

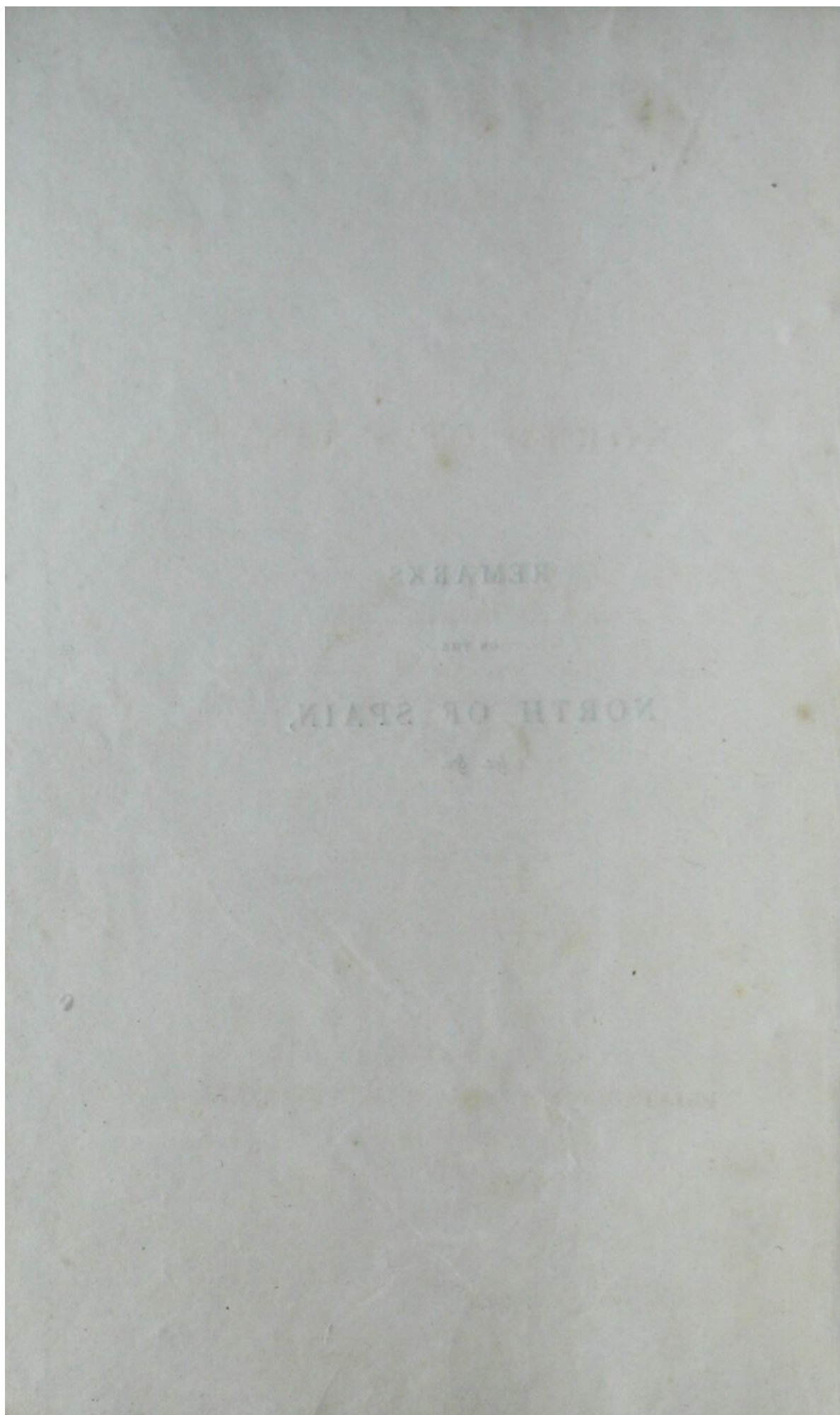








REMARKS
ON THE
NORTH OF SPAIN,
&c. &c.



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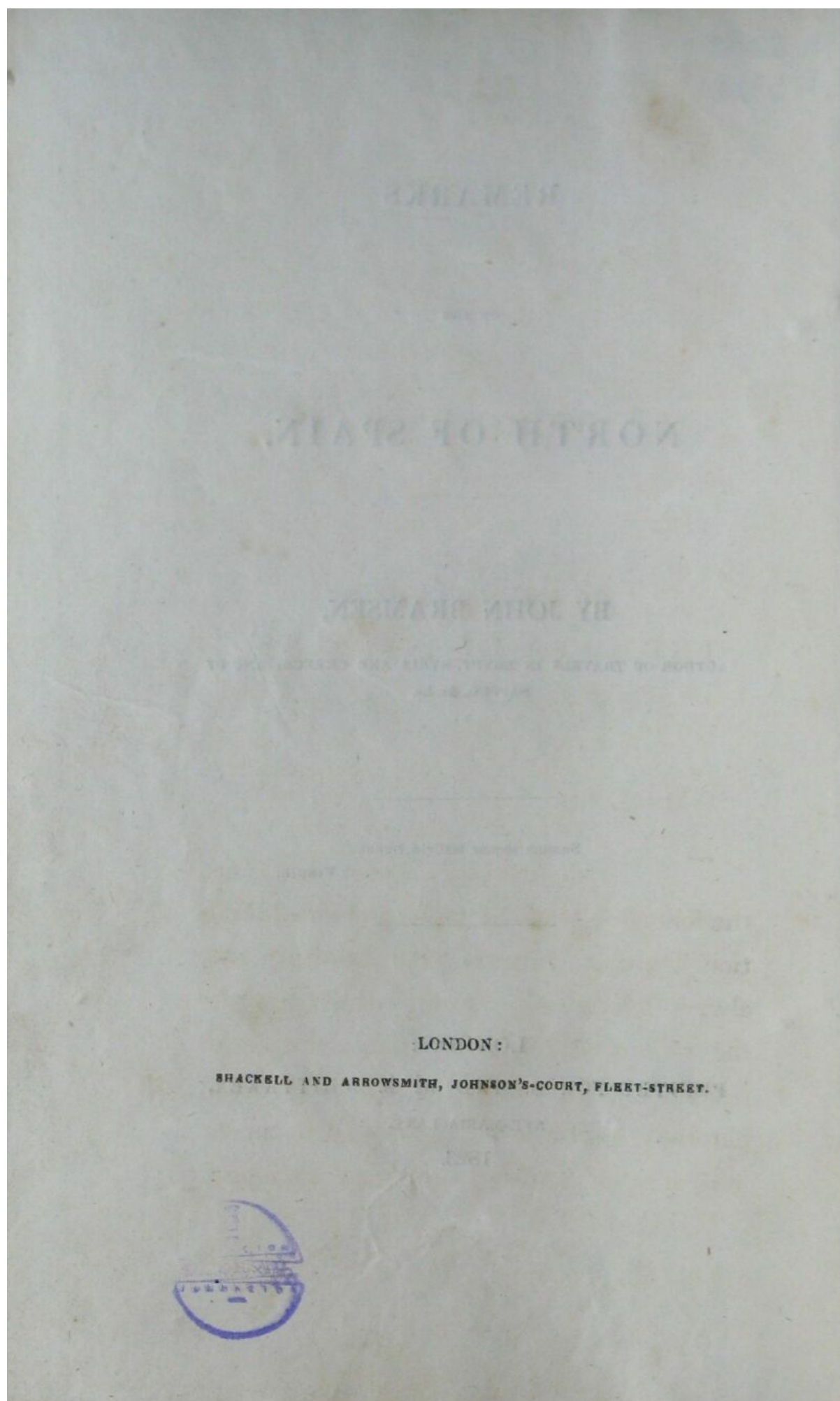
BY JOHN BRAMSEN,

AUTHOR OF TRAVELS IN EGYPT, SYRIA AND GREECE; AND OF
SAPPHO, &c. &c.

Summa sequar fastigia rerum.

VIRGIL.

LONDON:
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AVE-MARIA LANE.
1823.



DEDICATION.

TO

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE EARL OF FIFE, G. K. G.

&c. &c. &c.

MY LORD,

IN dedicating to your Lordship the following work, I take into consideration the deep interest your Lordship has always felt in every thing which regards the welfare of Spain;—where, during a residence of several years, your Lordship heroically participated in the endeavour to mitigate the sufferings of that unhappy

country; and personally contributed towards its final emancipation from the yoke of foreign despotism. The recollection of this sympathetic co-operation, during their arduous struggle for independence, is still, I am proud to mention, alive in the bosom of every true Spaniard.

I need not eulogise the protection, which your Lordship is so well known to extend to the arts and sciences, without distinction of nation, and for which your Lordship's name is so justly honoured in this country, as well as on the continent.

I also am happy, that these REMARKS afford me an opportunity of publicly avowing to your Lordship, the high sense of gratitude I entertain for the kindness I have experienced, during the many years, I have been honoured with your Lordship's friendship.

DEDICATION.

vii

I subscribe myself, with sentiments of
profound respect and esteem,

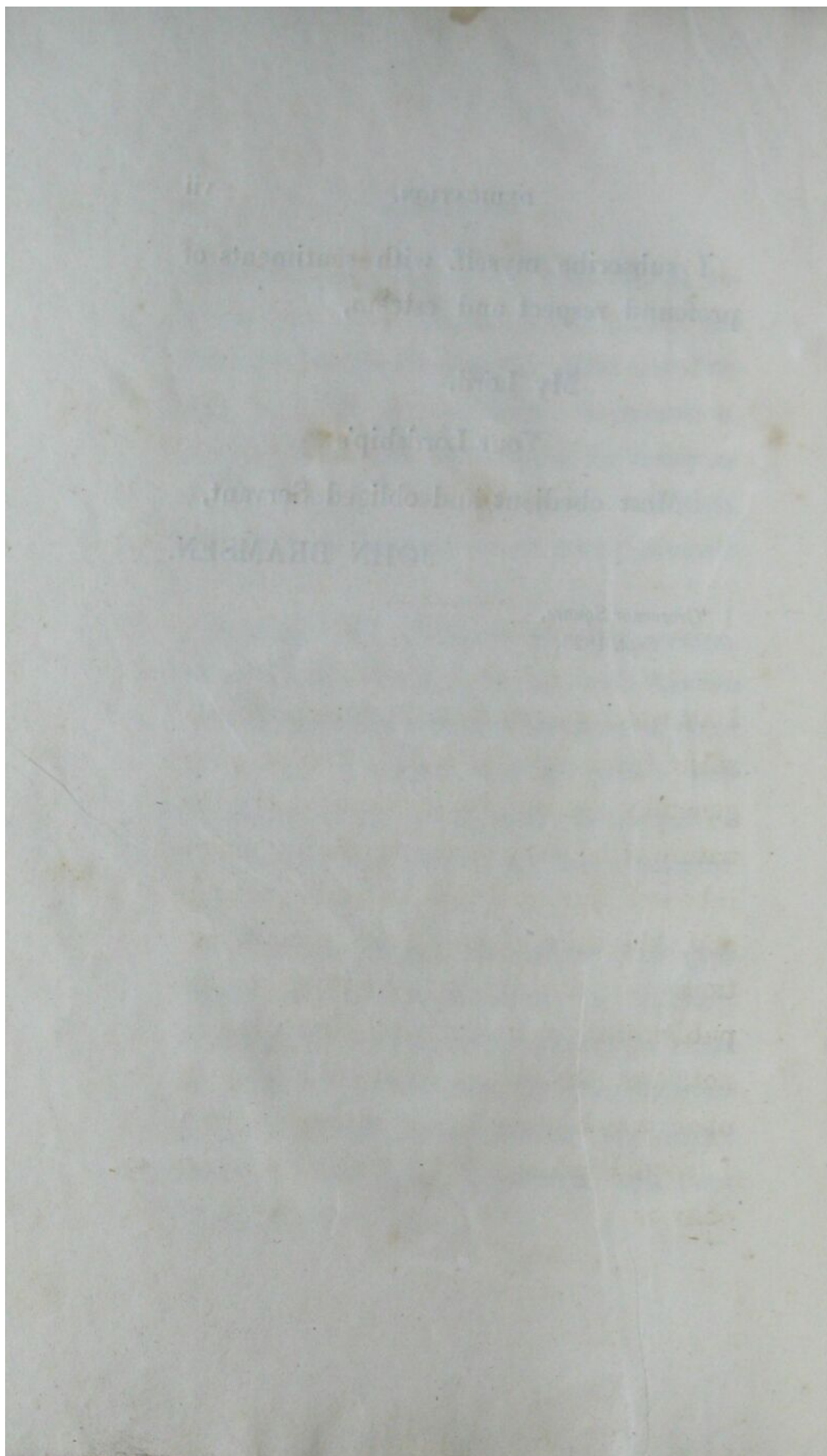
My Lord,

Your Lordship's

Most obedient and obliged Servant,

JOHN BRAMSEN.

*Grosvenor Square,
Sept. 1823.*



PREFACE.

I AM well aware that, at the present period, when the mania for writing travels has so generally spread, a publication of this nature is no very welcome offering, unless it be well furnished with interesting matter; and, therefore, I experience some sensations of timidity on presenting to the public this small volume: and were it not, that the subject concerns a country, upon which every eye in Europe is fixed, I should perhaps have consigned it to oblivion.

If the following remarks have no other merit, they certainly are entitled to that of being unbiassed by party feelings; and I assure those, who may be inclined to peruse them, that I had firmly resolved, on leaving the *Lazaretto of Behobia*, to keep aloof from politics and from the *contagion* of party, which resolution I have in my travels always firmly maintained; and whenever it has been my lot to depict scenery, customs, manners, or party feelings, I have never heightened the picture by false colouring to excite admiration, or given exaggerated statements, with the design of flattering the views of my political readers.

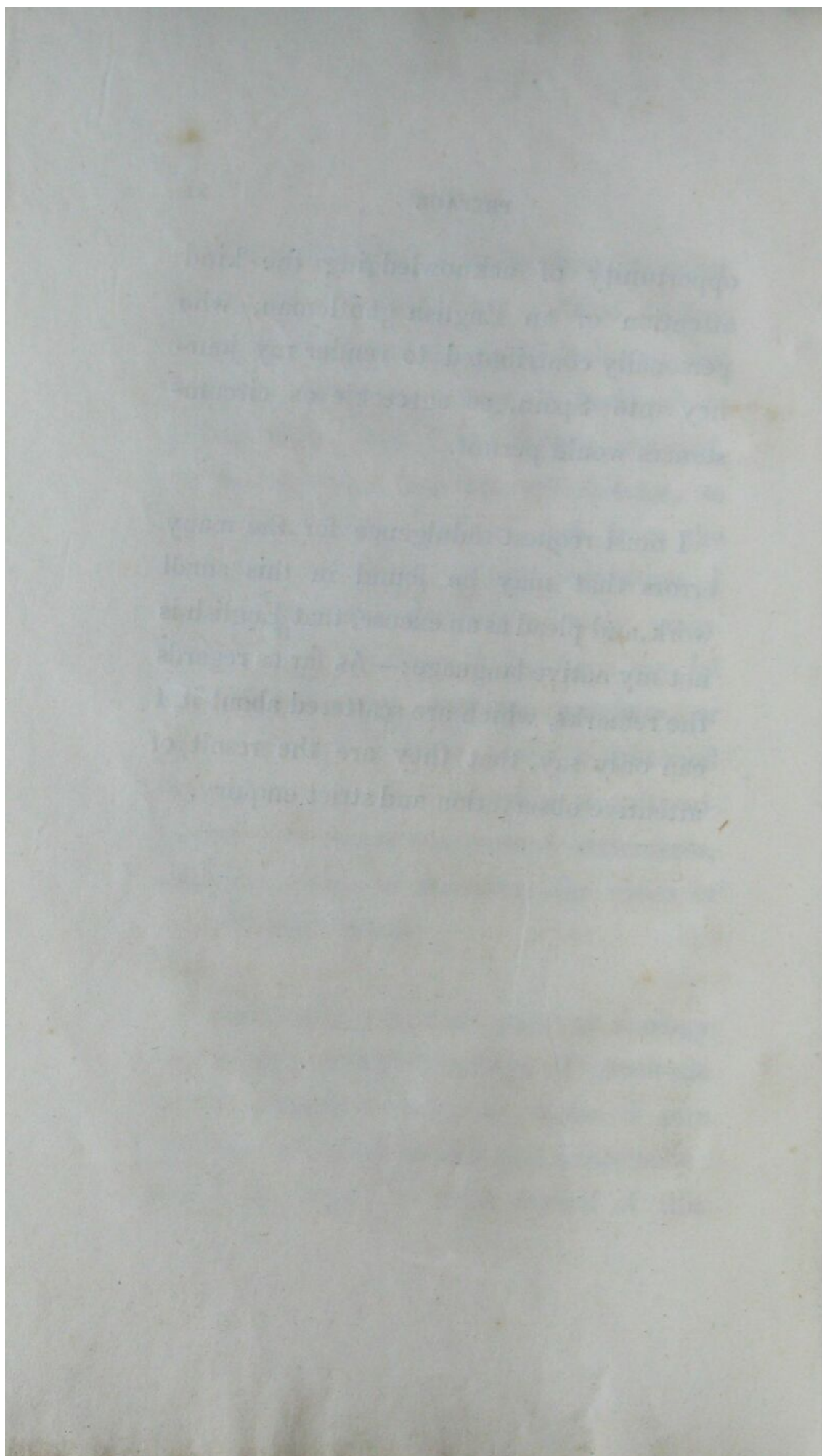
I am sure that I need offer no apology for having indulged feelings of gratitude to my friends abroad, to whom I owe much for their politeness and hospitality; and I am happy to avail myself of this

PREFACE

xi

opportunity of acknowledging the kind attention of an English gentleman, who personally contributed to render my journey into Spain, as agreeable as circumstances would permit.

I must request indulgence for the many errors that may be found in this small work, and plead as an excuse, that English is not my native language :—As far as regards the remarks, which are scattered about it, I can only say, that they are the result of attentive observation and strict enquiry.



CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

	Page.
Departure from Bayonne.—St. Jean de Luz.—Laz- zaretto of Behobia.—Mons. le Commissaire.— Veteran Serjeant.—Bidassoa.—Savage Peasants. —Custom House	1

CHAPTER II.

Irun.—Hotel. — Spanish Dinner. — Inhabitants.— Garrison.—Female Patriots.—Plaza de la Con- stitucion	7
--	---

CHAPTER III.

Departure from Irun.—Spanish Mules.—Tolosa.— Villa Franca.—Post House.—Durango.—Recon- tre with some of the Factious; their civil treat- ment	13
--	----

CHAPTER IV.

Arrival at Bilboa.—Hotel.—Public Walks.—Ex- change. — Cafés.—Streets. — Arenal. — Campo	
--	--

	<i>Page.</i>
Volantil.—Dinner of the Constitutional Soldiers.	
—Italian Riding Master.—Harbour.—Consuls.—	
Theatre	26

CHAPTER V.

Society.—Physicians.—State of Literature.—Mila- nese Printseller.—Saints and Napoleons.—Inha- bitants.—Ladies.—Their Dresses	38
--	----

CHAPTER VI.

Tertulias.—Amusements.—French Officers.—Spa- nish Ladies and Dress.—Clubs.—Dinner Party. —Smokers.—Xefe Politico.—Hospitality of Baron de Diem——r.—British Consul.—Han- seatic Consul.—Manufactories.—Commercial Opinions of a Spanish Merchant.—Spanish Wool	44
--	----

CHAPTER VII.

Climate of Bilboa.—Insects.—Ccd-fish.—Spanish Dustmen.—Exportation by Liverpool Merchants. —Quay.—Dutch Vessels.—French Chasses Ma- rées.—Passage to Bayonne.—Spanish Barges	53
---	----

CHAPTER VIII.

Mails; mode of conveying them.—Stages.—Sang- froid of a young Englishman.—State of the Police.—Serenos.—Spanish Precaution.—Ser- vants.—Finesse to obtain admission.—Porters.— Women employed to unload the Vessels	58
---	----

CONTENTS.

XV

CHAPTER IX.

Page.

Political Opinions.—Monks.—Spies of the Factionous.—Spirit of Intolerance. — Militia. Discipline.—Spanish Gasconading.—Franciscan Monk.—Destruction of a Convent.—Its Interior.—The Booty.—Beautiful Devotees	63
---	----

CHAPTER X.

The Inquisition. — Tortures. — Capture of seven horses by the Factionous.—Escape of the horses of the English Ambassador.—Recovery of six horses.—Remarks	70
---	----

CHAPTER XI.

Constitutional Fête.—Feu-de-Joie.—Vivas.—Spanish Grandee.—Theatre.—Public Ball	81
--	----

CHAPTER XII.

Departure from Bilboa.—Constitutional Troops.—Female Squadrons.—Commander.—The March.—Villages. — Accommodations. —Orduna Mountains	85
---	----

CHAPTER XIII.

Arrival at Orduna.—Alcalde.—Hotel.—Anti-Constitutional Landlady.—Factionous Inhabitants.—Description of Orduna.—Constitutional Fracas.—Prudence of the Commander.—Veteran Ensign.—Female Hints on Discipline	94
--	----

CHAPTER XIV.

	Page.
Precaution of the Commander.—Faction in Ambuscade.—Surprise.—Booty.—Rencontre with the Faction.—Passage over the Orduna Mountains.—Vita del Hombré.—Berguenda.—Anti-constitutional Peasants.—Inn.—Landlord	101

CHAPTER XV.

Good Qualities of Constitutional Troops.—Hotel at <i>Miranda de Ebro</i> ; description of the Town.—Departure for Vittoria.—Pueblo de Argenzon.—The Painter Murillo.—Arrival at Vittoria	110
--	-----

CHAPTER XVI.

Hotel.—Table-d'Hôte.—Description of Vittoria.—Theatre.—Audience.—Criticism and National Spirit.—Café.—Assassination.—Field of Battle at Vittoria.—Remarks.—Bon-mot of an old Statesman	116
--	-----

CHAPTER XVII.

Departure from Vittoria.—Emigration.—Salinas.—Mondragon.—Postmaster at Tolosa.—Ernani.—Escort attacked by the Faction.—Custom House at Irun.—Quarantine removed.—Recrossing the Bidassoa.—French Custom-House.—Arrival at Bayonne	124
CONCLUSIVE REMARKS	129

CHAPTER I.

Departure from Bayonne.—St. Jean de Luz.—Lazaretto of Behobia.—Mons. le Commissaire.—Veteran Serjeant.—Biddassoa.—Savage Peasants.—Custom House.

IN the beginning of September, 1822, I took my departure from the Hotel St. Etienne, Bayonne, and proceeded to St. Jean de Luz, pleasantly situate a few miles from the sea coast. The town and its vicinity were occupied by a great number of troops, whose appearance would have justified a Frenchman in saying, "*la troupe est bien tenue*:" it is small, and consists of houses badly constructed, partly of brick, and partly of wood. The road hither from Bayonne is hilly, and in many places very sandy. After we had proceeded

for about an hour on our road to Irun, we were stopped by three *gens d'armes*, belonging to the *Cordon Sanitaire*, and conducted to the *Commissaire de Police*, whom I found confined to his bed, in a miserable hut, situate in front of the *Lazaretto of Behobia*; the latter composed of three brick houses, on a small eminence, having a pleasure ground before it.

I found M. le Commissaire such a sallow-visaged personage, that I could not refrain from remarking that he himself was a fitter subject for the *Lazaretto*, than any traveller coming from the other side of the Bidassoa.

He received me very politely, and made many apologies for his situation. An elderly lady, rather *en bon point*, whom I understood to be his wife, was sitting at his bedside, administering to the wants of her *chère moitié*. The good lady, who was rather loquacious, expressed her surprise "that any human being could venture to cross the Bidassoa," or, to use her own ex-

pression, "to approach the dragon's mouth;" thereby intimating her fears that I should catch the yellow fever; but, should I have the good fortune to return, my fate would be to reside under her roof and kind care, for the space of five days, including those of arrival and departure, which, in fact, reduces it to three.*

When my passport was signed, I wished M. le Commissaire a speedy recovery, and took my departure under the escort of a serjeant, with whom I embarked in a boat to cross the Bidassoa. The heat was intense. Immediately on entering the boat, the veteran began a conversation in broken English; praising the kind treatment he had received in England, during the time he had been a prisoner of war there: then by an ingenious digression he adverted to the intolerable heat of the day. I soon perceived that his conversation was rather an appeal directed to my purse, than to the vanity of

* Madame la Commissaire officiated as cook to the persons confined in the Lazaretto under quarantine.

his auditor, for a franc or two silenced his eulogies. When we were about half way over the river, which is small, he informed me that we were out of France. We were met half way by a ferry-boat, into which the other passengers and myself stepped, and in five minutes reached the opposite shore; and though the distance was little more than twenty paces, our new Charon had the conscience to demand five francs from each, which, on our refusal, he endeavoured, in no very civil terms, to exact. Hardly had we settled with him, when we were beset by a swarm of men, whose savage looks, and sallow complexions, reminded me of the Arabs I had seen among the mountains of Jerusalem. Their dress accorded with their looks; their hair hung over their shoulders, and they wore a shirt, the colour of which dust and time had conspired to conceal. Some wore a brown jacket, and a small round hat; some were barefooted, others wore sandals, and an old slipper fastened to the foot with black riband. They did not appear to enjoy the best reputation for honesty; as

there were guards watching their motions for the better security of the baggage and passengers. These guards were only distinguished by a cartridge-box fastened in front by a girdle.

I would recommend all travellers to have horses ordered from Irun, which is about half a mile from this spot, to draw the carriage from the middle of the river; as during the *quarantine* the French postillion conducts the carriage only as far as the French limits, which is in the middle of the Bidassoa, and there leaves it; the river at low water being very shallow. There was formerly a bridge over the Bidassoa, but it was destroyed by the Spaniards at the commencement of the late war. Unless such precautions are taken, travellers have no alternative but to submit to the extravagant imposition of twenty-five francs, made by the above-mentioned peasants, for performing that office; and who are so awkward, that they frequently upset the carriage in the river, or otherwise injure it, while dragging it over the stones on the shore.

The custom-house is situate at the entrance of Irun, where our baggage was deposited for examination. The officer informed me, that, as my passport had not undergone all the necessary formalities, at the Spanish consulate at Bayonne, I could not proceed; and there was no remedy but that of sending it back, to obtain the *visa* of the Spanish consul. It was returned to me the following morning; and I was then obliged to send it to the *Xefe Politico* (Chief of the Police) at St. Sebastian, to obtain his *visa*, for which formality every traveller must pay a Spanish dollar. The custom-house officer, having valued our carriage much above its prime cost, wished us to deposit the full amount in cash, which we thought rather dangerous on account of the position of affairs in Spain. We therefore decided on leaving the carriage at the custom-house, and hired one with seven mules, for four hundred francs, wherewith to proceed to Bilboa.

CHAPTER II.

Irun.—Hotel.—Spanish Dinner.—Inhabitants.—Garrison.—
Female Patriots.—Plaza de la Constitucion.

ON our arrival at Irun we alighted at the hotel, kept by the postmaster, where, to my no small surprise, I found the stable situate at the very entrance of the hotel; occupying that part of the building which, in England, generally forms the parlour. The dining-room was directly over the stable, and presented no very elegant appearance; as the only furniture it contained consisted of an old wooden table, a few crazy chairs, and a bed in a recess. The adjoining apartment, which was furnished in an equally splendid manner, had also a bed in

8 IRUN—HOTEL—PLAZA DE LA CONSTITUCION.

it, and was destined for the reception of a select party. Both rooms had large holes in the floor, through which the effluvia of the stable afforded no very agreeable sensation to the olfactory nerves of the visitors. As the carriage we had hired, could not leave Irun before one o'clock the following day, it afforded me an opportunity of seeing the town, consisting of one main street, which, though narrow, had a foot pavement. The houses were miserable; most of them not more than one or two stories high, and irregularly built. Some had a small balcony with curtains; others wooden verandas, extending the whole length of the first floor windows. There were a few shops, but those very poorly stocked. At one end of the main street was a square, called *Plaza de la Constitucion*,* where the scanty garrison paraded. I could hardly help smiling on observing the town-house

* There is generally in every Spanish town, in the market place, a marble slab affixed to the wall of some public building, upon which is inscribed *Plaza de la Constitucion*.

strangely metamorphosed into a miserable fortress, occupied by the garrison, and having a small drawbridge in front. At the other end of the main street stands a church of inferior architecture, containing nothing worthy of remark. The neighbourhood appears fertile; and at a short distance from the town are seen scattered many country houses with gardens, well stocked with vegetables and fruit trees. The general appearance of Irun is far from being cheerful; the want of windows in most of the houses, a defect which was supplied by wooden shutters, contributing in no small degree to increase the gloominess of its aspect. Besides—it appeared evident that no great care was taken to clean the streets, which were accordingly very filthy. Most of the inhabitants had a sallow and sickly appearance: the men of the lower class generally wore a handkerchief tied about their heads and a small cap over it; some a chocolate-coloured jacket and trowsers, and many had red sashes round their waists. The females tied their hair, which was of a glossy black,

in long tresses; their eyes were generally large and dark, and their eyelashes black, which appears to be a national characteristic. They were rather graceful than beautiful; but their complexion, like that of the men, was pale and unhealthy. The men of the lower class generally sat on benches before the doors, smoking segars. About six in the evening, a person, dressed in plain clothes, followed by two drummers, passed through the street, playing national airs upon a flageolet or pipe, for the purpose of calling the soldiers to parade. After marching up and down several times, they took their station on the parade; but it appeared that the ladies were animated by a more lively spirit of patriotic feeling than the men; as they obtained a far greater number of female than of male recruits.

The garrison, consisting of about fifty men and a few officers, assembled; but shortly after their arrival, most of them laid down their arms, and joined in the dance with the females. The charm of

the national airs fascinated the aged as well as the young; as I observed several women, not less than seventy years of age, with heads as white as the tops of the neighbouring Pyrenees, joined the youthful group in threading the mazes of the fandango. The officers and several of the inhabitants stood by, smoking segars. I saw one officer take a segar from the mouth of a soldier to light his own, and then return it in a most friendly manner.

It appeared that it is contrary to custom, for men-servants to wait at table at the inns; as during our dinner we were attended by a female servant, who stood behind our chairs with a towel hanging over her shoulder. I think it will not be unpleasant to some of my gastronomical readers to be made acquainted with a Spanish bill of fare; that they may know what to expect, should they visit that part of Spain. The first dish placed upon the table was an olla (*pot au feu*), composed of meat, ham, fowls, pig's feet, suasages, bread, and a species of beans called *cara-*

vansas; the second dish consisted of cabbages and sausages from Estramadura; the third, of boiled partridges and rice; the fourth, of *bacallao a la Biscayan^{na}*, or cod-fish, dressed after the Biscayan fashion; the whole of the dishes being profusely seasoned with oil, and garlick. The dessert consisted of fruits of various kinds, among which were grapes of an extraordinary size, but they were nearly tasteless. *say your*

CHAPTER III.

Departure from Irun.—Spanish mules.—Tolosa.—Villa Franca.
—Post House.—Durango.—Rencontre with some of the Fac-
tious.*

THE day after our arrival, we obtained our permit and baggage from the Custom-house, with our passport from St. Sebastian; and at one o'clock took our departure from Irun, and proceeded on our journey to Tolosa. A short distance from Irun the road was so hilly and in such a bad state, that, in spite of the close conversation, which the drivers kept up with their mules, two of the latter were frequently on their knees. On each side of the road were immense mountains; some barren, and others covered with fern and underwood.

* Those are called factious in Spain, who are not of the constitutional party.

Between the mountains the country was cultivated mostly with Indian corn ; and part of the road lined with apple and pear trees loaded with fruit. The scenery was wild and picturesque : a deep melancholy seemed to hover over the whole country ; Nature having done little towards producing a smiling or even an agreeable landscape.

The few insignificant towns, villages, and straggling houses, which we passed before we reached Tolosa, presented a wretched appearance. Instead of windows, many of the houses had holes, formed in the walls to admit light and air. In the villages, the pavement was in such a condition, that our carriage, with the utmost exertion both of man and beast, could hardly be made to pass ; and as it hung upon very indifferent springs, we were most unmercifully shaken. Our *mulatero*, who was a Frenchman, walked by the side of the mules, and very seldom took his seat in front ; nor did the Spanish postillion, who acted as his assistant. The mules appeared

to understand the expressions of the drivers, who told me that each had its appropriate name, and required only to be spoken to, without any beating, to accelerate or retard its pace; which generally is a quick walk. On entering or leaving a village however, it improves its pace into a trot. It is neither watered nor fed until it reaches the end of its day's journey, which is often from ten to twelve leagues.

Our vehicle was drawn by seven mules, two and two abreast, with a leader. Their heads were fantastically ornamented with white and blue trappings, and a great number of small bells were attached to leathern belts, fastened round their necks; the leader having several large bells by way of pre-eminence. I often observed that it walked with greater precaution than the other mules; particularly in turning the roads, and winding along the precipices.

On passing a village half-way between Irun and Tolosa, we found a great number

of the inhabitants, playing at ball in the square; two of whom approached our carriage, and demanded whether we had received a clearance for our baggage from the Custom-house. After showing it to them, they allowed us to pass. Shortly after many of them came to the side of the carriage, and enquired if there were any Factious inside. Being answered in the negative, they retired, and we continued our journey unmolested, as far as the gates of Tolosa; where we were stopped by the sentries demanding our passports; which, on receiving, they delivered to a corporal and three soldiers for examination. They kept us more than a quarter of an hour waiting, and were not very polite in their expressions; but finally returned the passports, and told us we might enter the town. We alighted at the hotel near the bridge, a very extensive building, which appeared formerly to have been a convent: it being composed of numerous small rooms, having no other furniture than a narrow bed, a wooden table, and a few chairs. The besdteads were of an extraordinary form;

the head board being very high and narrow, gilt, and otherwise ornamented with crosses and flowers: some bedsteads in the other rooms had also a board at the foot, with similar ornaments.

In the morning a female servant brought us breakfast, which consisted of chocolate and bread; neither butter nor milk could be obtained. Being requested by one of the travellers to bring a tea-pot, she brought a small shaving bowl, filled with water, scarcely warm, observing that it was the only utensil she had for beverage of that kind.

Tolosa is situate thirty-seven miles SW. of Bayonne. Its principal street is about half an English mile in length; and the houses, mostly three stories high, have a balcony in front of each window.

Formerly there were several sword manufactories in Tolosa; but they are now in a state of inactivity; which must be particularly regretted by the Spaniards, under their

present want of arms. Cleanliness appeared to have been proscribed by the inhabitants, who strongly resemble in this particular those of Irun.

There is another inn in the town, kept by the post-master, standing in the centre of the main street, and which we learnt was of a similar description with the one above-mentioned.

We left Tolosa for Villa Franca, a small town, lying in a more cheerful spot than the one we had left; where the inn, kept by the post-master, was comfortable, and its owner civil. He informed us, that the Factionous had paid them a visit a few days before; and that, at their departure, they had taken a horse and a mule from him. A Spaniard, who happened to be present, observed, that it was rather incompatible with their title of Army of the FAITH, to plunder peaceable inhabitants, and particularly a post-master.

We departed from Villa Franca to Villa

Real; but the scenery on the road was far from displaying such agreeable prospects as that we had so lately quitted. The features of the country did not vary, until we arrived at the post-house, situate on the public road to Madrid, about an English mile from Bergara. The view from the balcony was very imposing; for the sky was serene, and the purple rays of the sun, setting behind the lofty mountains, presented a sight at once beautiful and sublime.

Towards evening, many of the inhabitants of the neighbouring town, Bergara,—where there is a college of no small fame,—passed the house in their way to a village, which was in sight.

These people, seeing our carriage before the door, made many enquiries who we were, and our business in Spain. The inmates of the post-house were rather civil, but not so the numerous insects who infested the beds.

We proceeded hence to Durango, having

quited the road to Madrid. At a short distance from the place where we slept, we passed a large village, standing delightfully on the banks of the river. The peasants were peaceably occupied with the concerns of husbandry, and exhibited not the smallest symptom, that the state of the country had interrupted the course of their occupations.

The road hence to Durango is the worst I ever met with; and had not our carriage been built of very solid materials, it would have reached Durango in a very shattered condition. We arrived, however, at the gates with no other inconvenience than that of having been severely shaken.

We were there stopped by the sentry to show our passports; but in a more polite manner than at Tolosa; and having written down our names, we were allowed to proceed to the post-house; where we dined, and gave refreshment to our mules for the first time, during that day's journey.

The few troops, most of which were militia-men, were well equipped; there being but few of the line in the town or its neighbourhood. I was informed that the Factious made frequent inroads, and then retreated to the neighbouring mountains.

We were shown a public building near the gates, to which the Factious had a few days previously set fire; destroying the greater part of the building, and the walls that surrounded it. They entered at the breach; but after some skirmishes were compelled to retire; not, however, without having previously levied contributions.

The inmates of the hotel appeared to be of a very religious cast; the rooms, into which we were shewn, being stocked with images of saints of all sizes; on the chimney stood several apostles; at the door was a picture of Christ and the Virgin; while the walls of the room were covered with religious inscriptions.

Our dinner was served up with a par-

simony more suitable for a hermit on his pilgrimage, than for travellers, who had been jumbled about at a most unmerciful rate. The dishes, too, were so highly seasoned with garlick, that nothing but the emergency of appetite could render them at all palatable. The wine was new and sour, and quite in unison with the rest of the repast.

There are several large buildings, of decent architecture, particularly the college, which is frequented by numerous students, many of whom I saw walking in black gowns.

The landlady told me that the inhabitants, being exposed to their exactions, are in constant alarm from the Factious; who were well informed of the exact number of horses and mules in the town, of which they stood in great need.

Having played our part at the table, as well as could be expected on such an occasion, we hastened to continue our journey to Bilboa; in order to arrive there

before night: as we had heard that the road thither was much worse, than the one we had passed; and in spite of the holy display in the room where we sat, the inhabitants of the neighbourhood did not aspire to principles, harmonizing with the sanctity of this external exhibition.

We passed several mountains, some of which were entirely barren; but others were peopled with flocks of sheep and goats, which grazed peaceably among the rocks.

Towards evening we entered a narrow defile between high mountains, covered with large oak trees. We had hardly done so, when suddenly two peasants rushed from behind a tree on the brow of the mountain, calling out "*Alto aqui.*" One of them was dressed in a brown jacket, without stockings or waistcoat: he was about twenty-five years of age, and apparently but a novice in the trade, as he trembled very much. The other, rather older, appeared a veteran in his profession. Each held a gun which was

levelled at the windows of the carriage; two others stood a little higher up the mountain.

They wished to make their appearance as terrific as possible, pretending to belong to a patrol of the *Army of the Faith*; saying that their captain was on the top of the mountain with a strong detachment of troops; that they wished to be informed who we were; our business in Spain, whether political or not; whether we had any letters or passports: and they accompanied every sentence with an oath.

We presented our passports; assuring them that none of us had come to Spain with any political design; being at the same time persuaded, that their views were of quite a different nature from that they affected to represent.

When we delivered our passports for examination, they read them upside down, and then returned them, affecting to be satisfied. After having detained us about a quarter of an hour, they began to abuse

the French driver, and wanted to see his permit for driving mules ; observing, at the same time, that the army was in great want of them. Finally, the enigma was solved. They told us that though they served in a good cause they received bad pay ; and were sorry to be under the necessity of asking us for some remuneration, for having stopped us in so civil a manner.

We presented each with a Napoleon : this somewhat abated their patriotic ardour, and instead of an oath, we were repeatedly greeted with *muchas gracias*. One of them begged us not to mention to the constitutionals their bad pay and the necessity they laboured under of asking money from travellers. They then ascended the mountain, and having disappeared behind the trees, we proceeded on our journey towards Bilboa.

CHAPTER IV.

Arrival at Bilboa.—Hotel.—Public Walks.—Exchange.—Cafés.
—Streets.—Arenal.—Campo Volantil.—Dinner of the Constitutional Soldiers.—Italian Riding Master.—Harbour.—Consuls.—Theatre.

IN consequence of this detention we did not reach the suburb of Bilboa before ten o'clock at night. According to an old established law, no carriage of any kind is permitted to enter the town, in order to preserve the pavement. Our carriage, mules, and baggage, therefore, were left at the post-house, in the suburbs.

We alighted at the *Posada de San Nicholas*, at the corner of the street called *Ascauo*, which was recommended to us as being the best in the town. Although we met with the same inconvenience of finding the

stables situated near the staircase, nevertheless the hotel was superior to any I had hitherto seen in Spain.

Bilboa, the capital of Biscay, is situate on the Ybaicabal, about fifty miles west of St. Sebastian, and one hundred and eighty north of Madrid. It is pretty large, and is surrounded by high mountains, at the feet of which are several convents agreeably situated in the midst of scenery truly picturesque.

The houses are generally from three to five stories high, built of brick or free-stone ; and every story has a small balcony before each window, with a curtain over it, to protect the inmates from the scorching heat of the sun :—and in some houses I noticed small windows, fixed in the middle of a green wooden shutter.

The market place, which is spacious, and well furnished with fruits and vegetables, is situated near the river. In the same square stands the Town hall, a very ancient

building of mean architecture. Not far from thence is a neat well built church, of which the interior contains nothing worthy of notice. A very old house was pointed out to me, over which the arms of the present proprietor were affixed.* This is the house whence Peter the Cruel, who was remarkably strong, threw a deputy out of the window, because he differed from him in political opinion. The mansion, in which Admiral Mazarredo lived, is a fine spacious building with the family arms over it, carved in stone.

The church of St. James, standing near the post-office, has an entrance of superior architecture; in its interior are six different naves, and a silver altar, over which appears St. James on horseback, of massy silver. The choir and the windows are in the gothic style; the latter of coloured glass; but there are so many wooden images, and so much gilding in

* This is generally the insignia of nobility, or to shew that the proprietors are descended from ancient families.

the interior of the church, that they detracted much from its solemnity.

The names of the principal streets are *Calle del Correo*, where the *Xefe Politico* resides; *Ascauo*, where the *Posada de San Nicholas* is situated; *L'Esperanza*, *Vide Varieta*, and *El Portal*, &c. &c.

The public walk, called *L'Arenal*, lies in front of the *Calle de Stufa*, along the river; it is the most handsome, and most frequented by the *beau monde*. There are many stone benches, and in the centre a flower garden. This walk is a rendezvous or Exchange for the merchants, who meet between twelve and two o'clock, to settle their commercial transactions; and they generally conclude their negociations, at the two coffee houses in the *Calle del Correo*, kept by two brothers, who are natives of Switzerland. The first Café, at the entrance of the street, is considered the most respectable. In the afternoon between two and four, *L'Arenal* is the rendezvous of politicians, who meet to discuss or to fabricate news, to assist the

interests of the party, to which they respectively belong.

This walk is also a parade for the militia, who assemble daily. Here on days of Constitutional Fêtes, the troops meet to discharge the *feu de joie*: and here, in the evening, the fashionables of both sexes take their lounge; and little boys, with lighted matches, run up and down the walk, crying "*Fuego, fuego!*" for the smokers to light their segars, at the moderate charge of a halfpenny. Many of the most famous smokers and frequenters of this walk are well known to these boys, and pay by a subscription of a penny per week; but they seldom or ever smoke when they are walking with ladies.

As soon as it grows dark, the place is abandoned by the more respectable class of ladies, and only frequented by females, who have other intentions than that of respiring the fresh air.

There is another walk called *El Campo Volantil*, which is situated at a small distance