

The prevalent notion of Biscay is, that it is the wildest part of the sea—and wild enough it is sometimes. The belief has arisen, very much, from the old popular sea songs about the cruising and fighting of the British fleets; and because the old-fashioned, broad-bowed, duck-sided, square-sterned war ships were floundered and tumbled about by the long rolling mountain waves. Besides, there is no storm of great consequence in it, except that which sets in from some point to the west, and hence, in running up or down, you catch the side sea with a vengeance, as it sweeps along from the open Atlantic, gathering majesty as it goes, until it expends itself on the coast of France. I had a great desire to see Biscay in its most placid mood, that I might contrast it with its angry one, and my wish was fully gratified. We had a light fair wind all the way, and rocked along so easily.—Have you ever observed a big boy on the road, who had a message on hand, but was in no great hurry, having a fine day and a happy heart, sticking his hands into his pockets, whistling as best he could, and swinging his body, with great deliberation, as he took his easy steps onward—then, the “Morocco” was like that big boy, on her watery path to the south? It was fine.

On the fourth day out we made the Spanish coast. Now we were getting among the grand memories and heroics of the Peninsular war. There, the first of them, is Corunna, and hence the gallant Sir John Moore conducted his wearied and battered army, thro' cold, and snow, and want, as it was driven before the superior numbers of the French. Here he made his noble stand until he had safely embarked his troops; but then a French cannon ball closed his career. Some members of his staff and a few soldiers, only, were left. The enemy was marching on. Now quickly, quickly, and make a grave; and then, each for himself, to escape being taken prisoner. So, without tap of drum or bugle call, they carried the remains of their beloved chief beyond the rampart, and with bayonets and hands they dug and scraped a hollow sepulchre. Wolfe tells it well in lines which, unfortunately, have been so frequently parodied:—as to the burial,

“No useless coffin enclosed his breast,
Nor in sheet nor in shroud we wound him;
But he lay—like a warrior taking his rest—
With his martial cloak around him!”

Silence, with the darkness, was their safety, and all the funeral honors were the tears of brave men dropping on the earth which covered him. They left, fearing that the French might dishonor the hallowed spot. Ah! they were all mistaken; for there followed a generous deed of the truest chivalry. Marshal Soult almost immediately came up, and having learned that his brave foe was killed, and quietly and hastily interred, at once took with him a large firing party, and, over the grave, paid the military tribute to his late antagonist. It was done ere the British were out of hearing of the thrice repeated musketry roll, which they understood so well the meaning of. That deed was like one of the brightest angels coming down to travel, for a moment, on the war-path, and to leave footprints that every manly eye will love to look upon. Feats of kindness and honor are more noble—because more difficult to do—than those performed in the shock of battle.—Soon after passing Corunna we made Cape Finisterre, the lands-end of Spain, from east to west, but it was hazy and we saw nothing of it. By evening we came on the coast of Portugal, and during the night passed Oporto.

On the fifth day, at early morning—and such a morning of calm delightful air, I never saw and felt before—we were running close along shore.