

main road to enter the fertile valley, at whose extremity stood the village, with its scattered farms and cottages, sheltered by the hanging woods, and bold outline of a range of hills, which swept like an amphitheatre round it. As the small detachment, followed by its baggage waggon, slowly wound through the narrow road,—the hedge rows of which here and there closed over our route, and for the moment lent a sombre hue to the landscape,—the rays of the setting sun were just gilding the grey spire of the church, and cheering us, at every opening which discovered it, with the assurance that we drew towards the end of our march. Before we halted, the whole village had turned out to have a view of the “Sogers,” and were congregated about the green; which, with its spreading elms, afforded the general spot of assembly for business or pleasure—the seat alike of the fair, and the holiday wake. A party of countrymen had been smoking their evening pipe over a tankard, upon the bench at the door of the public house, and were now good-naturedly offering a share of their all to our poor fellows; whose appearance gave too certain warrant that they had with difficulty escaped with their bodies from the charnel-house. The village gossips were drawn together in knots, regarding the sallow countenances of our men with the eloquent eyes of female pity; and rural politicians were shaking their heads at the want of judgment and foresight which could send the flower of the land thus to wither in the pestilential marshes of Walcheren. Even the pert chambermaid of the little inn seemed for a moment, forgetting her habitual smirk and giggle, to regard us with a sober look of concern, which was reflected on the broad shining face of her fellow servant, John Ostler; while the only spectator in whom our party appeared to awaken no interest was a sharp visaged, ferret-eyed personage,—whom I inwardly set down as the attorney of the place,—standing with

his hands in his pockets under the arch-way of the inn, and viewing the whole scene with an air of calm, self-satisfied contempt.

I was still engaged in surveying the groups of village idlers, whom our arrival had attracted to the spot, when I was politely accosted by a stranger, with an apology for forcing himself upon my attention. He was an elderly man, with that bearing of mingled frankness and unobtrusive retirement of manner which goes at once to the heart. He had completely the stamp of a gentleman; but the urbanity of his address appeared to flow rather from kindly feelings, chastened by apprehension lest the unreserved indulgence of his natural benevolence should offend, than to spring from the polished ease of the man of the world. He said that the village was small, and he feared we should find its accommodations indifferent; particularly, as he was sorry to perceive we were among the sufferers of the Walcheren expedition. His own residence was quite a cottage, but he could promise more quiet and comfort for two of our number under its roof than the neighbouring farm-houses might perhaps afford. If we would allow him, therefore, to become the host to myself and another of our officers, at least, until we had time to look about us for a shelter, we should be conferring an obligation on him; “for,” said he, “you will give me the satisfaction of knowing, that I am, in some measure, discharging what I consider to be the duty of every Englishman, towards the gallant fellows who devote their lives to avert the miseries of war from our firesides!”

It is so rare an occurrence with a military man to experience attention or hospitality in England, that the address of the stranger at first excited my surprise; but there was an earnestness and sincerity about him which made it impossible to doubt that he meant his offer to be accepted, and that to reject it would be to distress him. The exterior, too, of