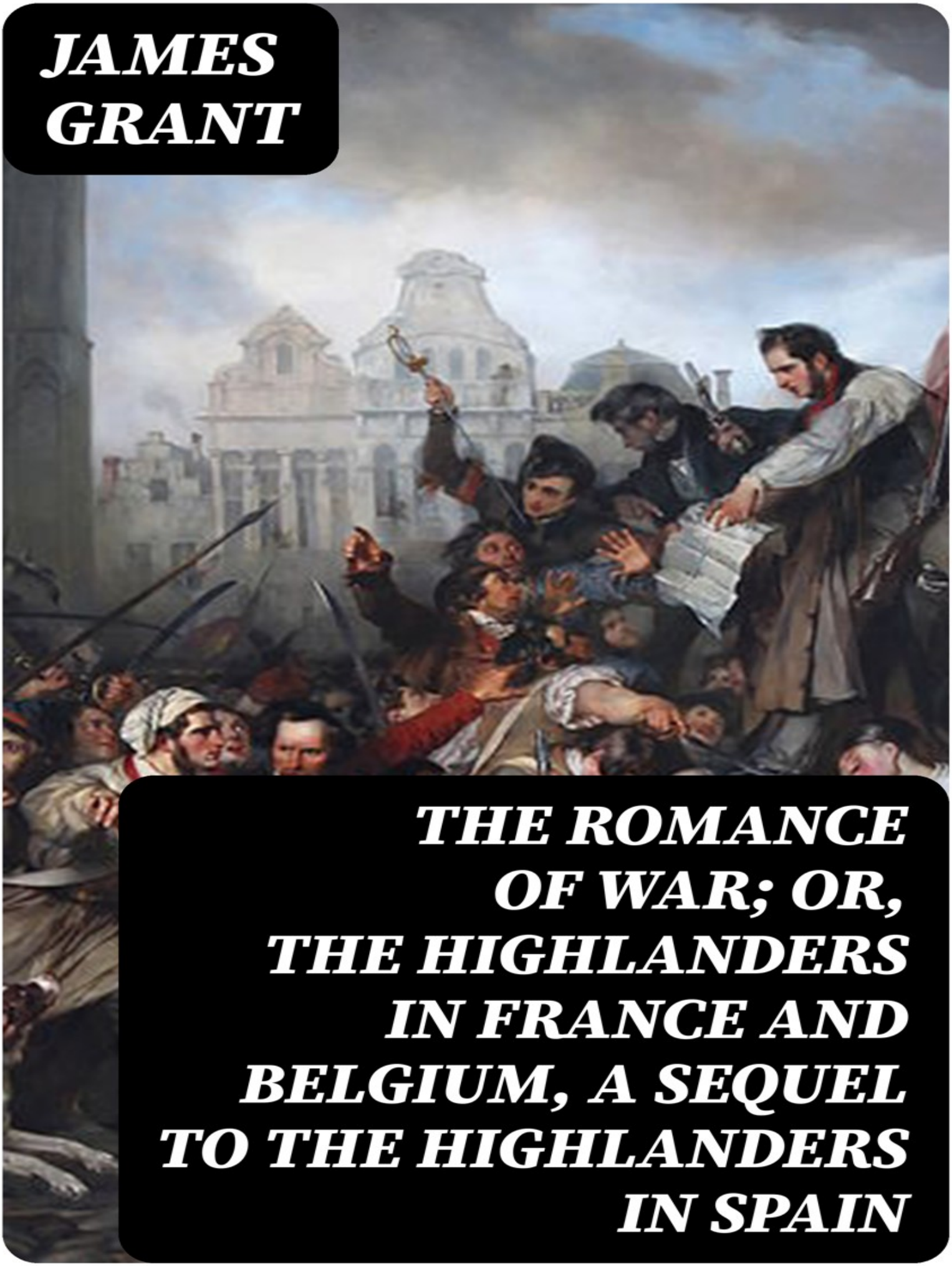
JAMES GRANT



THE ROMANCE OF WAR; OR, THE HIGHLANDERS IN FRANCE AND BELGIUM, A SEQUEL TO THE HIGHLANDERS IN SPAIN

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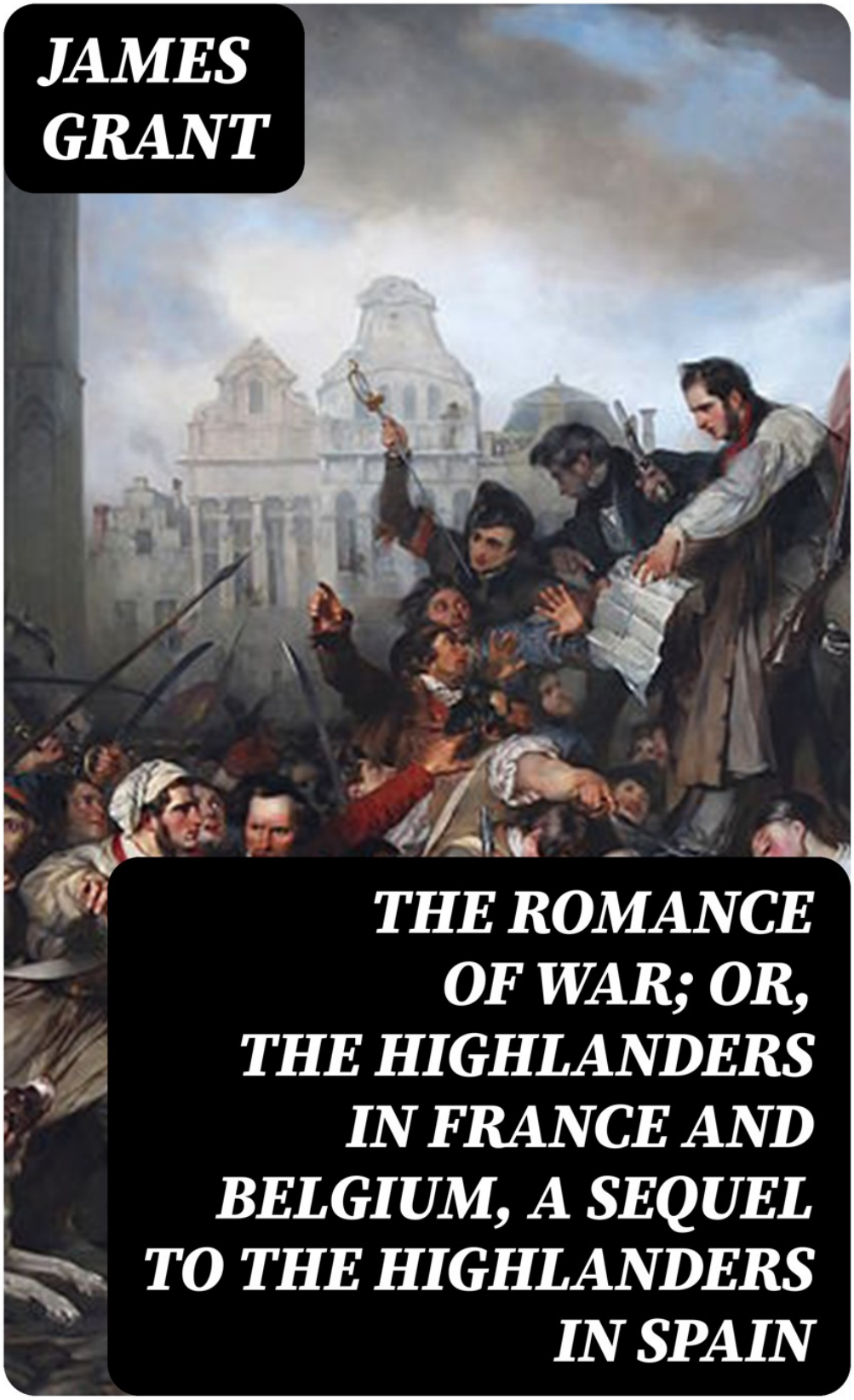

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The Romance of War; or, The Highlanders in France and Belgium, A Sequel to the Highlanders in Spain

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PREFACE.

Numerous inquiries having been made for the conclusion of "The Romance of War," it is now presented to the Public, whom the Author has to thank for the favourable reception given to the first three volumes of his Work.

In following out the adventures of the Highlanders, he has been obliged to lead them through the often-described field of Waterloo. But the reader will perceive that he has touched on the subject briefly; and, avoiding all general history, has confined himself, as much as possible, to the movements of Sir Dennis Pack's brigade.

Notwithstanding that so many able military narratives have of late years issued from the press, the Author believes that the present work is *the first* which has been almost exclusively dedicated to the adventures of a Highland regiment during the last war; the survivors of which he has to congratulate on their prospect of obtaining the long-withheld, but well-deserved, *medal*.

Few—few indeed of the old corps are now alive; yet these all remember, with equal pride and sorrow,

"How, upon bloody Quatre Bras,
Brave CAMERON heard the wild hurra
Of conquest as he fell;"

and, lest any reader may suppose that in these volumes the national enthusiasm of the Highlanders has been over-

drawn, I shall state one striking incident which occurred at Waterloo.

On the advance of a heavy column of French infantry to attack La Haye Sainte, a number of the Highlanders sang the stirring verses of "Bruce's Address to his Army," which, at such a time, had a most powerful effect on their comrades; and long may such sentiments animate their representatives, as they are the best incentives to heroism, and to honest emulation!

EDINBURGH,
June 1847.

THE ROMANCE OF WAR

CHAPTER I.

TOULOUSE.

"One crowded hour of glorious life,
Is worth an age without a name!"

The long and bloody war of the Peninsula had now been brought to a final close, and the troops looked forward with impatience to the day of embarkation for their homes. The presence of the allied army was no longer necessary in France; but the British forces yet lingered about the Garonne, expecting the long-wished and long-looked for route for Britain. The Gordon Highlanders were quartered at Muret, a small town on the banks of the Garonne, and a few miles from Toulouse. One evening, while the mess were discussing, over their wine, the everlasting theme of the probable chances of the corps being ordered to Scotland, the sound of galloping hoofs and the clank of accoutrements were heard in the street of the village. A serjeant of the First Dragoons, with the foam-bells hanging on his horse's bridle, reined up at the door of the inn where the officers of the Highlanders had established a temporary mess-house. Old Dugald Cameron was standing at the door, displaying his buirdly person to a group of staring villagers, with whom he was attempting to converse in a singular mixture of broad northern Scots, Spanish, and French, all of which his hearers found not very intelligible.

The horseman dashed up to the door with the splendid air of the true English dragoon, and with an importance which caused the villagers to shrink back. Inquiring for Colonel Cameron, he handed to Dugald two long official packets; and after draining a deep hornful of liquor which the Celt brought him, he wheeled his charger round, and rode slowly away.

"Letters frae the toon o' Toulouse, sir," said Dugald, as, with his flat bonnet under his arm, and smoothing down his

white hair, he advanced to Fassifern's elbow, and laid the despatches before him; after which he retired a few paces, and waited to hear the contents, in which he considered he had as much interest as any one present. The clamour and laughter of the mess-room were instantly hushed, and every face grew grave, from the ample visage of Campbell, who was seated on the colonel's right hand, down to the fair-cheeked ensigns, (or Johny Newcomes,) who always ensconced themselves at the foot of the table, to be as far away as possible from the colonel and seniors.

"Fill your glasses, gentlemen," said Cameron, as he broke the seal of the first despatch; "fill a bumper, and drink 'to a fair wind.' My life on't 'tis the route, and we shall soon have Old England on our lee!"

"Praise Heaven 'tis come at last!" said Campbell, filling up his glass with bright sparkling sherry. "I never hailed it with greater joy, even in Egypt. But what says Sir Arthur—the marquis, I mean?"

"'Tis the route!" replied Cameron, draining his glass. "To-morrow, at daybreak, we march for Toulouse."

"Hurrah!" said the major. "We shall have the purple heather under our brogues in a week more. Hoigh! Here's to the Highlandmen, shoulder to shoulder!" Every glass was reversed, while a round of applause shook the room.

"We embark on the Garonne," continued Cameron, consulting the document. "Flat-bottomed boats will convey us down the river, and we shall sail in transports for Cork."

"Hech! how, sirs! Cork?" exclaimed Campbell, in a tone of disappointment. "*Demonios!* as the dons say; and are we

not going home to our own country,—to the land of the bannock and bonnet?"

"Ireland is our destination. A famous place to soldier in, as I know from experience, major."

"I love poor Paddy well enough," said Campbell: "who is there that would not, that has seen a charge of the Connaught Rangers, or the 87th? Regular devils they are for righting. But we were sent home to braid Scotland after Egypt; and we saw service there, gentlemen. Old Ludovick Lisle, and Cameron there, could tell you that. But the other paper, colonel; what is it about?"

"A despatch for General the Condé Penne Villamur, at Elizondo. It is to be forwarded instantly by the first officer for duty: who is he?"

"Stuart," said the adjutant.

"The deuce take your memory!" said Stuart testily, as this announcement fell like a thunderbolt upon him; "you seem to have the roster all by heart. Colonel, is it possible that I am really to travel nearly a hundred miles, and to cross those abominable Pyrenees again, after fighting my way to Toulouse?"

"Without doubt," replied Fassifern, drily. "You will have the pleasure of seeing Spain once more, and again paying your respects to the gazelle-eyed señoritas and pompous señores."

"I would readily dispense with these pleasures. But might not Wellington have sent an aide or a dragoon with this despatch?"

"*He* seems not to think so. There is no help, Ronald, my man. You would not throw your duty on another. Obedience

is the first—You know the adage: 'tis enough. You can rejoin us at Toulouse, where we embark in eight days from this."

"Eight days?"

"Make good use of your nag; you will require one, of course. Campbell will lend you his spare charger 'Egypt,' as he styles it."

"With the utmost pleasure," said the major, filling up his glass. "But look well to him by the way, for he is an especial good piece of horse-flesh as ever was foaled, or any man found for nothing on that memorable day of June, on the plains of Vittoria. But when I remember the airing you took with my steed at Almarez, I cannot lend you Egypt without entertaining some secret fears of never beholding him again."

"Have no fears for Egypt, major," said Ronald, laughing. "I will restore him without turning a hair of his glossy coat."

"Then, Stuart, you must march forthwith," said Cameron; "the marquis's despatch must be carried onward without delay. You must reach St. Gaudens by sunrise."

Dugald was despatched to desire Jock Pentland, the major's bat-man, to caparison Egypt; and mean while Stuart hurried to his billet, where he hastily selected a few necessaries for his journey, and packed them in a horse valise. In case of accidents, he indited a hasty letter for Lochisla; but, for reasons which will be given in another chapter, it never reached those for whom it was destined.

To his servant, Allan Warristoun, poor Evan's successor, he abandoned the care of his baggage, desiring him to have it all in readiness against the hour of march on the morrow. He belted his sword and dirk tightly to his waist, and

examined the holsters, to see if the pistols were freshly flinted and in good order; after which he examined his ammunition, well knowing that the more lead bullets and the less loose cash he had about him, the better for travelling on such unsafe ground as the Lower Pyrenees. He remembered that the whole of these waste places were infested by hordes of lawless banditti, composed of all the rascal crew of Spain,—guerillas, whose trade was at at end, broken or deserted soldiers, unfrocked monks, fugitive *presidiarios* or convicts, bravoes, *valientes*, and vagabonds of every kind, with which the long war, the absence of order and law, together with the loose state of Spanish morals, had peopled every part of the country. While the remembrance of these gentlemen passed through his mind, Stuart again examined his arms and horse-equipage carefully, and mounting, rode forth along the dark, straggling street of Muret. From the mess-room window there was handed to him a parting bumper of sherry, which he drank in his saddle.

"Good-bye, Lisle!" said he, waving his hand; "bid Virginia adieu for me. And now good-bye, lads; good-bye to ye all;" and, striking spurs into Egypt, he galloped off.

"He is a fine fellow, and keeps his seat as well as any cavalier of the *Prado* at Madrid," said the major, watching Stuart's retreating figure as long as he could see it by the star-light. "He is a fine fellow; and I wish he was safe back again among us. He has a long and a perilous path before him, over these d—d Pyrenees; and ten to one he never returns again from among those black-browed and uncanny

dons. We all know Spanish ingratitude, sirs!" The worthy major knew not how prophetically he spoke.

Next morning the regiment marched to Toulouse and remained eight days, awaiting the arrival of the boats and other small craft to convey them down the Garonne, which becomes navigable at a short distance from the city.

The eight days passed away, and Ronald Stuart did not return. The eventful day arrived,—the day of embarkation for home, and the regiment paraded on the river side without him. The officers glanced darkly at each other, and the colonel shook his head sorrowfully, as if he deemed that all was not right; and a murmured curse on the Spaniards was muttered among the soldiers. The whole regiment, from Fassifern down to the youngest drum-boy, regretted his absence, which gave room for so many disagreeable constructions and surmises. Other corps were parading at the same time, and in the stir, bustle, and confusion of embarking men and horses, baggage, women, and children, his absence was forgotten for a time. The cheers of the soldiers and the din of various bands were heard everywhere. The time was one of high excitement, and joy shone on every bronzed face as boat after boat got under way, and, with its freight, moved slowly down the Garonne, —"the silvery Garonne," the windings of which soon hid the bridge, the spires, the grey old university, and the beautiful forests of Toulouse.

CHAPTER II.

ADVENTURES.

——————— "Turn thy horse;
Death besets thy onward track.
Come no further,—quickly back!"
Aikin's Poems, 1791.

Stuart departed from Muret in no pleasant mood, having a conviction that he was the most unfortunate fellow in the army; because, when any disagreeable duty was to be performed, by some strange fatality the lot always fell upon him. But his displeasure evaporated as the distance between Muret and himself increased. It was a clear and beautiful night. Millions of sparklers studded the firmament, and, although no moon was visible, the scenery around was distinctly discernible. Afar off lay Toulouse, the direction of which was marked only by the hazy halo of light around it, arising from amidst the bosky forests, which extend over nearly a hundred thousand acres of ground.

Before him spread a clear and open country, over which his horse was now carrying him at a rapid pace. It was midnight before the lights of Muret vanished behind him. The road became more lonely, and no sound broke upon the silence of the way, save the clang of Egypt's hoofs, ringing with a sharp iron sound on the hard-trodden road.

After riding nearly twenty miles, he found himself becoming tired and drowsy; and dismounting, he led his horse into a copse by the road-side, where, fastening the

bridle to a tree, he lay down on the dewy sward, and, placing his claymore under his head, fell fast asleep. Before sunrise he was again in his saddle, and, without breaking his fast, reached the town of Saint Gaudens, on the Garonne, forty-four miles from Toulouse. Unwilling to waste farther the strength of the noble animal which had borne him so far, and with such speed, he halted at Saint Gaudens for twelve hours, and again set forward on the direct road for the province of Beam.

The well-known chain of the Pyrenees, the scene of so many a recent contest, began to rise before him, and as he proceeded, every object which met his view became more familiar.

On nearing the Pass of Roncesvalles, he reached the block-house which his light company had garrisoned and defended so stoutly. It was now falling into ruin, and the skeletons of the French were lying around it, with the rank dog-grass sprouting among their mouldering bones. A ghastly sight!—but many such occurred as he journeyed among the mountains. Near the block-house he fell in with an encampment of *gitanos*, or gipsies, a people whose ferocity is equalled only by their cunning and roguery. They were at dinner, and bade him welcome to the feast, which consisted of broiled rabbits, olives, rice, and *bacalao*, with wine—stolen of course—to wash it down. He took his share of the viands seated by a fire, around which the ragged wayfarers crowded, male and female; but he was very well pleased when he took his departure from these singular people, who would not accept of a single maravedi for his entertainment.

Near midnight he arrived at the village of Roncesvalles, which consists of one straggling street, closed by an arched gateway at each end. The barriers were shut, and no admittance was given. He thundered loudly, first at one gate and then at the other; but he was unheard or uncared for by the drowsy porters, who occupied the houses above the arches. He therefore prepared to pass the night in the open air, which, although nothing new to a campaigner, was sufficiently provoking on that occasion, especially as a shower was beginning to descend, and sheet lightning, red and flaming, shot at times across the distant sky, revealing the peaks of the mountains, and the moaning voice of the wind announced a tempestuous night. Wishing the warders of Roncesvalles in a hotter climate than Spain, he looked about for some place of shelter, and perceived, not far off, a solitary little chapel, or oratory, which was revealed by the pale altar-lights twinkling through its tinted windows and open doorway.

In this rude edifice he resolved to take shelter, rather than pass the night in the open air; and just as he gained its arched porch, the storm, which had long been threatening, burst forth with sudden and appalling fury. The wind howled in the pass, and swept over the mountains like a tornado, and with a terrible sound, as if, in the words of a Gaelic bard, the spirits of the storm were shrieking to each other. The forked lightning shot athwart the sky, cleaving the masses of cloud, and the rattling rain thundered furiously on the chapel roof and windows, as if to beat the little fabric to the earth. His horse was startled by the uproar of the elements, and snorted, grew restive, and shot fire from his

prominent eyes as the passing gleams illuminated the porch, within which Stuart had stabled him by fastening the bridle to the figure of an old saint or apostle that presided over a stone font, from which the old troop-horse soon sucked up the holy water. Ronald wrapped a cloak round him, and flung himself on the stone pavement of the chapel, to rest his aching limbs, which were beginning to stiffen with so long a journey on horseback.

The building was totally destitute of ornament, and its rude construction gave evidence of its great antiquity. There were several shrines around it, with wax tapers flickering before them, revealing the strange little monsters in wood or stone which represented certain saints. In front of one of these knelt a stout, but wild-looking Spanish peasant, devoutly praying and telling over his chaplet. The entrance of Stuart caused him hurriedly to start,—to snatch his broad-leaved hat from the floor, to grasp the haft of his dagger, and glance round him with frowning brow and eyes gleaming with apprehension. But on perceiving the uniform of the intruder, his dark features relaxed into a smile; he bowed his head politely, and resumed his orisons, which Stuart never interrupted, although they lasted for a weary hour. There was something very grotesque in the aspect of one particular image, which appeared to be thrust unceremoniously into a dark niche, where no taper burned; from which Ronald inferred that the saint had no worshippers, or was not a favourite in the neighbourhood of Roncesvalles. The appearance of the image was calculated to excite laughter and derision, rather than piety or awe. It resembled the figure of Johnny Wilkes or Guy Fawkes, rather

than a grim and ghostly saint. The effigy was upwards of six feet high, and had a painted mask, well be-whiskered, and surmounted by a cocked hat. It was arrayed in leather breeches and jack-boots, a blue uniform coat, and tarnished epaulets. A sash encircled its waist, and in it were stuck a pair of pistols and a sabre. Its *tout ensemble* was quite ludicrous, as it stood erect in the gloomy niche of the solemn little chapel, and was seen by the "dim religious light" of distant tapers.

With the hilt of his broad-sword under his head for a pillow, Stuart lay on the pavement, and viewed this singular apparition with considerable amusement; and if he restrained a violent inclination to laugh, it was only from a reluctance to offend the peasant, who was praying before an image which, by its long robe and bunch of rusty keys, seemed meant for a representation of San Pedro.

From the devotee, who, when his prayers were ended, seated himself by his side, Stuart learned that the strange image represented St. Anthony of Portugal, one of those redoubtable seven champions whose "history" has made such a noise in the world from time immemorial. Notwithstanding the mist which ignorance, superstition, and priestcraft had cast over his mind, the sturdy *paisano* laughed till the chapel rang again at the appearance of the Portuguese patron, and acquainted Stuart with some pleasant facts, which accounted for the military garb of the saint. By virtue of a decree in that behalf on the part of his Holiness, St. Anthony was, in 1706, formally *enlisted* into the Portuguese army; and in the same year received the rank of captain,—so rapid was his promotion. His image was

always clad in successive uniforms as he was hurried through the different grades, until he reached the rank of Marshal-general of the armies of Portugal and Algarve,—a post which, I believe, he yet holds, with a pension of one hundred and fifty ducats per annum, which every year is punctually deposited, in a splendid purse, in the Chapel-Royal, by the Portuguese sovereign. Awful was the wrath, and terrible were the denunciations and holy indignation, when a cannon-ball carried off the head and cocked hat of the unfortunate image, which had been placed in an open carriage on one occasion, when *commanding* the Portuguese army in battle.

The image in the chapel at Roncesvalles had been placed there by the soldiers of the condé d'Amarante's brigade, the condé himself furnishing the saint with some of his cast uniform; but, since the departure of the Portuguese, the shrine had been totally deserted, as no true Spaniard would bend his knee to a Lusitanian saint. Such was the account given by the peasant, and it illustrates rather oddly the religious feelings of the Portuguese. After sharing together the contents of a flask of brandy, with which Ronald had learned to provide himself, they composed themselves to sleep. The peasant, who had also been shut out of Roncesvalles, drew his broad *sombrero* over his dusky visage, and, wrapping his brown mantle around him, laid his head against the base of a column, and fell fast asleep. Those suspicions which a long intercourse with Spaniards had taught Stuart to entertain of every casual acquaintance, kept him for some time from sleep. He narrowly watched his olive-cheeked companion, and it was not until, from his hard

breathing, he was sure he slept, that he too resigned himself to the drowsy deity. He awoke about sunrise, and found that his companion had departed. A sudden misgiving shot across his mind, and he sprang to the porch to look for his horse, which stood there, fair and sleek, as he left him on the preceding evening. He took him by the bridle, and advanced towards Roncesvalles.

The storm, and all traces of it, had passed away. The sky was clear and sunny, and the distant mountains mingled with its azure. The air was laden with rich perfume from little shrubs, of which I know not the name, but which flourish everywhere over the Peninsula; and every bush and blade of grass glittered like silver with the moisture which bedewed them. The gates of Roncesvalles stood open, and, passing through one of the archways, Ronald asked the first person he met whether there was an inn, café, *taberna*, or any house of entertainment, where he could procure refreshment for himself and horse, but was informed that the wretched mountain-village could boast of none. The man to whom he spoke was a miserably-clad peasant, and, like most Spanish villagers, appeared to belong to no trade or profession. He was returning from the public fountain with water, which he carried on his head, in a huge brown jug. He seemed both surprised and pleased to be accosted by a British officer, and said that if the noble *caballero* would honour him by coming to his house, he would do his best to provide refreshment. This offer Stuart at once accepted, and placing a dollar in the hand of the *aguadore*, desired him to lead the way. After seeing his horse fed and watered, and after discussing breakfast, which consisted of

a miserable mess of milk, peas, goats'-flesh, and roasted *castanos*, he mounted, and again went forth on his mission, glad to leave Roncesvalles far behind him. He expected to reach Elizondo before night; but soon found that his horse had become so jaded and worn out, that the hope was vain. The pace of the animal had become languid and slow; his eyes had lost their fire, and his neck and ears began to droop.

That he might advance faster, Stuart was fain to lead him by the bridle up the steep and winding tracks by which his journey lay. Once only Egypt showed some signs of his former spirit. In a narrow dell between two hills, in a rugged gorge like the bed of a departed river, an iron howitzer and a few shells lay rusting and half sunk in the earth: close by lay the skeletons of a man and a horse, adding sadly to the effect of the naked and silent wilderness around. At the sudden sight of these ghastly objects lying among the weeds and long grass, the steed snorted, shyed, and then sprung away at a speed which soon left the dell, and what it contained, miles behind.

As he rode through a solitary place, Stuart was startled on perceiving a party of men, to the number of fifteen or twenty, all well armed and on horseback, rising as it seemed from the earth, or appearing suddenly above the surface successively, as spectres rise through the stage. The fellows were all gaily attired in gaudy jackets, red sashes, and high-crowned hats; but the appearance of their arms, a long Spanish gun slung over the back, a cutlass, and double brace of pistols, together with various packages of goods with which their horses were laden, gave them the aspect of

a band of robbers. Stuart thought of the gang of Captain Rolando, as he saw them appearing from the bowels of the earth, within about twenty paces of where he stopped his horse. He next thought of his own safety, and had drawn forth his pistols, when one of the strangers perceiving him, waved his hat, crying, "*Amigos, señor, amigos!*" and, to put a bold face on the matter, Ronald rode straight towards him. They proved to be a party of *contrabandistas*, travelling to Vittoria with a store of chocolate, soap, butter, cigars, &c., which they had been purchasing in France. A sort of hatchway, or trap-door, of turf was laid over the mouth of the cavern from which they arose; after which they set off at full speed for Errazu.

Ronald was very well pleased to see them depart, as *contrabandistas* are, at best, but indifferent characters, although few travellers are more welcome at Spanish inns, where they may generally be seen at the door, or in the yard, recounting to their laughing auditors strange tales of adventures which they had encountered in the course of their roving and romantic life; and, as they are always gaily attired, they are generally favourites with the peasant-girls on the different roads they frequent. Their cavern, which Ronald felt a strong wish to explore, was probably some deserted mine, or one of those subterranean abodes dug by the Spaniards in the days of the Moors, and now appropriated by these land-smugglers as a place for holding their wares. Had Ronald worn any other garb than that of a British officer, the contraband gentry might, by an ounce bullet, have secured for ever his silence regarding their retreat, but they well knew that it mattered not to him: so,

after an interchange of a few civilities and cigars, they rode off at a gallop, without once looking behind them.

As he proceeded on his way, the scenery became more interesting, the landscape being interspersed with all that can render it beautiful. A ruined chapel towered on a green eminence above a tufted grove, through which swept a brawling mountain torrent, spanned by a pointed arch; while a cascade appeared below, where the stream, grappling and jarring with the rocks that interrupted its course, rushed in a sheet of foam to a cleft in the earth many feet beneath. Around were groves of the olive-tree, with its soft green leaves and bright yellow flowers; and beyond was Errazu, with its vine-covered cottages, its larger mansions of brick and plaster, with heavy-tiled roofs and broad projecting eaves, its great old monastery and its church spire, the vane of which was gleaming in the light of the setting sun. As he was travelling on duty, Stuart was entitled to billets; he therefore set about procuring one. The alcalde was at confession, and the *escrivano*, to whom he applied, gave him orders for a quarter in the house of a solitary widow lady, who, with her daughter, resided in a lonely house at the end of the town.

Considering their circumstances, this was the last house upon which a billet should have been given; but the escrivano had a piece of revenge to gratify. The old lady was a widow of a syndic,—a magistrate chosen by the people, like the Roman tribunes,—who, during his whole life, had been at feud with him, and the escrivano hoped that Stuart's being billeted there would give rise to some

pleasant piece of scandal, for the benefit of the gossiping old maids and duennas of Errazu.

The appearance of the widow's mansion did not prepossess Ronald much in its favour. The French had not left Errazu unscathed on their retreat through it; and, like many others, the domicile of Donna Aminta della Ronda showed signs of their vindictive feeling. One half had suffered from fire, and was in ruins; but two apartments were yet habitable, and into one of these Stuart was shown by an aged and saffron-coloured female domestic, to whom he presented the billet-order, by which he was entitled to occupy the best room and best bed in the house. The chamber, which was paved with tiles, was on the ground-floor; the window was glazed, but the walls were in a deplorable state of dilapidation; and many choice pieces of French wit appeared scribbled on various parts of the plaster. Among other things was a copy of verses addressed to Donna Aminta, written in rather indelicate French, and signed "M. de Mesmai, 10th Cuirassiers, or Devil's Own," which informed Stuart that his former acquaintance had once occupied that apartment.

Two antique chairs, high-backed and richly carved, a massive oak table, and a brass candlestick, composed the furniture. A chamber, containing an old-fashioned bed, with crimson feathers and hangings, opened out of this apartment, with which it communicated by means of an arch, from which the French had torn the door, probably for fuel. But this snug couch did not appear destined for Stuart, as the old domestic laid a paillasse upon the tiled floor for his use; and placing wine, cigars, and a light upon the table,

laid the poker and shovel crosswise, and withdrew, leaving him to his own reflections.

He was somewhat displeased at not being received by the ladies in person, especially as the escrivano had informed him, with a sly look, that the youngest possessed considerable attractions; but, consoling himself with the wine and cigars, he resolved to care not a jot about their discourtesy. After he had amused himself by thoroughly inspecting every nook and corner of the room, and grown weary of conning over the "History of the famous Preacher, Friar Gerund de Campazas," which he found when ransacking the bed-closet, he began to think of retiring to rest. He debated with himself for a moment which berth to take possession of, because by his billet he was entitled to the best bed the house contained; and the four-post and paillasse seemed the very antipodes of each other. But his doubts were resolved at once by the sudden entrance of the ladies, who sailed into the room with their long trains and flowing veils, and bowing, coldly bid him "*Buena noche, señor!*" as they retired to their bed-room. Ye gods! a bed-room destitute of door, and a foreign *oficial* to sleep in the next room! Stuart was puzzled, dumb-foundered in fact, and his Scottish modesty was quite shocked. But, lighting another cigar, he affected to read very attentively "Friar Gerund de Campazas," and wondered how all this was to end; while the ladies, favoured by the gloom of the chamber, undressed and betook themselves to their couch, around which they drew the dark and massive folds of the drapery. Ronald laid down the book, and stared about him. There was something very peculiar in the affair, and it

outdid the most singular Spanish stories he had ever heard related, even at the mess.

The elder lady had nothing very enchanting about her, certainly; but Ronald's keen eye had observed that the young donna had a melting black Spanish eye, a cherry lip, and white hand. He thought of these things and glanced furtively towards the mysterious closet, where the black outline of the couch, surmounted by its plumage, seemed like that of a hearse or mausoleum. Not a sound came from it after Donna Aminta had mumbled her *ave*; but the trampling of heavy feet arrested Stuart's attention; the door opened, and two tall and muscular Spaniards entered. One wore a broad hat, with a sprig of romero stuck in the band of it, as a guard against evil spirits and danger. The other wore a long cap of yellow cotton. They were shirtless and shoeless, and their ragged cotton breeches and *zamarra* jackets displayed, through various holes, their dark and swarthy skin, giving them a wild and savage appearance, which their brown bull-like necks and ferocious visages, fringed with masses of dark hair, did not belie. As usual, each was girt about the middle by a yellow sash; but, stuck in it, each had a dagger and brace of pistols. They were beetle-browed and most cut-throat looking fellows. At first sight Ronald knew them to be *valientes*,—villains whose poniards are ever at the service of any base employer who pays well. He started up on their entering and drew his sword an inch or so from the sheath. The fellows smiled grimly at the demonstration; upon which, he inquired sternly the reason of their intrusion, and why thus armed?

"Donna Aminta can best answer your questions," answered one fellow with surly impudence, as they swaggered into the bed-chamber. With his hand on his claymore Ronald strode towards them.

"Stand, señor cavalier!" said the one who had spoken; "stand! We seek not to quarrel with you; but life is sweet, and if we are set upon— You understand us: the good lady shall see that we are worthy of our wages. We mount guard on her chamber: cross this line," added he, drawing one on the tiles with his poniard; "cross this line, and, *Santo demonio!* we will whet our daggers on your backbone."

Insolent as this reply was, Stuart resolved to put up with the affront rather than come to blows with two desperadoes, whose fire-arms gave them such advantage. He deeply regretted that he had left his loaded pistols in the holsters of the saddle, and remembering that he was alone, and among jealous strangers, he thought that a brawl would be well avoided. The bravoes seated themselves on the floor within the ladies' chamber, and remained perfectly quiet, without stirring or speaking; but their fierce dark eyes seemed to be watching the stranger keenly. Ronald retired to his paillasse, and laid his drawn dirk and claymore beside him, ready to grasp them on the least alarm. He remained watching the intruders by the light of the candle, until it flickered down in the socket and expired, leaving the place involved in deep gloom. The silence of the chamber was broken only by the real or pretended snoring of these modern Cids, who had so suddenly become the guardians of the ladies' bower. When he first committed himself to his miserable couch, Ronald had determined to lie awake; but, growing weary of listening

and watching in the dark, he dropped insensibly asleep, and did not awaken until the morning was far advanced. The instant sleep departed from his eyelids, the remembrance of last night flashed upon his memory. He rose and looked about him. The bravoes had withdrawn; the ladies also were gone, and the couch was tenantless. Sheathing his weapons, he drained the wine-jar; and snatching up his bonnet, he departed from the house unseen by its inmates, whom he bequeathed to the devil for their discourtesy.

Fetching his horse from the stable of the *escrivano*, where he had left it overnight, he again resumed his journey, feeling heartily tired of Spain, and wishing himself again at Toulouse, where his comrades were awaiting the order to embark.

CHAPTER III.

THE LADY OF ELIZONDO.

"A love devoid of guile and sin;
A love for ever kind and pure,—
A love to suffer and endure;
Unalterably firm and great,
Amid the angry storms of fate;
For ever young, for ever new,
For ever passionate and true."
The Salamandrine.

A ride of a few leagues brought Stuart to Elizondo. On entering the market-place, two Spanish soldiers, placed as sentinels before the door of a large mansion-house, attracted his attention. He was informed that it was the residence of the Condé Penne Villamur. It stood at the corner of the old marketplace, to which one of its fronts looked; the other faced the *Puerta del Sol*, where the superior classes of the inhabitants met to promenade and converse, between ten and twelve in the forenoon.

He dismounted, and, ascending a splendid staircase, was ushered into a handsome apartment, the lofty ceiling of which was covered with antique carving and gilding. As

usual in Spanish houses, the furniture was very antique, and the chairs and hangings were of damask cloth. The condé, a grim old fellow, whose grey wiry moustaches were turned up to the tops of his ears, lay back in an easy chair, with his legs stretched out lazily at full length under the table, upon which stood wine-decanters, and fruit, &c. &c. A young lady, either his wife or daughter, sat in that part of the room where the floor was raised, as if for a throne, about a foot above the rest. She sat working at a new mantilla, which she was embroidering on a frame. Her feet were placed on the wooden rail of a *brasero* or pan filled with charcoal, which rendered the atmosphere of the room very unpleasant to one unaccustomed to such an uncomfortable contrivance. When Stuart entered, the señora merely bowed, and continued her work, blushing as young ladies generally do when a handsome young officer appears unexpectedly. The count snatched from his face the handkerchief which during his siesta had covered it, and bowed twice or thrice with the most formal gravity of an old Castilian, stooping until the bullion epaulets of his brown regimentals became reversed. Stuart delivered the despatch with which he had ridden so far, wondering what it might contain. The condé handed him a chair, and a glass of Malaga; after which he begged pardon, and proceeded to con over the papers, without communicating their contents. But in consequence of the complacent smile which overspread and unbent his grim features, Ronald supposed that the envelope contained only some complimentary address to the Spanish forces. And he was right in his conjecture, as, six months afterwards, he had the pleasure,

or rather displeasure, of perusing it in a number of the *Gaceta de la Regencia*.

"*Diavolo!*" thought he, as he bowed to *la señora*, and emptied his glass; "have I ridden from the Garonne to the Pyrenees with a paper full of staff-office nonsense!"

Villamur read over the document two or three times, often begging pardon for the liberty he took; and after inquiring about the health of Lord Wellington, and discussing the probabilities of having a continuance of fine weather, as if he kept a score of barometers and thermometers, he ended by a few other common-place observations, and covering up his face with his handkerchief, began to relapse insensibly into the dozing and dreamy state from which Stuart had roused him. Irritated at treatment so different from what he expected, and which an officer of the most trusty ally of Spain deserved, Ronald at once rose, and bowing haughtily to the lady, withdrew; the condé coolly permitting him to do so, saying, that Micer Bartolmé, the alcalde, who kept the faro-table opposite, would give him an order for a billet.

"Confound his Spanish pride, his insolence, presumption, and ingratitude!" thought Stuart, bitterly. "'Tis a pretty display of hospitality this,—to one who has looked on the slaughter of Vittoria, of Orthes, and Toulouse! But my duty is over, thank Heaven! and to-morrow my horse's tail will be turned on this most grateful soil of Spain."

Micer Bartolmé expressed much joy at the sight of the red coat, and would have invited the wearer to remain in his own house, probably for the purpose of fleecing him at faro; but it so happened that, at the moment, he was not exactly