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Richard Ford

Excerpt

[More information](#)*Leon.*

KINGDOM OF LEON.

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## SECTION VIII.

## THE KINGDOM OF LEON.

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The very important kingdom of Leon, because lying out of the hacknied track of travellers, is not visited as it deserves. It abounds with sites of unrivalled military interest; the painted sculpture is of the first class; the scenery in the Bierzo and Sierras is magnificent, and the fishing excellent. The chief cities, Salamanca, Valladolid, and Leon, are full of architectural and artistic interest, while to the historian the archives of Spain lie buried at Simancas. The Summer months are the best for the hills, the Springs and Autumns for the plains.

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## THE KINGDOM OF LEON.

*El Reino de Leon* runs up from the plains of the Castiles into the spurs of the Gallician and Asturian Sierras. It is one of the most ancient of the once separate and independent kingdoms of the Peninsula, for the natives, being situated near the mountain-den from whence the Lion of the Goth soon turned upon the Moor, were among the earliest to expel the infidel invader, whose hold was slight and resistance feeble when compared to his deep-fanged retention and defence of Andalusia. Nor, when we behold the dreary steppes and rugged hills of Leon, and pass over the mountain barrier into the cold damp Asturias, can we be surprised that the Arab, the lover of the sun and plain, should turn readily to the more congenial south. The Christian dominion was extended by Alonzo el Catolico, who, between A.D. 739-57, overran and reconquered the plains down to the Duero and Tormes. The Moors nevertheless continued to make annual *Algarus* or forays into these parts, more for purposes of plunder than reconquest. Thus this frontier arena was alternately in the power of Christian and Infidel, until about the year 910 Garcia removed the court from Oviedo to Leon, and gave its name to his new kingdom, to distinguish it from those of Castile and Navarre, and other counties and lordships. Indeed, the ranges of hills which from Catalonia to Galicia separate district from district, divided the country politically as well as geographically, and the dislocated land seemed to indicate distinct petty principalities, to prevent national unity, and foster local partition, and that *isolated independence* which is the inveterate tendency of this unamalgamating land; the early Christian counts, lords, dukes, or kings (sheikhs in reality), were rivals to each other, and when not at war with the Moor, quarrelled among themselves after the true Iberian fashion, “*Bellum quam otium malunt; si extraneus deest, domi hostem quærunt*” (Just. xlv. 2). The male line of the Leon kings failed in 1037 with Bermudo III., whose daughter carried the crown to her husband Ferdinand of Castile; he redivided his domains by his will, which, however, his son Sancho reunited, and Leon and Castile were finally joined in the person of St. Ferdinand, and have never since been separated.

The kingdom contains about 20,000 square miles, with a million inhabitants. These hardy, ill-educated agriculturists neither change their homes nor habits; creatures of routine and foes to innovation, they cling to the ways of their forefathers; yet although purely tillers of the earth, their practice is barbarously backward, and they plough in the primitive style of Triptolemus and the Georgics; most farmers are slow to improve, and these are no more to be hurried than their mules. Their minds, like their cumbrous creaking wheels (see Index, *Chillo*), are blocked up with the dirt and prejudices which have been accumulating since the deluge.

The minor traits of Leonese character are influenced by local differences, and the peasant is modified by the nature by which he is surrounded. Thus near the Sil, the Leonese resemble the Gallician mountaineers, as in the Sierra, near the Asturias, they partake of the Asturian, while in the southern portions they differ very little from the old Castilians (see Sect. xi.). These plains produce much corn and *garbanzos*, and a strong red wine is made near Toro. The hills to the N. are well timbered, and their valleys are filled with pastures and refreshed by beautiful trout streams. In these rarely visited localities the stranger will find a simple but cheerfully offered hospitality. The marly fresh water basin, or *tierra de Campos*, between Zamora, Leon, and Valladolid, is the land of Ceres; but although bread is a drug, and there are no corn-laws, nowhere are the people more scanty or miserable; they dwell in mud hovels made

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of unbaked bricks, or *adobes*, the precise Arabic *toob-ny*, and vie even with La Mancha in discomfort. The country is as uninteresting as the ventas are uncomfortable; woe betide him who rides across these interminable plains in winter or summer, the apologies for roads are then either axle or ankle deep in mud, or clouded in a salitrose dust, which seems to be on fire under the African sun.

Near Salamanca, however, matters improve, and many of the yeomen are wealthy, and live on isolated farms, *Montaracias*, growing much corn, which is exported into Andalucia. They are also breeders of cattle on a large scale, which they manage with the primitive sling, or *honda*, as near San Roque. The *conocidores*, or herdsmen, ride down the animals, *les agorachan a caballo*, just as their descendants do in South America. At their cattle brandings and family feasts, *herraduras y fiestas de familia*, as at their marriages, they keep open house with much eating, drinking, singing, and dancing the *habas verdes*; such feasts are truly described in Don Quixote at the wedding of Camacho. They are the unchanged convivium *fiesta* Carduarum of Martial (iv. 55, 17); and such were the Oriental sheep-shearings of Nabal (1 Sam. xxv. 36), who "held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king."

The houses of the humble Leonese, like their hearts, are always open to an Englishman; they have not forgotten the honesty, justice, and good conduct of our triumphant soldiers, which contrast with the rapine, sacrilege, and bloodshed of the defeated foe. They remember Salamanca, and him whom they call the "great lord," *El gran Lor*, the Cid of England; and many years after his victories over the French, imagined that he was coming back, possibly to become king of Castile. Their houses are substantially furnished and clean, for here, as elsewhere in the unvisited portions of the Peninsula, dirt and discomfort lodge at the public inn, whose accommodations are fit for the beasts and muleteers who use them. One peculiarity in their houses is the loftiness of the beds; the mattresses and pillows, *colchones y almohadas*, are often embroidered with lions and castles, and the coarse, but clean home-spun sheets are fringed with *flejos y randas*.

The peasant's dress near Ciudad Rodrigo and Salamanca is peculiar and expensive; his Sunday costume is worth more than that of all the peers who attend early service at Whitehall chapel, *El gran Lor's* included. The Leonese *Charro y Charra* are here what the *Majo y Maja* are in Andalucia, at least as far as goes gay and costly apparel, the joy of half-civilized nations; but these sons of the Goth have none of the *Zandunga* of the Oriental Southron, and the two costumes differ altogether. The *Charro* wears a low, broad-brimmed hat; his shirt, or *camison*, is richly worked in front, with a gold knob-brooch, or *boton*; his *chaleco*, or waistcoat of figured velvet, is cut square and low down to the pit of the stomach, to display this shirt; it is garnished with square silver buttons and cross ribbons; his jacket is open at the elbow, and edged with black velvet; his sash is a broad belt, a *cinto* of leather not of silk; his long dark cloth gaiters are embroidered below the knee; he wears large silver buckles in his shoes; a stick in his right hand and a cloak over his left shoulder, complete the rustic dandy. The gay *charra* is worthy of such a beau. She wears a *caramba* in her hair, and a mantilla of cloth cut square, *el cenerero*, which is fastened by a brooch or silver clasp, *el colchete*, and this hood is richly embroidered; her red velvet boddice, *jupon*, is adorned with bugles, or *canutillo*, worked into fanciful patterns; her wrist-cuffs are wrought with gold; her sash is tied behind; her petticoat, *manteo*, is usually scarlet *de grana*, which, with purple *morado*, is the favourite colour, and like her apron, or *mandile*, is embroidered with birds, flowers, and stars. She has also a handkerchief, *rebocillo*, which is worked in gold; she wears many *joyas*, jewels and chains bedecked with coloured stones,

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which descend as heirlooms from mothers to daughters. But these fine clothes have not corrupted the wearers, whose honest simplicity of character, "*La honradez y sencillez de los Charros*," is proverbial; thus one of them being at a theatre, where in the play a traitor was deceiving the king, cried out, thinking the transaction a reality, "*Señor, Señor, no crea V. M. á ese*"—"Sire, Sire! do not believe him." The Leonese rustic disputes with the *Sanchos* of La Mancha the palm of being the *Juan Español*, or Goody Gaffer of the Peninsula.

CIUDAD RODRIGO rises on a slight eminence above the Agueda, which flows under the walls to the W., being here intersected by small islands. A bridge communicates with a suburb, and leads over the plains to Portugal, which is distant a few miles. This fortified place, although "weak in itself, is," says the Duke, "the best chosen position of any frontier town that I have seen." Hence the important part it played in the retreats and sieges during the Peninsular war: and in these consist its present interest, for otherwise it is dull and poverty-stricken, and, as usual, miserably provided with every requisite for defence.

Ciudad Rodrigo was so called after the Conde Rodrigo Gonzalez Giron, who founded it in 1150. Three Roman columns brought from ancient Malabriga are preserved on the Plaza, and are borne by the city for its arms. It is the see of a bishop, suffragan to Santiago. Pop<sup>n</sup>. about 5000. There is only a poor posada. As this is a *Plaza de Armas*, much jealousy is exhibited towards curious strangers, who are suspected of making plans with a design to take the citadel. All who wish to examine the positions, and make sketches, had better apply for permission of the governor, which probably will be refused.

There is little worth notice in the town. The cathedral was begun in 1190 by Ferd. II. of Leon: the architect, Benito Sanchez, lies buried in the cloister. The edifice was enlarged in 1538 by Card. Tavera, Archbishop of Toledo, and previously bishop here. An inner door of the old cathedral exists near the entrance, with curious statue work and alto-relievs of the

Passion. The quaint Gothic *Silla del Coro* is by Rodrigo Aleman. The classical *Colegiata*, or *Capilla de Cerralvo*, was built in 1588 by Fr<sup>o</sup>. Pacheco, Archbishop of Burgos, and was very fine. Being converted into a powder magazine, it was blown up in 1818 by what here is called an accident, but which, as in the East, is the common result of a careless want of ordinary precautions. The shattered fragments were left for many years exactly as they fell, pictures flapping in the *Retablo*, &c. The cardinal's coffin had been torn from its sarcophagus by the French to make bullets of the lead,—unplumbing the dead to destroy the living. The uncovered corpse was cast into a niche, and then moved to a loft, where we saw it lying in the tattered episcopal robes. The chaplain, on this indecency being pointed out, merely shrugged his shoulders: yet he was a descendant of this prelate, and enjoyed the revenues of his endowment; although he duly dined himself, he never buried his dead, neglectful of the conditions of the national proverb, *Los vivos a la mesa, los muertos a la huesa*. The cathedral being placed at the N.W. angle of the town, and exposed to the *Teson*, has suffered much during the sieges. The walls were built by Ferdinand II., and the large square tower by Henry II. in 1372.

The Duke, when here, lodged at *La Casa de Castro*; observe its portal with spiral pillars. The costumes of the *Charro* and *Charra* are to be seen in Ciudad Rodrigo in great perfection on holidays.

Ciudad Rodrigo, uninteresting in itself, has been rendered illustrious by the great events which have taken place

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in it and its immediate neighbourhood. The chief of these are the siege by the French, the failure of Massena's invasion of Portugal, the siege and capture by the English, and the Duke's retreat from Burgos; while in the vicinity are *El Badon*, *Sabugal*, *la Guarda*, *Fuentes de Oñoro*, and other sites where the moral and physical superiority of our chief and his troops over the enemy was signally manifested, in spite of their great gallantry and our inferiority of numbers. Near, also, are *Celorico*, *Fuente Guinaldo*, *Freneda*, and other villages, long the head-quarters of the Duke, while hovering on the borders of Spain and planning her deliverance. From these once obscure places some of his most remarkable dispatches were written: then and there, while all at home and abroad despaired, his prophetic eye saw in the darkest gloom the coming rays of his glory.

The first siege was undertaken in the spring of 1810 by Massena and Ney, almost in the presence of the English army, which was stationed on the Coa, within the Portuguese frontier. This siege was a gross mistake, which the French found out when it was too late; they here wasted precious time, during which the Duke prepared his lines at Torres Vedras, and thus out-generaled and defeated the enemy. Ciudad Rodrigo, when invested by the French, was miserably supplied with means of defence, owing to the usual want of foresight and means of the government, but the commander Herrasti was a brave and skilful officer. The Duke, although anxious to relieve him, refused to risk an action against an enemy "double," as he said, "his number in infantry, and three times so in cavalry." He disregarded the sneers of Spaniard and Frenchman alike "at his coward selfish caution," for he knew that the fate of Spain did not depend upon Ciudad Rodrigo's fall or relief, but on the preservation of the little English army, the salt of the whole, and which eventually drove the invaders countless legions headlong over the Pyrenees.

After a most desperate resistance, the accidental explosion of a powder magazine forced the gallant Herrasti to surrender July 10, when every article of the capitulation was forthwith violated by Ney (Toreno xii.).

After the fall the Duke remained patient, through fair and foul report, until his time to act at Ciudad Rodrigo was come. He foresaw that Buonaparte would make a third attempt on Portugal, to "drown the leopard," and efface the disgraces of Junot and Soult: and accordingly he was prepared. In July, 1810, Massena crossed the frontier with overwhelming numbers. Busaco checked his fool-hardy advance, where, Sept. 26, Ney was repulsed by Beresford and the Portuguese. Massena, however, pushed on to Sobral, and there, Oct. 10, found out for the first time the deep pit which his greater rival had in his prescience dug for him. Massena's whole campaign was a complete failure: begun in fanfaronnade, carried out in rapine and butchery, it ended in total defeat, in the loss of 30,000 men, and of every pretension to generalship. His only strategics were rash, rapid advance, and reliance on great numerical superiority. "His retreat in March, 1811," says the quiet Duke, "was marked by a barbarity seldom equalled, and never surpassed." Women were regularly foraged for and sold in the market, while the abominable horrors and filthy slime of their foul quarters were "revolting and degrading to human nature" (Pen. Camp. iii. 54).

While Ney and Massena differed on the field of battle, Soult at a distance was influenced by those rivalries which sapped the French cause (see Barrosa, p. 221). Instead of hastening day and night, as he ought, to his comrade's relief, he never moved from Seville until December, when it was too late, and then loitered at Olivenza and Badajoz, where, but for the misconduct of Mendizabal at Gebora, of Imaz at Badajoz, and of Lapeña at Barrosa, Soult and Victor would have both been beaten at

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the same time as Ney and Massena. The Duke was thus robbed by others of his full reward; he could deserve success, but 'tis not in mortals to command it.

Massena soon made a desperate effort to restore his faded laurels, and crossed the Agueda, May 2, 1811, with 45,000 infantry and 5000 cavalry, to relieve Almeida, which the Duke was blockading with less than 36,000 infantry and 2000 horsemen, and those out of condition; accordingly he fell back on the hills, which are seen from Ciudad Rodrigo, rising S.W. on the Portuguese frontier. His object was, in spite of inferior numbers, to protect both his approaches to Almeida, and his line of retreat into Portugal by Sabugal; hence he was obliged to over-extend his line; his centre was the village on the ragged hill of *Fuentes de Oñoro*, now truly *Fountains of Honour* to England; this point rises above the stream *de dos casas*, and was made, May 5, the grand object of Massena's attack, whose repulse was complete. Nothing ever surpassed the charge of the 71st and 79th Highlanders, who, their colonel being killed, raised the war-cry of the Camerons. The 88th cleared the streets, and bayoneted down the "finest body of French grenadiers ever seen." Our cavalry, feeble in number, caught the generous inspiration, and crushed the splendid French horsemen under Montbrun, whose hesitation lost what Picton called their "golden moment," for they might have destroyed the whole light division. But Massena withdrew, just at the critical moment when a real general would have pressed on; he retreated, having lost 5000 men and his entire military reputation. Our loss was 2000 men. This day settled the "spoilt child of victory," who under the Duke's tuition had grown up to be a finished *man* of defeat. He surrendered on the 11th his command to Marmont, and retired to Bordeaux, having carried off 800,000 dollars, "extorqués par le sang et le pillage, une malédiction générale le

suiuit" (Schep. iii. 252). Plunder, indeed, says the Duke, was the original motive of Massena's Santarem expedition, "against every military principle, and at an immense sacrifice of men" (Disp. Dec. 29, 1810).

He lived to prove false to both Buonaparte and the Bourbons. "Signalez-le," say the French (B. U. xxvii. 407), "à l'horreur de la postérité, ses rapines lui ont acquis une honteuse célébrité." He died, April 4, 1817, the disgusting death of a low debauchee, an end worthy of his origin. The son of a Jew pothouse-keeper at Nice, hooted out of the ranks for theft, he rose from being a fencing master to be a favourite of Buonaparte, and obtained a great name by easy victories over feeble enemies; tested against the Duke he was always found wanting.

The next year the Duke pounced upon Ciudad Rodrigo, and took it in 11 days, being in less than half the time which he himself had expected. His secrecy and boldness of plan, rapidity of attack, and admirable strategics baffled Soult and Marmont alike. Now, as afterwards at Badajoz, the French scarcely began to move before the deed was done. This fortress, which when weak had defied Ney and Massena for three months, had in the meantime been rendered much stronger by General Barrie, an able officer who worthily commanded a gallant garrison; he had thrown up new works, and fortified the two convents, S<sup>a</sup>. Cruz to the N.W. and San Francisco to the N.E. into redoubts. The Duke, in spite of the winter season, appeared before the place Jan. 8, 1812, and at dusk that very evening took the strong fortified *teson* to the N.; Graham, with the light division, having converted a proposed reconnaissance into a real attack. This determined the rapid fall of the fortress, as precious time was gained, and breaching batteries securely established. On the 19th two practicable breaches to the N.E. were nobly carried by Picton and Crawford, the latter re-

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ceiving his death-wound. After Ciudad Rodrigo was taken the Duke rode back to Gallegos, sorrowful at the loss of brave Crawford; he outstripped his suite, and arrived alone and in the dark. Marmont was so taken aback by the rapidity and brilliancy of this capture, that in his official report he observed, "There is something so *incomprehensible* in all this, that until I know more I refrain from any remarks." What can be greater praise to those who thus puzzled him? Yet Foy (i. 259, 302) refuses to the Duke and our engineers even a knowledge of the "alphabet of their art," and sneers at their profound ignorance and bungling in every siege; and this when Cadiz, Tarifa, Gibraltar, and Alicante were attacked by the French, and *not* taken, because defended by the English, while Ciudad Rodrigo, Badajoz, Salamanca, Almaraz, S<sup>t</sup>. Sebastian, &c., defended by the French, *were* taken, because stormed by the English. So also did a handful of our soldiers capture at a hand-gallop both Cambray and La Pucelle Péronne, to say nothing of Paris. In truth, whether in Spain or France, the British army never took up a position which it did not hold, and never attacked a position of the enemy which it did not carry, and it accomplished both, although the French in numbers were generally as two, often three to one, and fought like truly brave and first-rate soldiers. In both the sieges and captures of Ciudad Rodrigo of Badajoz, the scholar will be struck with the parallel of Scipio's feat at Carthage (Polyb. x. 8): he too jumped upon his prey, while two enemy armies were just too far apart to be able to get up in time to relieve it; he too concealed his scheme so profoundly that the vulgar attributed the results of deep design to the "gods and luck," to which none ever owed less than the Duke.

The Duke, for this splendid feat of design and execution, was made an English earl; the Cortes bestowed on him the rank of *grande*, making him duke of his recovered fortress; and by this title,

*Duque de Ciudad Rodrigo*, Spaniards are fond of calling him, as it Espanolises to their ears our victorious general, while Wellington, a *foreign* name, grates harshly because inferring services rendered by a superior.

The Duke gave over captured Ciudad Rodrigo to Castafios and the Spaniards. This act for a time conciliated our allies, who had before suspected that England would keep this frontier key for themselves. Our confidence was miserably disappointed, for Don Carlos de España,\* who was placed in command, forthwith broke all promises of pay to his men, and a mutiny ensued, the repairs were neglected, and even the stores furnished by England not moved in; but the *Boukra*, *bab boukra* of the Oriental is the *Mañana*, *pasado mañana*, of the Spaniard, whose *to-day* is ever sacrificed for *to-morrow*! By this unpardonable procrastination the capture of Badajoz was neutralized and Soult again saved, as by Lapeña at Barrosa, from ruin. "If (says the Duke) Ciudad Rodrigo had been provisioned as I had a right to expect, there was nothing to prevent me marching to Seville at the head of 40,000 men" (Disp. April 11, 1812).

The traveller will visit the English position, walking out to the suburb by the Alameda to S<sup>t</sup>. Francisco, then to the smaller *teson*, now called *de Crawford*, and then to the larger *teson*, now *el fuerte de Wellington*; he may return by S<sup>t</sup>. Cruz and the Agueda; it was on its banks, Oct. 11, 1811, that Julien Sanchez the *guerrillero* surprised the French governor Reynaud while out riding, and carried him off. He treated his prisoner with hospitality, and yet he himself had taken up arms because his house had been burnt and

\* This man was created a grandee by Ferd. VII., and became the celebrated Conde de España, long the terror of Catalonia. Ennobled, he claimed descent from the Foix of Bearn. He was originally a French adventurer, and when the war began, was in prison at this very Ciudad Rodrigo for smuggling. For his tragical death see Urgel (p. 502).

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his parents and sister had been murdered by the French, and he himself at that very moment was proscribed as a *brigand* by Gen. Marchand (Toreno, x.).

Ciudad Rodrigo became in the hands of the Duke an important base for future operations, and its capture may be termed the first blow by which he struck down the invader. It was to this point that he retreated Nov. 17, 1812, after raising the siege of Burgos; this sad conclusion of a campaign in which he had taken two fortresses, won Salamanca, delivered Madrid and Andalusia, and traversed Spain a conqueror, in spite of the great gallantry and numerical superiority of the enemy, was no failure of his. The neglect of our ministers at home, and the misconduct of our allies abroad, robbed him as usual of his full reward. He had much less to fear even from the French, his valorous enemies, than from his worst opponents, his so called friends.

## EXCURSIONS FROM CIUDAD RODRIGO.

A morning's ride may be made to *El Bodon*, and to *Fuente Guinaldo*, which lie to the S.W. up the basin of the Agueda. "Here," says the Duke, "the British troops surpassed every thing they had ever done before." In Sept. 1811, while the Duke was blockading Ciudad Rodrigo, Marmont and Dorsenne advanced with 60,000 men to its relief. The Duke, whose forces barely reached 40,000, fell back towards *El Bodon*. Fifteen squadrons of superb French cavalry under Montbrun charged the 5th and 77th in squares, attacking them on three sides at once: they were repulsed at every point, and the two magnificent regiments retreated some miles in the plain with all the tranquillity and regularity of a parade. Marmont on that day proved that he was no great general; he failed to take advantage of the most favourable moment of the war to crush the English army (Nap. xxiv. 6).

On the 26th the Duke took up a position at Fuente Guinaldo, and Mar-

mont, as if to amuse his opponent, went again through certain beautiful manœuvres in the plain below like a ballet-master. A little behind flows the Coa, and here, near the heights of Soito, the Duke offered Marmont battle, which, notwithstanding all his numbers, he declined. Remembering Massena's defeats, he was shy of advancing into Portugal.

Those who have leisure may prolong their excursion by making a circuit into Portugal, and coming back by Almeida, thus visiting many spots the scenes of the Duke's victories, and long his head-quarters. The author, who had planned this trip, was unfortunately prevented, but this was the route furnished by a friend in Ciudad Rodrigo. Take, however, a local guide, and attend to the provend. The distances are given approximatively.

## ROUTE LXII.—EXCURSION FROM CIUDAD RODRIGO.

El Bodon . . . . .	2
Fuente Guinaldo . . . . .	1½
Alfayates . . . . .	2½
Guarda . . . . .	3
Celorico . . . . .	4½
Almeida . . . . .	7
Freneda . . . . .	2½
Fuentes de Onoro . . . . .	1½
Gallegos . . . . .	2½
Ciudad Rodrigo . . . . .	3

Leaving Ciudad Rodrigo, bear S.W., keeping on the ridge with the valley and river to the l., passing *El Bodon*; the plain to the r. of the road is the spot where Montbrun's charges were made in vain. From *Fuente Guinaldo*, strike W. to *Alfayates*; and entering Portugal, wind over the spurs of the Sierra de Meras, and by *Torre* to the Coa at *Sabugal*; thence proceed N.W. to *Pega*, where, says Walter Scott, March 30, 1811, the French rear-guard was overtaken by our cavalry; thinking themselves safe from the strong position, they played "God save the King" in derision; their minstrelsy was deranged by the *obligato* accompaniment of our artillery, and the rout complete; they were pursued and cut up for four long miles.



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ROUTE LXIII.—CIUDAD RODRIGO TO SALAMANCA.

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Continuing from Pega we reach *Guarda*, an ancient Portuguese episcopal town, on the Sierra de Estrella, pop<sup>n</sup> about 2300. Observe the old walls and Cathedral. The town took its name from the castle, which *guarded* the frontier against the Moors. It is about 6 L. from the Spanish *raya*. Water here is most abundant, and the descents to the rivers Mondego and Nocyme, together with the mountain ravines, are very picturesque. These almost impregnable heights were abandoned, March 29, 1811, by Massena, who, with 20,000 men, retired without firing a shot, from Picton, who had only three English and two Portuguese regiments. Thence on by *Prades* and *Salgares*, over a hilly peninsula formed by a bend of the Mondego, to *Celorico*, pop<sup>n</sup> about 1500. The country is full of streams with decent bridges. Cross the river and strike N.E. by Baracal, Alverca, Carvajal, to Valverde, and then cross the Coa to *Almeida*, distant about  $\frac{1}{2}$  L. This frontier fortress of Portugal rises on a gentle eminence, almost surrounded by a desert *plain*, or table as the word signifies in Arabic; it is distant about 1 L. from the Spanish *raya*, and about 7 from Ciudad Rodrigo; in times of disturbance the only route usually permissible is by the Val de la Mula, and the Aldea del Obispo, where the Spanish advanced posts are placed.

*Almeida* contains about 1200 inhabitants, and has a good church and tower; the citadel, which as in Spain has never been properly repaired since the Peninsular war, is still one of the finest in Portugal, although on the south side the rise of the land is in nowise favourable to military operations. It has six bastions of hard thick granite, with other six ravelins, together with a noble platform, which commands a full view of the surrounding country. It is flanked by wide trenches, covered way, and esplanades; and in the centre stands a castle celebrated for its style of architecture and strength, as also from its magazines being bombproof. It

has wells and two fountains. On the 25th August, 1762, it was taken by capitulation, after a heroic resistance, by Count O'Reilly, with forty thousand Spaniards and French, for Portugal had then no force sufficient to oppose a siege. By the peace of 1763, it was restored by the Spaniards. The first result of the Duke's victory at *Fuentes de Oñoro* was the capture of Almeida, to relieve which Massena risked the battle. Such was his fright and flight after which, that he left the garrison to shift for itself without even communicating his retreat to Gen. Brennier, the governor, who blew up the bastions, and managed by his skill and bravery, aided by another blunder of Sir Wm. Erskine (see Miravete, p. 539), to save his troops. This, said the Duke, "is the most disgraceful military event that has occurred to us; I have never been so much distressed as by the escape of even a man of them" (Disp. May 15, 1811); but, as he then remarked, he could not be everywhere at once.

The rivers Coa and Turones divide Spain and Portugal, at these the smuggler laughs; from Almeida ride S. by the ridge to Freneda, under Monte Cabrillas, and distant about 5 L. from Ciudad Rodrigo; thence to Villa Formosa and so on to Fuentes de Oñoro; visit the village, cross the Dos Casas, and make for Alameda, or Gallegos, a poor hamlet of 600 souls, and distant about  $\frac{1}{2}$  L. from the Agueda. The events which have occurred at these sites have been described a few pages previously.

## ROUTE LXIII.—CIUDAD RODRIGO TO SALAMANCA.

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There is a sort of coach conveyance; the road is bad and uninteresting. Those who are riding and do not seek hospitality (and it is seldom or never denied *here* to any Englishman) in

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Richard Ford

Excerpt

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some *Montaracia*, will find an isolated *posada* near the church at Boveda. The memorable field of the battle of Salamanca may be visited the next morning by turning out of the high road to the r., through Tura and Miranda de Azan; coming out of which and the trees which fringe the Zurguen, is the point where Pakenham headed and checked the extreme French left; instead of following the road straight on to Torres, keep now to the r.; in front of Azan was the scene of the grand cavalry charge of Le Marchant, which shivered the superb French lines, and decided their defeat. Thence descend to the poor village of Arapiles. About 1½ mile E. rise the two knolls, the Arapiles, by which the French call this important battle. Salamanca with its domes rises about 4½ miles N. of the village.

This glorious victory took place July 22, 1812. The battle was the result of a false move made by Marmont. He and the Duke had long been manoeuvring in face of each other, like two chess-players, or as Turenne and Montecuculi did in 1673; Marmont's disposable forces amounting to more than 100,000, the Duke's being under 60,000 (Nap. xviii. 4), of which scarcely half were British. This gave Marmont the power of every initiative, and reduced the Duke to act on the defensive. Marmont was goaded on by the reproaches of Buonaparte to risk a battle, and having lost it, was accused of rashness by his inconsistent master. The Duke's own account to Graham is short and sweet. "I took up the ground which you were to have taken during the siege of Salamanca. We had a race for the large Arapiles, which is the more distant of the two detached heights; this race the French won, and they were too strong to be dislodged without a general action. I knew that the French were to be joined by the cavalry of the army of the North on the 22d or 23d, and that the army of the centre was likely to be in motion. Marmont ought to have given me a *point*

*d'or*, and he would have made a handsome operation of it; but instead of that, after manoeuvring all the morning in the usual French style, nobody knew with what object, he at last pressed upon my right in such a manner, at the same time without engaging, that he would have carried our Arapiles, or he would have confined us entirely to our position; this was not to be endured, and we fell upon him, turning his left flank, and I never saw an army receive such a beating. I had desired the Spaniards to continue to occupy the castle of Alba de Tormes; Don Carlos de España had evacuated it, I believe before he knew my wishes, and he was afraid to let me know that he had done so, and I did not know it till I found no enemy at the fords of the Tormes; when I lost sight of them in the dark, I marched upon Huerta and Encinas; if I had known that there had been no garrison in Alba, I should have marched there, and should probably have had them all" (Disp. July 25, 1812).

The Duke's position was in the village of Arapiles. The battle began about three in the afternoon, for Marmont then extended his line towards Miranda de Azan. The Duke was writing when this false move was reported. He jumped up, and with eagle-eyed intuition exclaimed, "Egad! I have them;" and so he had. He "fixed the fault with the stroke of a thunder-bolt." A few orders issued from his lips like the incantations of a wizard, and the English masses advanced; Pakenham to the l. about five o'clock breaking the head of Thomières's splendid column into fragments with the force of a giant. Then the 4th and 5th divisions attacked the French centre, gaining manfully the crest of *La Cabaña*, on which hill some desperate fighting took place; then and there the English cavalry, under Le Marchant, trod to the dust 1200 Frenchmen, "big men on big horses," says Napier, "trampling down the enemy with terrible clamour and disturbance,