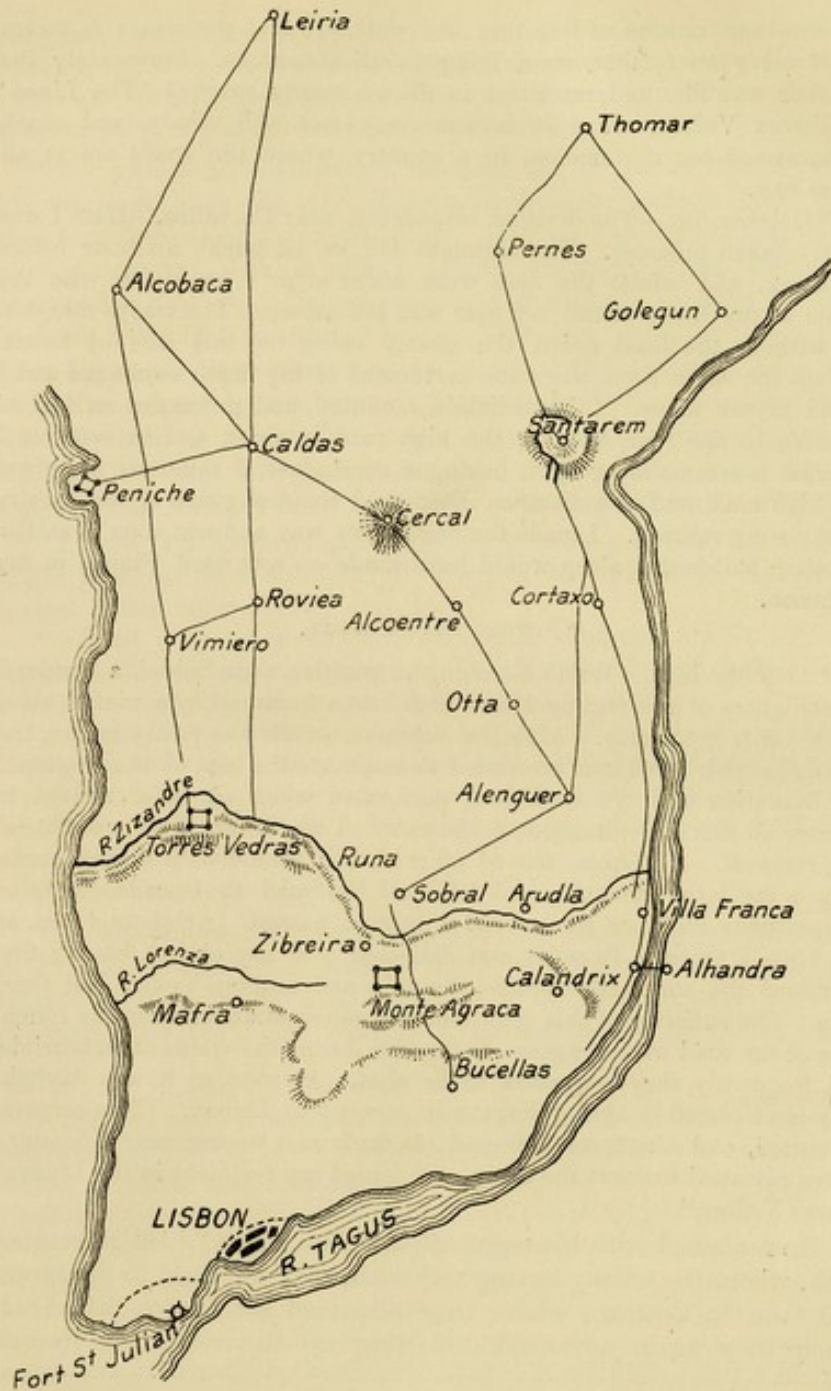
" ACTION NEAR SOBRAL.

"October 14th.—While marching to position near Sobral, a Corporal Buckingham of the regiment had both knees fractured by a cannon shot, a few yards in my rear. After the skirmish, which was pretty severe, the enemy retired. We now proceeded to amputate the legs of the corporal; the operation had not been long performed when an order arrived to remove all sick and wounded to the rear. I was directed to superintend his removal. At 8 p.m. moved off with the wounded in bullock carts, passed the large Redoubt, and followed the road to Bucellas; a more tempestuous night or worse road I seldom passed. At about 4 a.m. on the 15th I reached Bucellas and delivered over my charge, having first redressed the corporal's stumps, the rain and motion having laid them bare. The suffering of this man and the other wounded from the roughness of the road was very great, their cries during the whole night horrible, and frequently they requested to be shot. As soon as it was daylight they were placed in spring wagons to proceed to Lisbon. (This corporal recovered, and afterwards followed his trade as a weaver near Leicester.) I now returned towards the army, and joined my regiment in the Lines of Torres Vedras."

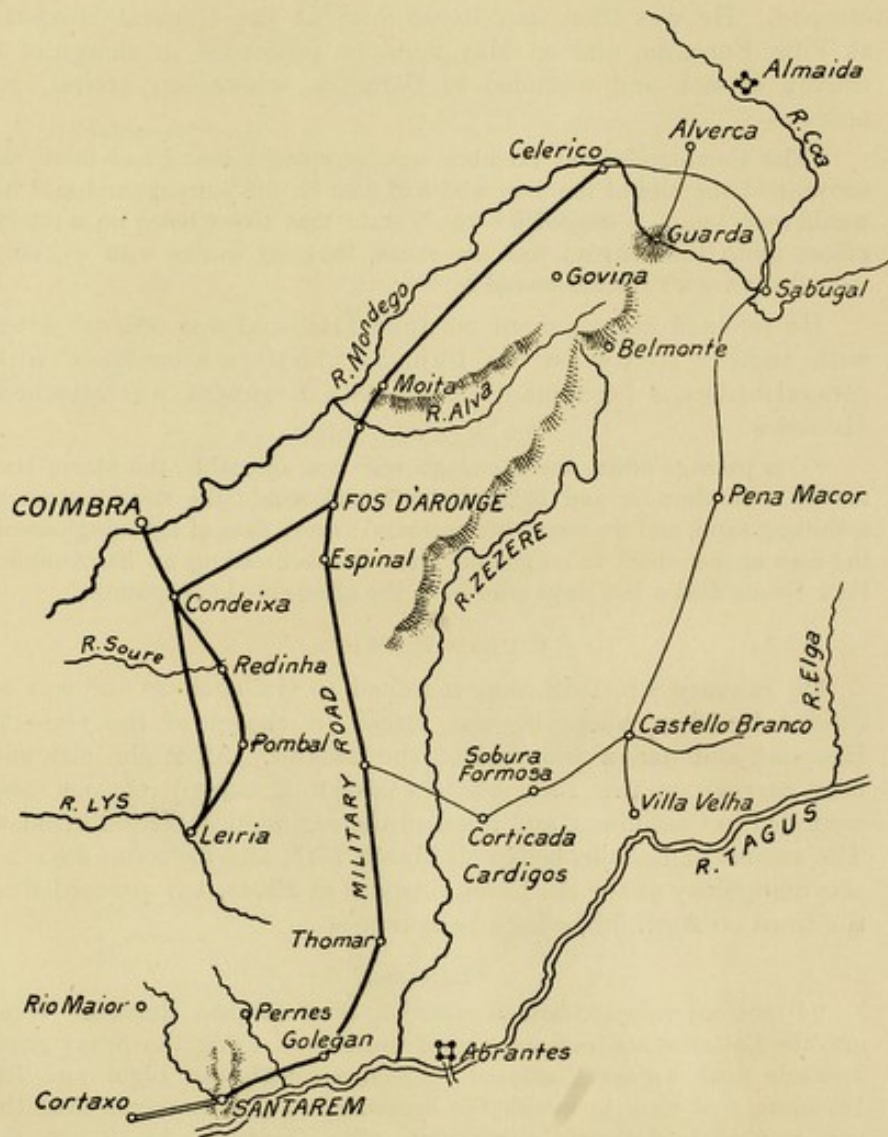
He remained with his regiment in "The Lines"¹ till November 16th, when, the enemy having retreated, they marched to Santarem and then to Cortaxo, where they remained till March 6th, 1811, when they again advanced, following up the retreating French

¹Vide Sketch of Lines.

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THE LINES OF TORRES VEDRAS, covering Lisbon, reached from near Torres Vedras to Alhandra on the Tagus (29 miles in extent).



ROUGH TRACING OF ROUTE FOLLOWED BY THE BRITISH ARMY AFTER THE FRENCH RETREATED FROM BEFORE THE "LINES OF TORRES VEDRAS."

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army through Espinal and Alverca towards Almeida, where they arrived on April 9th,¹ and remained till May 11th, when the enemy escaped. He was then sent to do duty at the General Hospital at Villa Formosa, and on May 22nd he proceeded in charge of a convoy of sick and wounded to Coimbra, where, on arrival, he notes:—

“The Commandant at Coimbra was very angry that I had taken no account of the kits of the men who had died on the journey, and said he would report me. I begged he would state that there being no military officer (with the convoy) was the cause, that my duties with so many wounded were all I could attend to.”

He rejoined his regiment on June 11th, and was ordered down with another convoy on the 13th, to which, in accordance with general orders, a Lieutenant Deane, 38th Regiment, was attached. He notes:—

“Our passage down the Mondego was not agreeable, the storm was terrific with thunder and lightning, rain and wind; the river bottom is a shifting sand, and we were often aground; every flash of lightning caused the man at the wheel to let go and cross himself, calling on St. Antonio. Poor Deane died a few days after from the effects of this exposure.”

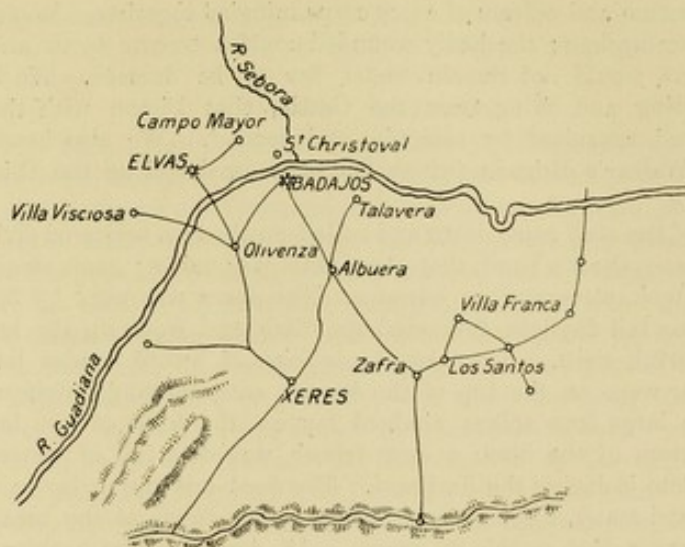
CIUDAD RODRIGO.

On January 8th, 1812, they marched to Gallegos on the way to Ciudad Rodrigo, where he was placed in charge of the General Hospital, and had a fine view of the assault. After the city had been carried on the 19th he took down a convoy of sick and wounded to Castinhera, and rejoined the regiment at Villa Formosa. The assault at Badajos began on March 25th, and for some days he was doing duty at the St. Clara Hospital at Elvas, but proceeded to the front on April 5th, where he notes:—

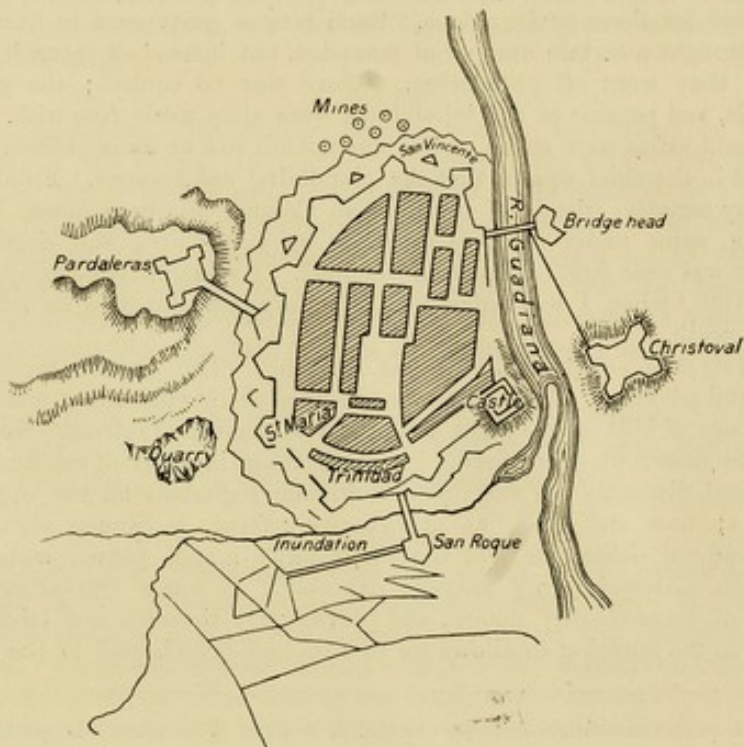
“BADAJOS.

“I received orders to attach myself to Staff-Surgeon Burnall. Went into the Batteries and saw some good practice in firing the heavy guns. Towards dusk we were ordered to advance with the Light and 4th Divisions, that were to attack the breaches and post ourselves near the part marked in Colonel Jones's map, ‘The Quarry.’ At 10 p.m. the assault began. The two divisions that marched up with us in such fine order were repulsed. The firing was tremendous, many of the musket shots from the walls passed us, and grape from Fort Pardaleras came rattling on the ground near. The two divisions retreated, completely

¹ *Vide Route.*



ENVIRONS OF BADAJOS



SIEGE OF BADAJOS

broken, the men and officers of every corps mingled together. As medical men we were useless; the badly wounded could not come to us and the slightly hurt would not remain under fire to be dressed. We heard great shouting and firing from the Castle, that Picton with the 3rd Division had assaulted by escalade, and carried. We also heard the bugles of Walker's Brigade (which had also escalated on the Olivenza side).

"One of the staff came down and called on the two scattered divisions to reform and show a front, that the Castle was taken; some degree of formation took place and an advance. The town was ours by 5 a.m., and, it being full daylight, I entered the ditch and went up the breach. A most awful sight. The *chevaux-de-frise* of sword blades let into solid timber were on the top of the breach still standing; platforms of wood with large iron spikes chained lay on the front of the breach. In the bottom of the ditch a deep trench was dug, full of water, and many fell into it during the darkness. The dead and dying lay in every direction, and many, I think, were buried by the *débris* of the breach as they lay at its foot unable to move. All day we were employed in removing the wounded. I was ordered to do duty at the Convent of St. André. Many wounded were brought in immediately, but the whole were not for three or four days. Each fatigue party sent in from the front brought a certain number of wounded, but instead of returning for others they went off plundering. There was no control; the goods, chattels, and persons of the inhabitants were alike made free with. My horse and valise were stolen, and it was not till two or three gallows were erected in the chief square that the plundering was stopped. From fifty to sixty females, friends of the Spanish Colonel in whose house I was staying, came under my protection. Our loss during the siege and assault was near 5,000 killed and wounded. I remained in Badajos till April 18th,¹ when I was ordered to rejoin my regiment, now on its way to the north.

"July 20th.—'Canizal.' A fine morning. The division formed in lines and advanced. Soon after we perceived the French Army marching on a ridge of hills on our right, and orders were given to retreat. Nothing could be finer; we were moving in parallel lines in sight of one another, we could distinctly see the different French regiments on the opposite heights; now and then, as opportunity offered, a cannon shot was delivered on either side, but the whole day's march passed without a collision, although every moment expected. It was a regular steeple-chase or cross-country march, and proved very tiresome and laborious. Early in the morning an allowance of rum had been issued to the men,

¹ In connection with this, see App. No. 2 from Wellington's Dispatches *re* Shortage of Officers.

and there being no water near they drank it raw ; the consequence was most were half drunk. We marched in columns of brigades and halted at Val Verde.

“ 1812. SALAMANCA.

“ July 21st.—Marched off at 3 a.m. through Morisco, forded the River Tormes at St. Marta, and, after marching a short distance, we bivouacked. Soon after halting a most tremendous storm of thunder, rain, and lightning took place ; many of the cavalry and artillery horses of both armies broke loose. I believe I was nearly the only one that had my baggage so well up that I was able to throw some sheeting across a line like a gipsies' tent, and so obtained some shelter. The storm ceased, and never did a more glorious morn usher in a more glorious day than July 22nd. Before daylight both armies were in position ; the whole morning was spent in movements. At 4 p.m. the action commenced, and before sunset every Frenchman was in full retreat. Our division was on the extreme left of our army and was not engaged, so I and my brother assistant, Burroughs, had a very fine view of the action. From our commanding situation we saw distinctly the attack of Pack and his repulse, and the beautiful advance of our lines of attack with their artillery at intervals. But we nearly paid dear for our curiosity, being covered by the dirt thrown up by some round shot fired at us. Our division commenced the pursuit of the retreating army.

“ MADRID.

“ August 14th.—The division entered Madrid, and encamped in the gardens of the Palace ‘El Campo.’ I entered the City. The French garrison, 2,000 picked men, retreated from ‘The Retiro’ to Fort La China, but, preparations being made to cannonade them with hot shot, they surrendered as prisoners of war. I saw them march out, and among them the savage old colonel and adjutant, who had treated us so harshly when prisoners in the Retiro after Talavera. I visited and showed some of my brother officers the dungeon in which I had been confined.”

The army left Madrid on August 30th, marching towards Valladolid in pursuit of the enemy, and arrived near Burgos on September 18th. The siege commenced on the 19th.

“ BURGOS.

“ October 2nd.—I had been in medical charge of the regiment since Wyld's appointment to the 4th Dragoon Guards (March 2nd, 1812). The new surgeon arrived this day, my old friend and fellow-prisoner Herriot. I was now ordered to take charge of the hospital at Villa Toro for receiving the wounded during the siege, and I continued so during the whole time, a very severe duty, having no assistance (one or two young Spanish surgeons were sent to assist at the latter portion). The

operations were continued to October 21st, and my surprise was very great when at 4 p.m. that day I was ordered to send off every man that could be moved, and to clear the village of wounded officers. Shortly after Deputy Purveyor Hodges arrived, and informed me that I was to remain in charge of such wounded at Toro as could not be moved. On my objecting to the duty, having been before left with the wounded at Talavera, Dr. McGrigor went to his Lordship, the Duke of Wellington, who agreed with me, but stated that if I remained I should have my promotion, to which I agreed. (Whilst on this duty I slept in the sacristy of the chapel, where the hospital was established. My ague returned, and I was far from well, and one day, whilst in the paroxysm of ague, lying between blankets, his Lordship, the Duke of Wellington, came into my room and talked with me.)

"October 22nd.—Early in the morning I saw the last cavalry picquet of our army retire. I waited the whole day in great anxiety for the arrival of the advanced guard of the French army, for I was left alone with the wounded and my Portuguese servant; a couple of stragglers from the Guards came in, and I made them useful in assisting me. About half-past five in the evening some cavalry approached the village; I attracted their attention, and an officer and party came towards me. I was taken to General Foy, who was very polite, and asked me to dine. At my request he sent me a safeguard. During the night many officers of the 1st and 7th French Divisions passed their time in my room; we talked much on politics. A French surgeon took a great fancy to my case of capital instruments, and left me his old ones!! My charge consisted of eighteen British and seven French wounded, but the French left some more the following day.

"October 23rd.—The two divisions of the French army marched off, leaving me two Gendarmes for the protection of the hospital, but they very soon proceeded to Burgos, not liking the prowling Spaniards.

"October 24th.—Having waited with the greatest impatience, and no communication coming from Burgos, I went into the city and waited on the Commandant de la place. He said he had received no advice of my being at Villa Toro, and hoped the Commissary would send for the wounded that evening. He did not wish me to return to Villa Toro, but I represented that my baggage was there, and that the wounded required my assistance. He at last gave me a pass. He told me that as the Marquis Wellington had detained the French surgeons at Coimbra, he supposed I should be sent to France, though I told him that General Foy had promised me to be permitted to return to the British headquarters. I returned to Villa Toro in bad spirits and health.

"October 25th.—No cars have arrived, nor any communication from the city; no rations, so purchased bread and chocolate for the wounded.

"October 26th.—No cars. In the evening I again went to Burgos, and seeing General du Bretton in the Public Mall, went up to him and

explained my situation at Villa Toro, with so many persons without comforts or even rations. He was greatly displeased with the Commandant, abused him well, and assured me they should be brought in the next morning.

"October 27th.—At last, about 3 p.m., some cars arrived, but not in sufficient number to carry off all the men. They had a strong escort of cavalry and infantry with them, and were to return again that evening. The Intendant of the French Hospital wished to borrow my horse, but that I objected to. He appeared greatly annoyed at my refusal, and wanted me to proceed forthwith to Burgos; but, as the whole of my charge were not removed, I would not."

"ESCAPE FROM BURGOS.

"October 28th.—In the morning I again went to Burgos to report I had still four men to remove. The Commandant said the cars should be off at once for them. He desired me to call in the evening to sign my parole as prisoner of war. This was a death-blow to me, and I immediately went to Captain Menzies, a wounded officer in Burgos, to ask his advice about attempting to escape. He advised me not to try, as my health was so delicate; he thought I could not go through the fatigue. Some officers of the German Legion, however, were of a different opinion. Seeing the cars ready to start, I had no time to lose. I bought a bottle of brandy and two pounds of meat, and rode to the gate. The sergeant of the guard wished to detain me, but I showed him my pass of the 24th, which he did not examine minutely, and talking of Verdun, where his regiment had been quartered, he allowed me to pass. On arrival at Villa Toro, I got my horse and mule ready, with my Portuguese boy mounted on the latter, and, seeing the cars approaching, I took a dose of brandy and started off at a gallop. After a good ride over flat but partly ploughed land, I came to a village at the foot of the mountains. The inhabitants told me they were sure the French would not follow me up the mountain; so I ascended, and at the top halted, and with my glass distinctly saw some French cavalry in the village I had just left. I immediately struck off the high road, and, judging as well as possible my proper direction, I continued on till dark, when I fell in with a peasant, whom I compelled to show me the way to the priest's house in the village of Massa. The priest gave me a good supper and forage for my beasts, and, having rested till 2 a.m., I proceeded on my way to Aquillo-de-Campo, my intention being to reach the coast at Santander, as I knew Sir Home Popham and some English vessels were there. I arrived at Aquillo-de-Campo on the 29th, at 5 p.m. It was as much as I could do to keep my horse on his legs. Here I found some Spanish troops, and obtained a good billet. I proceeded on my journey, passing through Reinosa, where I had coffee with the Spanish General Renovales, who informed me that Soult had joined Joseph, and that they had advanced on Madrid, that

General Hill had retired, and that Wellington and Hill would unite. On arrival at Santander, on November 2nd, I made the best of my way to Sir Home Popham's quarters, and put him in possession of all I knew of the raising of the siege of Burgos and what I had heard of the evacuation of Madrid. He was quite unacquainted with these facts, and thought them so important that he made up his mind to despatch a frigate to England with the intelligence. Of course, he catechised me closely. I then asked him for a passage to England, as I thought it would be a long and very unsafe journey to attempt to reach Wellington's headquarters. I sold him my horse for £25 (he afterwards sent for the saddle as well, a first-rate London one. He was, in my case, a great hand at a bargain). He introduced me to Captain Seymour, of the 'Fortunée,' frigate, of whom he had obtained my passage. I dined at the Royal Marine Mess.

"November 3rd.—Embarked for Plymouth, which we reached after a fine passage in five days. During the voyage nothing could have been kinder than Captain Seymour's attention to me, as also the officers, and especially the Marine officers. They told me at parting that they had expected to have to drop me overboard before the end of the voyage."

"November 16th.—Waited on the Adjutant-General in London¹ and was by him sent to see Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State, to whom I repeated the information I had furnished to Sir Home Popham; (my report had been received in London on November 10th. Lord Wellington's despatch, with the news of the raising of the siege of Burgos and Hill's retreat from Madrid, did not arrive in London till a week after, so that the news I brought was important). Being still very weak and wretchedly thin, I obtained one month's sick leave.

"December 24th.—Joined the depot of 24th Regiment at Maldon, in Essex (four companies having been ordered home). . . . I now memorialled the commander-in-chief, through my commanding officer, for promotion. The Duke of York's reply was the copy of the Director-General's answer to him, who stated that my service was so short and there were so many senior to me that he could not notice my claims except I was on a foreign station. I also sent a report to Dr. McGrigor in Spain, detailing how I had fulfilled the duty I was placed on at Villa Toro and claiming the fulfilment of the promise of the commander of the Forces, of promotion.

"1813.

"March 14th.—I was agreeably woke this morning with the intelligence of my being promoted to the surgeoncy of the 30th Regiment, my letter to Dr. McGrigor having succeeded, and I was directed to join the depot at Berwick-on-Tweed."

¹ Letter from A. G. (*vide* Appendix No. 2.)

1814.

He joined the 30th Regiment on May 13th, went with them to Jersey, and on January 2nd, 1814, they embarked for Holland. During the voyage they were nearly wrecked off the South Foreland, but managed to get to Ramsgate, where they were transferred to another transport, and after an exciting voyage, in which they stuck on a sand-bank, and were again nearly wrecked by ice coming down the river, they reached their destination and disembarked on February 10th. The regiment proceeded to Brussels on May 12th, from where, on June 27th, they marched through Tournay and Oudenarde to Antwerp, where they arrived on August 6th. Here they remained in garrison until April 8th, 1815. During their stay in Antwerp a Military Society was formed, called "The First Military Society of the garrison of Antwerp," under the patronage of Major-General Sir C. Halkett, K.C.B., &c. The directors of the Society were:—

- Lieutenant-Colonel W. Bailey, 30th Regiment.
- T. de Fevre, Ag. A.C.G. and Principal Commissary.
- Captain C. G. Napier, R.A.
- Surgeon J. G. Elkington, 30th Regiment.
- Lieutenant Fred Aldrick, 95th Regiment, D.A.B.M.G.

1815.

The only record concerning this Society that I have found among his papers is an invitation card and notice for a ball and supper to be given by the Society on January 31st, 1815, and he notes that the balls, concerts, plays, dinner parties and excursions seemed to make the winter pass rapidly. On March 9th they heard of Buonaparte's escape from Elba.

"April 8th.—We marched to Malines.

"June 15th.—The whole brigade was ordered to assemble at Soignes.

"QUATRE BRAS.

"June 16th.—At 2 a.m. we commenced our march on the road to Braine-le-Comte and proceeded later on to Nivelles. Shortly after 4 p.m. we advanced, and as we passed the wood of Bossu a staff officer whom I had known in the Peninsula came out of it, wounded in the foot. The firing was sharp in the wood and some of the balls came whizzing over our heads, so he would not dismount, and I bandaged him up on his horse. The regiment passed Quatre Bras, and proceeded some way down the Namur Road and entered some cornfields. It was certainly 5 o'clock now. Soon after there was an order to prepare to receive cavalry, and I fell back and stood on the Namur Road, with my hospital serjeant and

Bat horse having my instruments and medicines. I had the regiment in view, knowing it more particularly by the Adjutant, Andrews, having a white horse. On the road I received Colonel Hamilton of the regiment, wounded in the leg. He did not dismount while I dressed him. I also received Lieutenant Lockwood with a wound of a musket ball in the frontal sinus. I sent him to the farm at Quatre Bras, whilst here I saw the artillery on my right open fire on the advance of cavalry up the Charleroi Road. Shortly after the repulse of the cavalry I was ordered up to the front to some wounded of the regiment. I attempted to pass down the high road, but my horse would not pass the numerous dead men and horses of the French that lay in the road, and I entered the fields on my left and dressed some men at a farmhouse. I then returned to Quatre Bras and extracted the ball (as I thought) from Lieutenant Lockwood's frontal bone (but three weeks after a portion of it was found in the sinus and the trephine was used to extract it). During the evening—for it was now getting dark—I dressed many wounded, and was at last called to an officer who had received numerous wounds; after having dressed a number of them, I told him that none of them would kill him. He replied, "But look at this doctor," taking up his shirt. A lance had entered his side; it was only a muscular wound. On my telling him that would not settle him, he opened his eyes and recognised me and said, 'Do you really think, Elkington, I shall live?' I then sponged his bloody face, and found it was my old friend Menzies, of the 42nd, that I had left at Burgos with a compound fracture.

"June 17th.—Early in the morning all our wounded were sent to the rear, and about noon the army retreated. During the retreat we encountered a most severe thunderstorm with heavy rain, and perhaps I may safely say, that a more severe night was never experienced by the British army, who were lying out in cornfields up to their knees in mire. Colonel Vigoreaux and myself lay together, having my hospital panniers to windward, our only shelter.

"1815.—WATERLOO.

"June 18th.—Early in the morn it began to clear; the men and officers were actually benumbed, being so saturated with the wet. After a little running about, wringing their blankets, and the issue of some spirits, the circulation returned, and by 10 o'clock the muskets were all in good order. We could now distinctly see the movements of the different French corps. At noon the action commenced. The artillery in front of our brigade opening fire on the enemy, advancing on Hougomont (I took out my watch as this took place). About 7 o'clock in the evening the final attack by the Imperial Guard was made, and, being repulsed, the whole French army was soon in full retreat and in inextricable confusion. I remained at Mount St. Jean looking after the wounded till June 21st, by which time I had sent off every man of my regiment to

Brussels. I rode over the field to report on the number of French wounded still to be removed. At La Haye Sainte I found numbers of badly wounded. Those able to walk made the best of their way to Brussels. The transport was not sufficient to remove the British; the different pieces of French Artillery as they were brought to the rear were loaded as well as possible with these unfortunate beings—(a day or two after a general action is the period to gain a fine idea of the miseries of war). The inhabitants were now returning to collect what little remained of their household property, for friends and foes had made free with everything they wanted. Their houses were so filled with wounded there was no room or shelter for them. The bodies of the dead began to be offensive, and the whole air was contaminated from the numerous carcasses of men and horses. Peasants were employed to collect the bodies of the men to burn, and bury the horses, having their nostrils covered with handkerchiefs to mitigate the stench."

He left Mount St. Jean, where he had been looking after the wounded, on June 21st, and rejoined his regiment near Baray, whence they left for Paris on June 24th, arriving on July 7th, and encamping in the Bois de Boulogne. Here they remained till the end of October; the regiment embarked for home on December 25th, landing at Cork on February 1st, 1816, and marched for Limerick.

This ended his actual war service. He continued serving in Ireland with the 30th Regiment until his Battalion was disbanded on April 28th, 1817; and while at Tralee he was attacked with severe deep-seated ophthalmia of the left eye, which eventually led to loss of sight of that eye. For this he was granted a pension in 1819.

On being placed on half-pay he spent some time at Edinburgh attending classes, and then set up practice as a surgeon in Bath.

" 1820.

" December 1st.—Ordered by the *Irish* Medical Board to join the 35th Regiment at Cork. Declined the appointment.

" December 9th.—Ordered by the *English* Medical Board to hold myself in readiness for foreign service.

" December 10th.—Went to London, saw Sir James McGrigor, and got a favourable answer as to my remaining on half-pay.

" 1821.

" July 19th.—This morning I was greatly surprised by the first intimation reaching me that I was Gazetted Surgeon to the 1st Royal Regiment. I applied to be allowed to remain on half-pay, but this was refused.

" October 15th.—Joined the 1st Regiment at Newry."

After five years with the Regiment, in various stations in Ireland,

he accompanied them to Barbadoes. He appears to have had his usual luck while on the voyage out, for he notes :—

“1826.

“January 15th (1826).—Thick weather. This night we ran down a large schooner from the Azores laden with fruit. As she was for some time entangled with our anchor, the crew escaped on board us. One man had his leg crushed, and in a few days I was obliged to amputate it. This in a heavy sea and in one of the most rolling vessels I was ever in, was very awkward. I was obliged to be lashed to the foot of the table; however, the poor man did well. He was on crutches before we arrived at Barbadoes.”

1828.

After a year in Barbadoes he obtained leave of absence, and while on leave was posted to the depôt of the regiment at Glasgow; in September, 1828, he was appointed Surgeon to the 17th Light Dragoons, which regiment he joined in Ireland in December. He remained with them until March, 1841, when he was appointed Staff-Surgeon to the Royal Hibernian School, Dublin, where he remained till his death in October, 1853.

APPENDIX I.

RECORD OF SERVICE.

Hospital Mate, August 8th, 1807, to July 6th, 1808.

Assistant Surgeon 24th Regiment, July 7th, 1808, to March 10th, 1813.

Surgeon 2nd 30th Regiment, March 11th, 1813, to July 24th, 1817.

Half-pay 30th Regiment (on reduction of Battalion), June 25th, 1817, to July 12th, 1821.

Surgeon 1st Battalion 1st Royal Regiment, July 12th, 1821, to September 10th, 1828.

Surgeon 17th Lancers, September 11th, 1828, to March 4th, 1841.

Staff-Surgeon Royal Hibernian Military School, March 5th, 1841, to October 3rd, 1853 (the date of his death).

WAR SERVICES.

Capture of Madeira, 1807.

Peninsula from April, 1809, to November, 1812; at the Battle of Talavera, left in charge of wounded, made a prisoner of war; released in May, 1810, and rejoined the army in Portugal on its retreat from Busaco.

Present in the Lines of Torres Vedras, at the battle of Fuentes D'Onoro, Sieges of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajos, battle of Salamanca and the capture of Madrid; during the siege of Burgos was in charge of the hospital, and on the retreat of the army was again left behind with wounded (managed to escape).

Served in the campaign in Holland, 1814 and 1815, present at Quatre Bras, Waterloo, and the capture of Paris.

APPENDIX II.

LETTER FROM THE HORSE GUARDS ON HIS RETURN TO ENGLAND AFTER ESCAPING FROM BURGOS, DATED NOVEMBER 13TH, 1812.

SIR,—I have received your letter of yesterday reporting your having made your escape from the enemy (whose intention it appeared to be to detain you, contrary to the custom of war), on the 27th ult., which I will immediately lay before the Commander-in-Chief.

As we have been disappointed in not having received intelligence from Burgos, on the Marquis of Wellington marching from the neighbourhood of that city, I shall be much obliged to you if you will furnish me with any information in your power in regard to the situation of the officers who have recently been wounded before the Castle of Burgos; and if you would particularise such as have fallen into the enemy's hands. I beg you to give me every information in your power respecting Ensign Knox of the 3rd Regiment Foot Guards, reported to be severely wounded in the head. I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your humble servant,

HARRY CALVERT,

A. G.

J. G. Elkington, Esq.

In connection with the Medical Department of the Army, the following extracts from Lord Wellington's despatches are of interest:—

“(1) No. 332. To the EARL OF LIVERPOOL. Badajos, November 14th, 1809.

“THE INSUFFICIENT MEDICAL STAFF.

“It is besides very necessary that some effectual measures should be taken to increase the medical staff, not with gentlemen of rank, but with hospital mates. The duty of the general hospitals in every active army ought to be done by the General Medical Staff, and the regiments ought to have their surgeons and assistants entirely disengaged for any extraordinary event, or sickness that may occur. We have not now one surgeon or assistant with each regiment, instead of three, the others being employed in the hospital instead of hospital mates, and we have always been equally deficient. Indeed, one of the reasons which induced me to cross the Tagus on August 4th, instead of attacking Soult, was the want of surgeons in the Army, all being employed with the hospital, and there being scarcely one for each brigade; and if we had had an action, we should not have been able to dress our wounded.”

“(2) No. 480. To Dr. FRANK, CORTASCO, January 7th, 1811.

PRAISE OF THE MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

“. I have no objection to your making any use you think proper of this and my former letters; and you may be assured that I

¹ Selections from Wellington's Despatches. Gurwood, 1851.

shall be happy to avail myself of every opportunity of bearing testimony to the zeal, ability, and success with which the duties of the Medical Department of this army have been invariably carried on under your superintendence."

RE PROMOTION OF MEDICAL OFFICERS.

"(3) No. 685. To Earl BATHURST, Villa Toro, September 27th, 1812.

"I likewise beg to draw your Lordship's attention to the practice of the Medical Board in promoting to vacancies in this army. Instead of promoting the officers on the spot, who deserve promotion highly from their merits and services, officers are selected in England, the Mediterranean, or elsewhere, to be promoted. The consequence is increased delay in their arrival to perform their duty, and all who do arrive are sick in the first instance.

"It would be but justice to promote those on the spot who are performing the duty, and we would enjoy the advantage, and the seniors of the Department at least would have experience in the disorders of the climate, and of the troops serving in this country; to which climate they would have become accustomed."

PROMOTION OF MEDICAL OFFICERS.

"(4) No. 711. To Colonel TORRENS, Badajos, December 20th, 1812.

"I enclose some letters which I have received from Dr. McGrigor regarding certain promotions made by the Medical Board. I entirely agree with Dr. McGrigor in opinion, that it is no encouragement to those who are performing their duty with the army in this country to see that when by their merits and exertions they have attracted the notice of their immediate superiors, and of the officers under whose command they are serving, and have been recommended for promotion, others have been preferred to them who have quitted the arduous service on which these have remained, probably to solicit from the Medical Board the promotion which these have been found to deserve by their exertions. The officers promoted by the Medical Board (one of them, Mr. Higgins, I know is) are meritorious; but neither deserve promotion equally with either Dr. Tyce or Mr. Guthrie. I have frequently made you acquainted with my sense of the inconvenience felt by the constant change of the officers employed by every branch of the Service in this country. One of the principal causes of these changes is the practice of going to England to apply for promotion which ought to be acquired by service here; and I acknowledge that I do not see the utility of my forwarding the recommendations of the heads of departments of those officers whom they deem deserving of promotion, if to these recommendations are to be preferred the claims and applications of those who quit the Service here to go home to make them."

“Napier, in his ‘History of the Peninsular War,’ in commenting on the operations in Andalusia writes:—

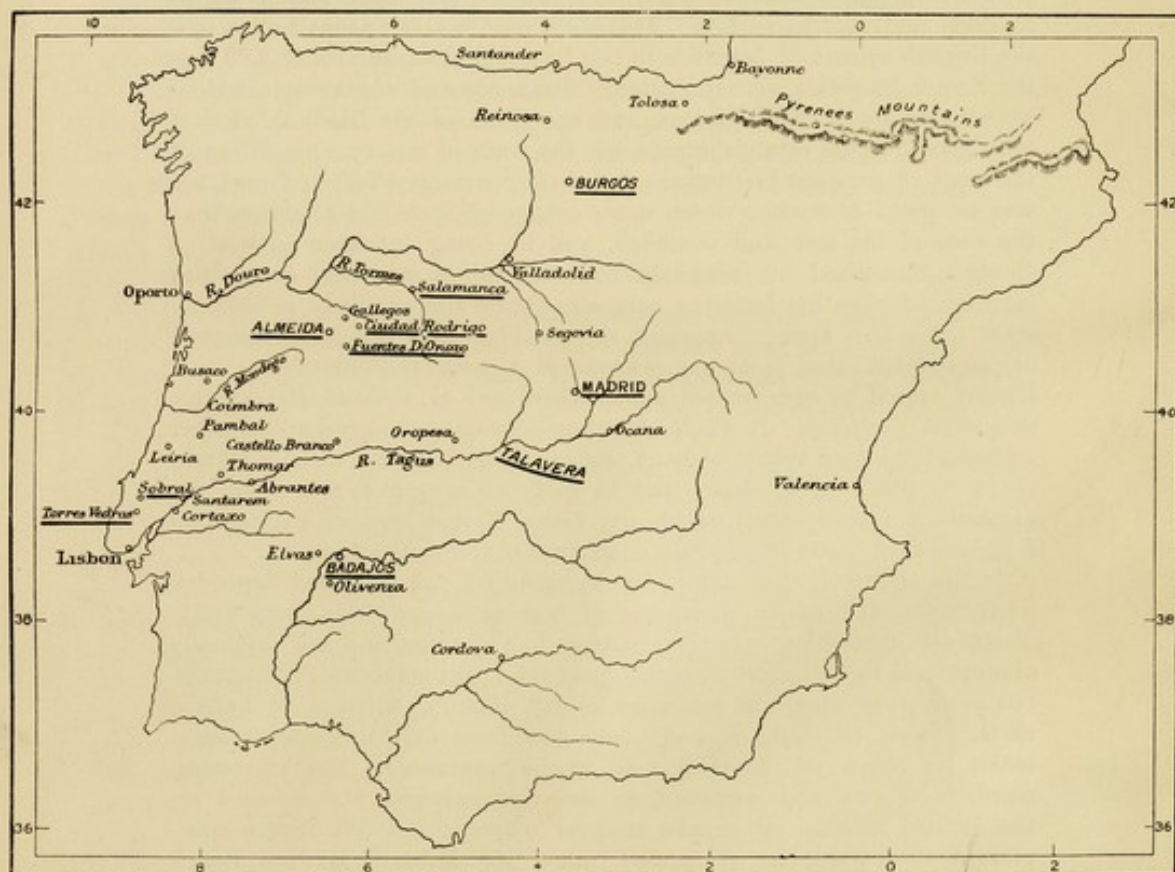
RE MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS.

“All the hospitals in the rear were crowded, and Salamanca itself, in which there were 6,000 sick and wounded, besides French prisoners, was the very abode of misery. The soldiers endured much during the first two or three days after the battle, and the inferior officers’ sufferings were still more heavy and protracted. They had no money, and many sold their horses and other property to sustain life; some actually died of want, and though Wellington, hearing of this, gave orders that they should be supplied from the purveyor’s stores in the same manner as the soldiers, the relief came late. It is a common yet erroneous notion that the English system of hospitals in the Peninsula was admirable, and that the French hospitals were neglected. Strenuous and unceasing exertions were made by Lord Wellington and the Chief of the Medical Staff to form good hospital establishments, but the want of money, and still more the want of previous institutions, foiled their utmost efforts. Now there was no point of warfare which more engaged Napoleon’s attention than the care of his sick and wounded, and he, being monarch as well as General, furnished his hospitals with all things requisite, even with luxuries. Under his fostering care also Baron Larrey justly celebrated, were it for this alone, organized the establishment called the hospital or ‘ambulance,’ that is to say, wagons of a peculiar construction, well horsed, served by men trained and incorporated as soldiers, and subject to a strict discipline. Rewarded for their courage and devotion like other soldiers, they were always at hand, and, whether in action or on a march, ready to pick up, to salve, and to carry off wounded men; and the astonishing rapidity with which the fallen French soldiers disappeared from a field of battle attested the excellence of the institution.

“But in the British Army, the carrying off the wounded depended partly upon the casual assistance of a weak wagon train, very badly disciplined, furnishing only *three* wagons to a division, and not originally appropriated to that service; partly upon the spare commissariat animals, but principally upon the resources of the country, whether of bullock carts, mules, or donkeys, and hence the most doleful scenes after a battle, or when an hospital was to be evacuated. The increasing numbers of sick and wounded, as the war enlarged, also pressed on the limited number of regular medical officers; and Wellington complained that when he demanded more, the Military Medical Board in London neglected his demands and thwarted his arrangements. Shoals of hospital mates and students were indeed sent out, and they arrived for the most part ignorant alike of war and their own profession; while a heterogeneous mass of purveyors and their subordinates,

¹ Second Edition, vol. v., Book 19, p. 248, August, 1812.

acting without any military organization or effectual superintendence, continually bade defiance to the exertions of those medical officers, and there were many whose experience, zeal, and talents would, with a good institution to work upon, have rendered this branch of the Service most distinguished; nay, many even of the well-educated surgeons sent out were for some time of little use, for superior professional skill is of little value in comparison of experience in military arrangement. Where one soldier dies from the want of a delicate operation, hundreds perish from the absence of military arrangement."



Map of portion of Spain and Portugal showing the principal places mentioned in the Journal during the Campaigns 1808, &c.

