

## EXPERIENCES IN SPAIN.

REPORT OF LIEUTENANT E. W. ALBY ON BOARD  
THE SHENANDOAH, EUROPEAN STATION.

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GIBRALTAR Aug. 22, 1873.

In obedience to Squadron Circular No. 2, I have the honor to submit the following report of my observations during a leave of absence of the past month:

Having become so much debilitated by the hot weather on the coast as to be quite unfit for duty, I left the ship at Malaga on the 10th of July for the purpose of spending a short time at Granada until my health should be restored. My original intention was to remain at that place until strong enough to travel to Cadiz by way of Cordova and Seville, rejoining my ship at that place, but, owing to the disturbed state of the country, I have been kept virtually a prisoner at Granada for over a month. Twice I have been turned back from my attempts to reach the coast by encountering the army under General Pavia, and once I found my self completely cut off from all intercourse with the world by the *Intra-Sigentes*. In order to avoid a narrative of undue length which I fear would be neither interesting nor instructive, were I to detail in regular succession the accidents and impressions of my trip, I will attempt to report what I have observed rather in the order of importance

## THE SPANISH ARMY.

I have said that I was twice turned back by the army. The first time was at Cordova where I arrived on the 21st of July, the day after the troops had taken possession of the city. I found communication stopped in every direction, except over the route by which I had come from Granada; so, after a day spent in examining the curiosities, I returned to my snug quarters in the *Alhambra*. Cordova I found quite tranquil, no opposition having been offered the troops, notwithstanding that the city and surrounding district had but a short time before been declared an independent canton. As near as I could ascertain, there were about 2,500 soldiers in the city, while the remainder of the army, about 5,000 men, were in camp outside in readiness for the march on Seville. As I have had opportunities of seeing American, German, and French armies on the march during war time, I was naturally interested in observing the movement of this body of Spanish troops.

The army had seen but little hard work the greater part having been but little over a week in the field, so that the soldiers were fresh. They appeared well disciplined as far as discipline is carried out in a Spanish army, which at best is very slack. Notwithstanding a prospect of fighting in a few days, there was an entire absence of enthusiasm. The men seemed ready and willing to go wherever they were led, but none were anxious. From what I saw of the infantry at that time, I thought that a month of hard work under a hot sun would sadly impair their effectiveness—an opinion which I found fully corroborated when I met them a second time after the capture of Seville and Cadiz. The first thing that struck me was the clumsiness of the uniform and accoutrements, together with the absolute neglect of cleanliness. An infantry soldier equipped for the march is an object rather for compassion than pride. The coat is a poor imitation of the one worn in the French infantry, made of heavy stuff, with skirts reaching to the knees. In place of being an easy-fitting garment, it is invariably

so large as to be uncomfortable. The pantaloons are well enough; but in place of the light, comfortable gaiter of the French, the Spanish wear heavy, tight leggings reaching to the knee. On the march, in place of shoes they wear sandals, which, although probably the best thing for marching on a road, must be uncomfortable in the extreme among stubble or rocks, as the whole upper part of the foot is left naked and exposed. I can say with certainty that when I saw the troops at Granada, after a month of marching and fighting, at least one man in twenty was lame from cuts and bruises of the feet. The knapsack is perhaps the most unsuitable of the whole outfit, being nothing more than an ordinary square cotton canvas bag with a strap over each shoulder. This strap, instead of being broad and stiff, is made of the same stuff as the knapsack, so that it invariably rolls itself into a slim cord, well calculated to prevent the soldier from carrying any more weight than is absolutely necessary. The ammunition and bayonet are carried at a waist belt, with no support but the hips. Pioneers carry the same accoutrements as the infantry, and in addition to the ordinary rifle, are obliged to carry their picks and crowbars. The other arms of the service are infinitely better off, the cavalry being almost precisely similar to the French, and the artillery differing in no important point except with regard to the saddles. The horses of both cavalry and artillery are the finest that I have ever seen, but the soldier here has no such affection for his horse as is shown in other countries. I saw repeated instances of horses bleeding at the mouth and in evident distress from having sucked leeches into their throats while drinking, yet nothing ever appeared to be done to relieve them. It was some time before I could account for the anomaly of a horse well conditioned and healthy looking, bleeding at the mouth and coughing, until one day, on asking a cavalryman in the cause, he put his hand in the horse's mouth and scraped out two leeches, at the same time shrugging his shoulders and saying that it was no use taking them out, as the horse would have more in his throat in a day or two. The whole appearance of the soldier is slovenly in the extreme, to an amount inexcusable even after a hard march. Not only are the garments always dirty, but so the arms and accoutrements. No care appears even to be taken with their rifles, and I have never seen the manoeuvre of stack arms performed.

When a regiment takes a rest in a street the rifles are leaned against adjacent houses, while in the field they are thrown on the ground. I always found the soldiers quiet and orderly in ranks; but there is nothing like precision anywhere. The same straggling is observable in a corporal's guard relieving sentries as in a regiment at the rout step. I met a great many of the officers, and found them invariably as polite and intelligent gentlemen as can be met with anywhere in the world. General Pavia is a fine looking soldier, apparently not over forty years of age, and even before his successes at Seville and Cadiz he had the affection of his whole army, officers and men.

The second time that I saw this army was when they took possession of Granada, after their victories at Seville and Cadiz. Upon arriving before the city, which is utterly defenseless, instead of marching directly in and taking possession before the volunteers could erect barricades (for the city was almost completely taken by surprise), the troops went in to camp about a

league away and remained there twenty-four hours. I rode out to the camp, but found it impossible to pass the line of sentries strict orders having been given to shoot any one found communicating with the soldiers.

The next morning they marched in and took possession, placing the city for a time under martial law. I was prepared to see soldiers badly used up, but not to the degree that they presented. Although they had a day's rest in an olive grove near the banks of a river, and their march of three miles had been made before sunrise, they could scarcely have looked worse after a defeat. About 3,000 entered the city, but did not take possession of the casernes, owing to fears of their being mined. The infantry were drawn up in a few of the narrowest streets, where they would find shade while the cavalry and artillery took possession of the Alameda. But few sentries were posted, and a few detachments stationed at the court house and other public buildings, no movements were made to guard against surprise, although it was known that scattered about in the vicinity of the city there were at least 3,000 volunteers. Not the slightest attempt appeared to be made towards either billeting the men in the houses or getting them into the casernes, and throughout the entire day and night they were kept assembled in regiments under arms. No fresh rations were served out, and in the middle of a rich and well inclined city the men had nothing but hard tack and water. It was a curious sight to look down the streets and see the poor fellows stretched out in the boiling sun, literally sleeping on their arms. They were allowed to go about if they wished, but only a few took advantage of the permission, seeming prefer to lying on the sidewalks, huddled up like sheep, to getting away and cleaning themselves up. Every one appeared completely worn out, and, from their appearance and the way in which they were disposed, missed up in a few narrow streets, I can confidently assert that 200 resolute men, well led, would have not only driven them out of the city, but completely dispersed them. Still there was not the slightest sign of demoralization; the men were as completely amenable to discipline as when I first saw them fresh at Cordova, and they appeared cheerful, but never enthusiastic. They talked of the fight at Seville as a workman would talk of a job which he had done well. The officers, however, were full of fight, and anxious to be taken to Malaga, where they promised to settle up scores of long standing against the cañaille.

From what little I saw of the army I can form but one conclusion: Neither officers nor soldiers lack courage, and I believe that well led they will fight as well as any troops in the world who are not thoroughly enthusiastic in their work. But the art of war is unknown in Spain. The soldiers are left unprovided for, simply because there is no one who knows how to take care of them. Lack of care, hard fare, and a dress calculated to kill a man in a hot climate wear them down in a month more than would be the case with English or Prussian soldiers in a year's campaign. It can scarcely be otherwise, as during the campaign of only a month the sun appears to have been the only formidable enemy they have had to encounter. They have been marching through the most fertile part of Spain unmolested, except at Seville and Cadiz, and even there it can scarcely be called hard fighting with at least 12,000 men engaged