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The Old Soldier's Story.

It was in a stirring time of the Duke of Wellington's wars, after the French had retreated through Portugal, and Badajos had fallen, and we had driven them fairly over the Spanish frontier, the light division was ordered on a few of their long leagues further, to occupy a line of posts among the mountains which rise over the northern banks of the Guadiana. A few companies of our regiment advanced to occupy a village which the French had just abandoned.

We had had a brisk march over a scorched and rugged country, which had already been ransacked of all that could have supplied us with fresh provisions; it was many days since we had heard the creak of the commissary's wagon, and we had been on very short commons. There was no reason to expect much in the village we were now ordered to. The French, who had just marched out, would, of course, have helped themselves to whatever was portable, and must have previously pretty well drained the place. We made a search, however, judging that, possibly, something might have been concealed from them by the peasants; and we actually soon discovered several houses where skins of wine had been secreted. A soldier, sir, I take it, after hot service or fatigue, seldom thinks of much beyond the comfort of drinking to excess; and I freely own that our small party soon caused a sad scene of confusion.

Every house and hovel was searched, and many a poor fellow, who had

contrived to hide his last skin of wine from his enemies, was obliged to abandon it to his allies. You might see the poor natives on all sides running away; some with a morsel of food, others with a skin of wine in their arms, and followed by the menaces and staggering steps of the weary and half-drunken soldiers.

"*Vino! vino!*" was the cry in every part of the village. An English soldier, sir, may be for months together in a foreign land, and have a pride in not knowing how to ask for any thing but liquor. I was no better than the rest.

"*Vino! quiero vino!*" said I, to a poor, half-starved and ragged native, who was stealing off, and hiding something under his torn cloak. "*Vino! you beggarly scoundrel! give me vino!*" said I.

"*Vino no tengo!*" he cried, as he broke from my grasp, and ran quickly and fearfully away.

I was not very drunk—I had not had above half enough—and I pursued him up a street. But he was the fleetest; and I should have lost him, had I not made a sudden turn, and come right upon him in a forsaken alley, where I supposed the poor thing dwelt. I seized him by the collar. He was small and spare, and he trembled under my gripe; but still he held his own, and only wrapped his cloak the closer round his property.

"*Vino! quiero vino!*" said I; "give me vino!"

"*Nada, nada tengo!*" he repeated.

I had already drawn my bayonet. I am ashamed, sir, to say, that we used to do that to terrify the poor wretches, and make them the sooner give us their liquor. As I held him by the collar with one hand, I pointed the bayonet at his breast with the other, and I again cried, "*Vino!*"