

OUR TABLE.

CHARLES O'MALLEY, THE IRISH DRAGOON.

A FEW of the earlier numbers of this work led us to anticipate a slight falling off from the great excellence of its predecessor—the ever-memorable “Adventures of Harry Lorrequer”—an anticipation, we are pleased to state, which we cannot longer entertain. The story, indeed, is widely different, and not altogether so humorous, but it is in no way inferior; and as a picture of the gallant, daring, and generous soldier, embracing a rapid view of such a soldier's life, it may be deemed a production superior to the portraiture of the mere holiday warrior, the details of whose misadventures were so powerful in their effects upon the risibility of the reader.

A spirited chapter, which we have transferred to our pages, from a recent number, will, however, convey a much more correct idea than any thing we can write, of the vigorous style and eloquent language of the author. In it the “Battle of the Douro” is placed with the vividness of life before the eye, and a portion of the soldier's enthusiasm conveyed to the breast of the most peace-loving reader—evidences of the power exercised by the author over the imagination, and of the ease with which he sounds the “depths and shallows of the human heart.”

In somewhat a different strain is the chapter which immediately follows that which we have given. It is the “Day after the Battle,” when other feelings than the exciting hopes of yesterday have taken possession of the mind. We extract from this a few melancholy passages. It is the burial scene of the unfortunate Hixley, whose fate is recorded in the chapter quoted.

There are few sadder things in life than the day after a battle. The high-beating hope,—the bounding spirits, have passed away; and in their stead come the depressing re-action by which every overwrought excitement is followed. With far different eyes do we look upon the compact ranks and glistening files,—

With helm arrayed,
And lance and blade,
And plume in the gay wind dancing.

and upon the cold and barren heath, whose only memory of the past is the blood-stained turf, the mangled corpse, and broken gun, the shattered wall, the well-trodden earth where columns stood, the cut-up ground where cavalry had charged;—these are the sad relics of all the chivalry of yesterday.

The morning which followed the battle of the Douro was one of the most beautiful I ever remember. There was that kind of freshness and elasticity in the air which certain days possess, and communicate by some magic their properties to ourselves. The thrush was singing gaily out from every grove and wooded dell; the very river had a sound of gladness as it rippled on against its sedgy banks; the foliage, too, sparkled in the fresh dew, as in its robes of holiday, and all looked bright and happy.

As I followed every rising fancy, I heard a step approach: it was a figure muffled in a cavalry cloak, which I soon perceived to be Power.

“Charley!” said he, in a half-whisper; “get up and come with me. You are aware of the general order, that, while in pursuit of an enemy, all military honours to the dead are forbidden; but we wish to place our poor comrade in the earth before we leave.”

I followed down a little path, through a grove of tall beech trees that opened upon a little grassy terrace beside the river. A stunted olive tree stood by itself in the midst, and there I found five of our brother officers standing, wrapped in their wide cloaks. As we pressed each other's hands, not a word was spoken: each heart was full; and hard features that never quailed before the foe were now shaken with the convulsive spasm of agony, or compressed with stern determination to seem calm.

A cavalry helmet and a large blue cloak lay upon the grass. The narrow grave was already dug beside it; and in the death-like stillness around, the service for the dead was read: the last words were over: we stooped and placed the corpse, wrapped up in the mantle, in the earth; we replaced the mould, and stood silently around the spot. The trumpet of our regiment at this moment sounded the call; its clear notes rang sharply through the thin air,—it was the soldier's requiem! and we turned away without speaking and returned to our quarters.

I had never known poor Hixley till a day or two before, but somehow my grief for him was deep and heart-felt. It was not that his frank and manly bearing,—his bold and military air, had gained upon me.