

which he imagined he had gained by his own valour; and retained it, notwithstanding the less doubtful claim of the military commander. But the same idea, which this Commander of the gun brig had taken up, was adopted by Buonaparte himself; who, having received the dispatch announcing the capture of the *Minerve*, whilst in the theatre at Brussels, immediately arose, and said, ‘*Messieurs et Dames, la guerre navale a commencèe sous les plus heureuses auspices. Une superbe fregate de l’ennemi, vient de se rendre a deux de nos batimens cannoniers,*’ not saying a word of the batteries, or the shoal.”

## CHAPTER VI.

JOURNEY FROM CHERBOURG.—KINDNESS OF M. DUBOIS.—AND ARRIVAL  
AT EPINAL.

A CIRCUMSTANCE occurred previous to the prisoners beginning their march, which cannot be too generally known; as it does great honour to an individual amongst our enemies, and is one of the many acts of kindness shewn by the inhabitants of France, to the prisoners passing through the country, where the general feeling was by no means so hostile to the English, as is too frequently supposed. Hostility to this country was almost entirely confined to the military in France.

The length of the journey they had to perform, rendered the prisoners very solicitous about their pecuniary concerns, particularly as no person at Cherbourg would discount their bills. Captain Brenton, in order to increase his stock, offered his watch for sale at a watch-maker's, who would give him only five guineas for it, though the watch was made by a first rate maker, and was of gold. He consequently left the spot with some indignation. Whilst standing at the door of the Auberge a little while after, he was addressed by a person who wished to know, if he had not a watch to dispose

of. Captain Brenton expecting a similar offer to the last, answered, "Yes, but you will not buy it." The stranger replied, "That is more than you know, let me see it." Upon examining the watch, he asked the original price of it, and being told thirty-one guineas ; he said, "Were I to buy your watch, I would only give fifteen guineas ; but as I only mean to take it in pledge, I will let you have twenty-five." Captain Brenton, surprised at so novel a mode of making a bargain, said laughing, "You are an honest fellow than I took you for ; give me the money, and take the watch." The stranger's name was M. Dubois, a merchant of L'Orient. He came back in a few minutes, saying, "Sir, I shall never forgive myself for having accepted a pledge from an officer suffering from the fortune of war. Take back the watch and give me your note of hand." This being done with due acknowledgments on the part of Captain Brenton, M. Dubois again left him, and in a short time again returned with twenty-five louis more, saying, that he had been examining his purse, and found that he had that sum more than was necessary to carry him to L'Orient, and begging that he would accept of that also. He then deposited it on the table, destroying the former note of hand ; and requesting that another might be made out to include both sums. Captain Brenton in his additional remarks on the subject of the watch, says, "Each time that M. Dubois, the kind merchant returned, he exclaimed, "Monsieur, ma conscience me pique," striking his breast ; and the last time exclaiming, "Ma conscience me pique encore." I observed that it must be a most unreasonable conscience, not to be satisfied with

what he had done; but he rejoined, "No, Sir, I ought not to have taken any security from you." Captain Brenton adds, "I am happy to say that in the course of this war very many instances occurred of great benevolence shewn towards the British prisoners in France; and in those cases where they experienced harsh or cruel treatment, it almost always arose from military power having been obtained by men, whose only recommendation was their bravery, and who had no kind feelings to temper it; but these instances were rare.

It seems due to this excellent man, M. Dubois, whose singular kindness and generosity alleviated the first bitternesses of captivity for the captain and crew of the *Minerve*, to add a letter, which proves that the act in question was not the sudden impulse of excited feeling on contemplating their unhappy lot; but that it was part of a character in which tenderness and sympathy with suffering predominated habitually.

"L'ORIENT, 6 PLUVIOSE, AN 12.

27 JANVIER, 1804.

"MON CHER AMI,

A mon retour d'une petite absence, on me remit votre lettre obligeante et amicale; et Je suis empressé d'y répondre. Il seroit en vain que j'entreprendrois de vous rendre le plaisir qu'elle ma'a fait. Il n'y a, que des cœurs aimants capables de s'en faire une idée.

"Je vous croyais depuis long temps échangé, et je vois avec peine qu'il n'en est rien. Combien je partage les chagrins que vous devez éprouver, de l'incertitude continuelle de votre sort, depuis votre départ de Cherbourg; c'est de mon avis la situation la plus pénible à supporter pour l'homme dont le caractère ferme et décidé, est audessus de tous les événemens.

“Vous êtes donc encore mon bien bon ami dans l’attente de votre échange, et vous me faites entendre que vous ne la prevoyez pas prochaine. Ah! Je sens combien votre situation est cruelle; vous êtes depuis long temps éloigné de parens et amis qui vous sont chers, et à qui sans doute vous l’etes aussi, et c’est ce qui augmente vos peines. Combien je désirerois qu’ il fut en mon pouvoir de les alléger. Mais comment? nous sommes loin l’un de l’autre. Si du moins le lieu de votre exil etoit L’Orient, aidé par mon épouse et ma petite famille, nous vous offririons les consolations de la plus tendre amitié, et si nous ne parvenions pas à dissiper entièrement vos chagrins, au moins réunis nous les partagerions. N’en doutez pas mon bien bon ami, car nous sommes sincèrement affectés de vos peines, et mon épouse (qui brule d’envie de vous connoitre, sur tout depuis votre agréable lettre) sent aussi vivement que moi, les regrets cuisants que vous éprouvez à’ être aussi long temps privé du plaisir de revoir tout ce que vous aimez chez vous. Espérons ensemble que ce moment si naturellement désiré de vous, n’est pas éloigné, et qu’au premier instant vous jouirez enfin des tendres embrassemens de tout ce qui vous est cher.

“Etes vous au moins à Verdun d’une manière agréable? Vous laissez t’on la liberté de former quelque société, qui pourrait vous distraire de vos ennuis? je le désire bien ardemment. Je ne connais personne dans cette ville, mais si vous aviez la faculté d’ aller et venir dans son enceinte je ferais mes efforts pour me procurer de divers amis quelques lettres de recommandation pour vous.

“Le Mandat que vous nous aviez remis á été parfaitement acquitté depuis plus de 3 mois; ainsi point d’ inquiétude de votre part à ce sujet; et quand il ne l’eut pas été aussi promptement, ce n’aurait pas été un motif d’ en avoir d’ avantage; vous méritez à ce sujet que je vous gronde un peu; il ne devait plus être question entre nous de nouveaux remerciemens (m’en aviez vous pas deja trop fait?) c’était un arrêté pris avant mon départ, et vous y contrenez; que ce soit au moins pour la dernière fois, car penseriez vous mon cher ami que le plaisir étoit pour vous seul? comptez au contraire pour beaucoup celui que j’ai en faisant la

connoissance d'un galant homme comme vous, et de qui, je continue à recevoir des marques d'un obligeant attachement. Ne regardez point ceci comme un froid compliment, ma plume n'est jamais que l'interprète de mon cœur.

“ Vous me faites l'offre obligeante de votre crédit pour moi, et mes amis, que le sort de la guerre rendrait malheureux en Angleterre. Je vous aime, et vous estime assez pour l'accepter avec franchise au besoin, mais toujours avec la circonspection que l'on doit au bon cœur d'un ami.

“ Vous dire mon cher Capitaine avec quel plaisir je recevrai de vos nouvelles toutes les fois que vous pourrez m'en donner, ne serait rien vous apprendre de nouveau ; puisque vous ne doutez sûrement pas de l'attachement que je vous porte : ainsi obligez moi de m'en donner le plus souvent possible, et sur tout l'avis de votre échange quand il aura lieu.

“ Je crois mon cher ami n'avoir pas besoin de vous rappeler que vous devez toujours librement et franchement disposer de moi dans toutes les occasions ; faites moi le plaisir de vous en bien souvenir, et de croire de loin comme de pres, qui si les vœux que je formerai toujours pour votre bonheur sont exaucés, il ne vous restera rien à désirer.

“ Il faut que je finisse mon Epitre. On ne s'ennuye pas quand on cause avec de bons amis. Il ne faut cependant pas les fatiguer, vous ne m'accuserez pas J'espère de Laconisme. Je trouverais au surplus mon excuse dans le plaisir que j'ai à m'entretenir avec vous.

“ Agréez par continuation mon cher ami l'assurance des sentiments d'estime et d'attachement avec lesquels je serai toujours votre tout dévoué bon ami,

“ L. DUBOIS.

“ P. S. Rappelez moi s'il vous plait au souvenir de Monsieur Fenwick et de vos autres officiers dont je me souviens toujours avec plaisir, et veuillez leur dire mille choses obligeantes de ma part ; ainsi qu'au cher fier Docteur que Je salue par trois fois trois.

“ Je viens aussi de recevoir une lettre de Monsieur Black, il a fidèlement rempli vos intentions près de moi, et je l'en remercierai par ma première.”

The seamen and marines of the *Minerve* began their march for Epinal on the 8th of July; and the officers on the following day. The sufferings of the former, unprotected by their officers during this long march, were extreme; assailed as they were by fatigue, hunger, and every privation. The officers upon leaving the coast were accompanied only by three gens d'armes, who treated them with every respect. They received notice of the place which should terminate the day's march, and made parties for performing the journey without any restraint from their guards. They, at the same time, shewed themselves deserving of such confidence by the strictest compliance with the directions they had received, and the utmost regularity of conduct.

On the third day they reached St. Lo, a military arrondissement, commanded by General Dellegorgue, an officer who had served in Egypt, and who fully appreciated British valour and British honour. He treated the prisoners with the most marked attention; and indeed the hospitality evinced by the inhabitants of St. Lo was such as to merit particular notice.

Captain Brenton's notes have left some further particulars of this march, and of the two days at St. Lo. He says, “ All was now preparation for the march, which was to commence on the 8th of July. The youngsters were all animation and glow; their spirits were buoyant; and feeling convinced that their detention would

be short, they had made up their minds to enjoy the events of the day, without care and without regret. They knew that their term of service would go on in the same manner as though they were at sea ; and they looked forward to the time, when they might return to their profession with much to relate, and the advantage of having acquired at least some portion of the French language. Early on the ninth we left Cherbourg, and having ascended the hill, took our last farewell of the poor old Minerve, lying dismantled in the harbour. The first day's march brought us to Valogne, a distance of fifteen miles. The weather was beautiful, as was the scenery ; and we quite enjoyed the release from the confinement of the Auberge. The ship's company had gone on the preceding day ; and subsequently during the whole course of the march to our ulterior destination, the officers arrived in the evening at the place which the seamen and marines had left in the morning. On the second day we reached Carentan ; and on the third came in sight of St. Lo, a beautiful little town on the slope of a hill. This place, we had been given to understand, was to be our residence, and we rejoiced to find it possessed of so many advantages.

“ On entering the town I was conducted by the gens d' armes to the General, and was received by him with all the urbanity and kindness possible. He invited me to dine with him, and to bring my first lieutenant. This officer being unwell, the second took his place. We had an elegant little repast, and every possible attention shewn us. At the commencement of the dinner I observed my lieutenant to evince a slight sign of dis-



gust. I asked the reason; and he replied, 'They are frogs, Sir.' The General asked what the officer said, and on being told, was much amused at the idea so prevalent among Englishmen, and especially English sailors, that much of the French diet consists of frogs. In the course of our conversation, I expressed my gratification that St. Lo should have been made the place of our confinement. The General replied, that he regretted much that there should be any disappointment, but that he had received orders for the prisoners to march on to Epinal; and that a military escort had been sent to conduct them to Caen, the capital of Calvados, the department we were then in: and that we were to proceed on our route the next day but one. On the 14th of July the prisoners were assembled, and consigned to the custody of an officer of cavalry. General Dellegorgue was present on this occasion, and when the prisoners were ready to march, he came up to me, and embraced me in the warmest manner; wishing me a speedy release from this captivity, and health, and happiness. This interview was highly amusing to the young midshipmen, who had never before witnessed such a demonstration of cordiality. One of them was heard to exclaim, 'See, the French General kissing our skipper;' the familiar name by which the Captain is designated when spoken of by the youngsters.

"According to the regulations of the march, the prisoners were billeted separately upon the houses of the inhabitants. Upon repairing thither to their beds at night, they found a supper prepared, and the friends of the family invited to assist in entertaining the captive guest: nor did it end here. The following day was to be

one of repose, and the march was postponed until the next. A dinner and supper was provided in the same manner; and on the morning of departure, at sunrise, breakfasts were prepared; nor could these worthy people be prevailed upon to receive any indemnification for the trouble and expence they had incurred. From St. Lo the escort was strengthened by the addition of a party of cavalry, and the prisoners were marched in ranks, from which none were suffered to deviate; an inconvenience greatly felt, when compared with the indulgence they had received at first; the more so, as it confined them to the middle of the road, covered them with dust from the horses, and kept them on too quick a pace for such a march, and in so sultry a season."

On arriving at Caen, Captain Brenton complained to the General of such restriction being imposed on officers, who had given their parole of honour. This General was the very reverse of the last; and he replied in a brutal manner, "*Je me moque de votre parole d'honneur. Je ne sais pas ce que c'est, moi.*" Captain Brenton replied, "I will describe it to you. It is (with a British officer) stronger than any prison you have in France." The General threatened to take from them their parole, but he did not put his threat in execution. After leaving Caen the restrictions gradually increased, and at length the prisoners, upon arriving at Bernay, were shut up in one room, with sentinels at the door; the commander of the escort, at the same time, offering to order every accommodation the inn could afford to be brought to them; an offer which was disclaimed with disdain, unless they should be treated differently. The

commanding officer of the party then shewed Captain Brenton his instructions from General —; which were to guard his prisoners with the utmost severity and vigilance, as well on the march as in the towns where they should stop; and to grant them no indulgences on his peril. He however said he felt so strongly the injustice that had been done them, that, if Captain Brenton would be responsible for their conduct, they should enjoy the same indulgence as when they began their march. This was a condition he gladly accepted, and which was productive of all the comfort of which their situation was susceptible. The worthy man who thus promoted the comfort of the poor prisoners is now no more, and consequently is out of the reach of the resentment of his General. The remainder of their journey was performed with ease; and they reached Epinal on the 12th of August, where they found their unfortunate shipmatés, who had arrived the preceding day. Some were in the hospital, and the remainder in rags, and starving from the small quantity and bad quality of their provisions. It is due to the liberality of M. M. Peregaux to observe here, that in reply to a letter from Captain Brenton, written from Pontoise, requesting them to send his drafts, and those of his officers, to England for acceptance, and, when honoured to remit the amount to Epinal; that those gentlemen sent three hundred louis d'or to Captain Brenton at St. Denis, and an order for four hundred more upon Epinal; with offers of as much as they wished to draw for under Captain Brenton's endorsement.

Some additional particulars of this journey may

be given from Captain Brenton's private notes. "Having heard of an English lady residing at Caen, I called upon her. She immediately offered me all the assistance in her power, and amongst other acts of kindness, made me a tender of her credit with a banker, which I thankfully accepted, and procured fifty louis. This was a very timely supply, as the fifty louis of M. Dubois were not expected to last long amongst so many."

"We were just seated at dinner at St. Denis, when a gentleman from M. Peregaux was announced, who brought me three hundred louis in gold, and a letter of credit for four hundred more upon M. Doublat, at Epinal, with an assurance that any bills endorsed by me should be immediately honoured. This conduct was truly noble, and a high compliment to the British navy. No sooner was this act of liberality made known, than there was a general cheer amongst the midshipmen, and indeed amongst all hands. 'I will walk no more,' cried one; and 'I will have a carriage and drive myself,' said another. In short, each one had some scheme of future proceeding, and all were determined to be indemnified for past fatigue. On the following day every description of carriage was put in requisition, and the whole of the prisoners were provided for; but when they found that all the carriages must be kept together, and go 'au pas,' in order to keep with the infantry, a portion of which formed a part of the escort; the luxury of being carried ceased to have its charms; and nearly the whole body returned to marching on foot, to which they had got so much accustomed."

Of his own feelings during this journey Captain Brenton speaks thus in his notes, "I performed nearly the whole of the march on foot, and in the heat of summer; yet I never remember to have enjoyed better health. Indeed, under all my trials, I have experienced the same mercy and goodness from Divine providence; and this has convinced me, that under all my depressions of spirits, and despondencies, from which I have so often derived unhappiness, it has been from want of exertion, and from gloomy forebodings, in which I was most culpably indulging."

Those who best knew him, would consider this to be more the language of humility than of truth; but they must also feel convinced that it was dictated by sincere conviction, and self-abasement. Again, advert- ing to the period immediately following his arrival at Epinal, he writes, "From the time of our arriving here I had frequent communication with England by letters; and our hopes were constantly excited, or depressed, by the various and contradictory reports which reached us: but I had one source of comfort which never failed me—it was the contemplation of the goodness of God towards me. I often contrasted my situation at that time, trying as it was, with what it would have been, had I been united to a woman, who would not have shared in my lot, as my beloved Isabella did. Her fond affection would have prompted her to have flown to me instantly, but for the prospect of my being immediately released. What advantages of beauty, or splendour of fortune, can be put in competition with such a heart as she possessed? with what lustre did she shine

in the hour of trial. It was at this time also, whilst living in peaceful retirement at Epinal, where we certainly enjoyed tranquility, and with very few exceptions experienced the greatest kindness from the French; that I began to consider more attentively the nature of the religion I professed; and I soon found that I had hitherto been a nominal christian only. Since that period I humbly trust every succeeding year has brought some little increase in the knowledge of my duty; although I am still at an awful distance from what I ought to be. My subsequent life has however been greatly influenced by the reflections I then made. Sweet are the uses of adversity."

He adds these remarks on his first arriving at Epinal. "The hopes of an immediate exchange having now vanished, I considered it my duty to take the most prompt measures to render our captivity as advantageous, and as little galling as possible, particularly to the young people, and to the ship's company. My first care was to have the young people, who had been placed under my particular charge, put *en pension* with respectable French families; where they might have the advantage of regular hours, and be enabled to learn the language with greater facility; instead of living together, where nothing but English would have been spoken, and much of their time passed in idleness. Here they had the advantage of such masters as the place afforded. The early hours of the French families greatly contributed to the health and comfort of those intrusted to their care; whilst the very moderate terms paid for their board and lodging, as well as for their instruction,

enabled them to obtain great advantages at a very low price. In fact the misfortune of having fallen into the enemy's hand, bid fair to be of the most essential benefit to some, who had been sent to sea very little advanced in education, particularly as their time of servitude went on as well as their pay, in the same manner, as though they had actually continued afloat. The officers and myself had of course each our private lodgings in the town; but we formed a mess at the principal inn, where we had an excellent dinner and supper, with wine included, for the very small sum of fifty francs each per month, less than one shilling and sixpence sterling per day.

“At (I believe) Gondrecourt, the march having been finished early in the day, I had laid down, and had fallen asleep, when I was awakened by English cheering under the windows; and looking out to ascertain the cause of this unusual circumstance, was told that a courier from Paris to Epinal had just passed, and had given the joyful information that he was the bearer of orders for an exchange of prisoners, and that we might expect to be marched back to the coast, even before we should reach Epinal. This was so probable, that it was easily believed, and we proceeded to Epinal, in the full persuasion that our stay there would be very short. It is likely the report was well founded, for at this time the British government had offered to exchange Captain Jurieu, taken in the Franchise, for me; but it was refused by the first consul.”

Having thus seen the Captain and crew of the *Minerve* arrived at the end of their journey; the

Editor feels that he is justified in calling the attention of his readers, to the circumstances under which the subject of this memoir was then placed.

We have seen him in the previous narrative, slowly and gradually, amidst various trials and disappointments, winning his way to that point in his profession, which a just and reasonable ambition led him to desire. We have seen him emerging out of difficulties which were likely to have overwhelmed a man who was supported by no family or private interest, and who was to rise, if he rose at all, by personal exertions. We have seen him obtaining promotion, rank, and honour, and finally in gaining the object of his early and persevering attachment, we have seen him realizing all that he had hoped for or desired. And now at the commencement of a new career, the career which to an ardent and energetic spirit like his, must have seemed the most brilliant and full of promise ; in command of one of the finest frigates in the navy, at the beginning of a war which seemed likely to be a struggle for life and death between two mighty empires, when everything that his profession could offer was before him ; when rank and fortune, and what was dearer than both to a mind like his, were apparently within his reach, and might have been reasonably anticipated ; he is doomed to open the campaign with a disaster, which was not only in itself most afflicting, and likely to affect his professional character ; but which immediately involved a captivity of interminable duration ; a captivity to be rendered more intolerable while it lasted, by hearing of what was done by others ; and which might be



extended to such a length, as to mar all future prospect of promotion or distinctions. It is only necessary for the reader to place himself in such circumstances, and the imagination can easily supply the pictures which might have presented themselves to Captain Brenton's mind on the occasion; and, notwithstanding this, we find him in the hour of misfortune, calm if dejected; resigned to a lot which seemed to involve the loss of all he had been seeking; and sustained under defeat by the consciousness of having endeavoured to do his duty. Something may be ascribed to temperament; something may be ascribed to the buoyant character of a profession, which being cast in the midst of dangers, lives by surmounting them, and grows habitually indifferent to circumstances, by successfully struggling against them. But while we cede much to causes like these, we need not cede more than is due. Many officers no doubt shared the same hard destiny with him, and bore with more or less equanimity the trial of captivity. No comparison is drawn, nor attempted to be drawn, between their behaviour and his. Our object is not to raise Captain Brenton on this occasion above others; but to shew him as he was, and to describe how he felt and how he acted. It is not essential that a model should be superior to every thing else of the kind; but we feel that it is sufficient for the purpose, if it has qualities that should be imitated, and that may be imitated; and we know that that example is sometimes found to be the most beneficial, which comes nearest to the level of him who is to be encouraged or directed by its contemplation.

It is more than probable that Captain Brenton was but one of many in his cheerful submission to his lot, as he was but one of many who experienced the same misfortune during the war; and that the same discipline of mind led to the same patience under trial in cases of which we know nothing. But his circumstances it will be admitted were peculiar; and it seems unquestionable that some higher influence than that of the causes referred to, is necessary in order to account for the calmness of mind he exhibited during the action, and for the cheerfulness which he displayed at the commencement of his captivity. Temperament might have done much, but in naming temperament, it seems fit to remind the reader of the shock which his bodily system had experienced by the accident that occurred, while the *Minerve* was fitting out. Concussion of the brain too often leaves long and melancholy marks of the injury sustained by that most delicate of all the elements which form the body. His professional zeal we have seen had led him to anticipate the moment of recovery, and to go to sea before he was capable of enduring the fatigues of service. Reluctantly, and under a conviction of the absolute necessity of repose, he had once left his ship and gone ashore; and when at last he resumed his command, and sailed from Portsmouth for the coast of France, it is obvious that he could hardly have been fit for service: and that it was the spirit of the man which at that moment raised him above the infirmities of the body. That in such a state of health he should have undergone the trial of such a night, as that on which the *Minerve* was lost; that he should have developed

such a variety of resources for the purpose of rescuing the ship from the position into which she had run ; that he should have met each crisis in the action, with such firmness and self-possession, is sufficiently wonderful. It is equally surprising, that after the excitement of the defence was over, he should have borne the fatigues and humiliations of the march without sinking under them ; and I can not but think, that any one who takes all into consideration, will come to the conclusion, that much which seems admirable, much of that which seems surprising in his conduct ; cannot be accounted for through temperament or natural energy. I believe it must be referred to that habitual reliance on God, which had been instilled into his mind in childhood, which had been retained through all the trials of his youth ; which if it had not grown, as it might have done, had never been obliterated or lost ; but which lived to be called into activity under peculiar circumstances ; and which finally, through the mercy and longsuffering of God, became that faith which works by love ; and made him capable of doing all things through Christ that strengthened him.

But the conclusion renders the example more valuable because it makes it more accessible. If all was to be ascribed to natural causes, to firmness of temperament and qualities peculiar to the individual, the portrait might be admirable, but it could not be generally profitable. The many, who make no pretence to such powers, would consider themselves released from all duty of imitating an excellence which they could not attain to ; and all might feel that they were invited to follow a path, which it was uncertain whether they

should be able to accomplish. But when we not only see an excellence described, which excites our admiration; but also see the sources and springs from which it is derived laid open; when we are allowed to feel, that many may attain to the eminence which is held up as our example, if they will but follow the course, and adopt the means that were made use of by those whom we admire; the advantage then is multiplied, or rather an advantage is realised which before was little more than problematical; and all will be encouraged to strive when there is a hope that all may be successful.

The casual note in the private journal of the subject of this memoir as to the uses of adversity, shews that he was conscious of the change that was gradually moving forward within him, and of the need in which he stood of strength and assistance from above. The life of excitement which he had hitherto led, was not favourable to the developement or growth of religious sentiment. The grace of God had kept alive the spark, that early education had kindled; and He, who will not bruise the broken reed, nor quench the smoking flax, had mercifully preserved him from the grosser contagion of the world, through the influence of that romantic attachment which added dignity to his youthful feelings, and that thirst for glory which accompanied it. But the process which protected him from what was evil, was not equally adapted to foster the growth of what is good. The activity of service, the absorbing interest connected with his profession in the time of war, saved him no doubt from the evil inseparable from

a life of ease; but his situation as an officer offered no advantages of a religious kind, nothing to encourage serious thought or reflection. In continual movement he had no leisure for reading, no access to those means which are usually thought essential to moral improvement; no opportunity of knowing how other men feel and think on matters of a spiritual nature. In all these respects, repose was necessary; and we may perhaps now be allowed to trace the hand of providence in an event, which, afflictive as it was in itself, gave him that interval of rest, which he never would have consented to seek, or to accept if offered; and sent him for a time to meditate in the retirement of captivity, on the state of his own soul, and the real end and object of man's being upon earth.

There can be no doubt that in a moral sense this calamity, for such it seemed, and such it doubtless was for a time considered by himself, was singularly beneficial. He then found leisure, and for the first time probably in his life, to review his own principles, to consider his own state, and to examine himself whether he was in the faith. It was a blessed opportunity, but it was well that he was prepared to improve it. Other men had it, but it is feared that few used it to the same purpose. If the root of the matter had not been in him; if religion had not been long known and truly honoured; if it had not already secured a hold on his heart and affections; the leisure which was given would have been employed as leisure too frequently is, by those who pass suddenly from the excitement of active life, in indolence or folly.

His time would in that case have been wasted, the opportunity would have been lost, and the gracious purpose of God would have been frustrated as to the effect it seemed calculated to produce.

Happily for him, his mind was prepared for the trial. That habit of realising God in everything that happened, and of cheerful submission to his will, which formed a chief feature in his character, led in this case to resignation. Conscious that as an officer he had done his duty, he submitted to his lot with calmness; and instead of giving way to regret and despondency as if all was lost because he had been once unfortunate; he turned at once to the duties that were before him, and endeavoured to be the protector and benefactor of those, whom he might have been otherwise leading to victory as their commander. With this wholesome occupation the mind had no leisure to prey upon itself, and to destroy its own energies by comparing what might have been his state with that which was. Captivity ceased to be irksome. The future was no longer gloomy, while the present moment was profitably employed. The withdrawal from the anxieties and fatigues of actual service was salutary, and he felt its beneficial effects in mind as well as in body; and through the influence of religious feelings on a mind prepared to admit them, an interval which might have been past in murmurings and unprofitable recollections, became, as we shall see in the subsequent pages of the memoir, a season of calm enjoyment and of real permanent improvement.

## CHAPTER VII.

REMOVED FROM EPINAL TO PHALSBURG, AND THENCE TO VERDUN.—SUFFERINGS OF THE PEOPLE ON THE MARCH, AND EFFORTS MADE FOR THEIR RELIEF AND IMPROVEMENT.—THE REV. ROBERT WOLFE OFFERS HIS SERVICES AND ASSISTANCE.—MRS. BRENTON'S ARRIVAL AT VERDUN.—RESIDENCE AT CHARNI.—ILLNESS, AND PERMISSION GRANTED TO RESIDE AT TOURS.—CONDUCT OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT TOWARDS THE ENGLISH PRISONERS OF WAR.

THE arrangements which have been mentioned, placed the officers and midshipmen in a state of comparative comfort ; but it was otherwise with the crew. Upon the approach of winter, the seamen and marines being unprovided with clothes or bedding, and placed upon very slender diet, began to suffer severely. A little addition was made to their food by subscription amongst the officers, when they met as they did every week, at Captain Brenton's lodgings, for divine service ; and through the same fund a quantity of old tapestry, from some of the ruined houses in the neighbourhood, belonging to the *ci-devant* nobility, was purchased, as a covering for them at night.

Again we have access to Captain Brenton's journal. "In the middle of November the negotiation for an exchange of prisoners having failed, we were ordered to

march to Phalsburg, a small fortress in the Vosges mountains, which was considered a more secure place for confining the prisoners than the open town of Epinal. We had however scarcely established ourselves in lodging there, before we were again removed, and sent to Verdun, now established as a general depôt. As this place appeared to be nearer the line of our probable march to the coast for embarkation; we persuaded ourselves that this sudden removal certainly indicated an approaching exchange; and our spirits were buoyed up with the hopes, which cheered us under a very severe season. Upon our arrival, however, every prospect of release seemed to have vanished, and the dispositions that were made for the regulation of the prisoners, were evidently such as foreboded the establishment being a permanent one. We had however the comfort of a regular intercourse by letter with England; and those which I received at this time were full of affection, of piety, fortitude, and resignation. My captivity, your beloved mother viewed as the greatest blessing. She had been greatly alarmed at the state of my health, when I rejoined the *Minerve* the last time, and attributed my recovery to my having quitted active service, which no other event perhaps could have been the means of my doing. She also derived comfort from the idea that I was sheltered from the dangers of my profession, and from the hope of our being soon restored to each other."

In describing the state of his sailors on this march to Phalsburg, Captain Brenton says, "The weather was very severe, and numbers of the poor destitute prisoners



must have perished, but for the assistance afforded to them by their officers, to which the captains of the merchant vessels very liberally contributed.

After marching during the whole of a tempestuous day, they reached Rem, where they were to remain for the night, and were shut up in a ruined roofless chapel. A small quantity of straw thrown upon a broken pavement, was in a short time soaked with rain ; and each man having received his three sols, had no other means of procuring food than purchasing it at the door, from persons who flocked there with wretched spirituous liquors, and boiled liver. The spirits were of course preferred, and the money intended for their supper was expended in the purchase, leaving the wretched prisoners no other support than their allowance of bread. To alleviate as much as possible this distress, on the following day, I requested the officer of the escort to put into my hands the daily allowance of three sols for each prisoner, to which I added a sum out of the subscription purse ; and giving it to one of the gens d'armes, he was sent forward to Luneville, where it was laid out in meat and vegetables, which were cooked in the house of a bourgeois ; who, as well as the messenger was remunerated for his trouble ; and thus upon the arrival of the prisoners, they found at least a comfortable meal ; and being confined in barracks had less cause to complain of their lodgings. So orderly and well behaved were these poor fellows, and so obediently respectful in their march, even to the youngest midshipman, as well as to their conductors, that upon their arrival at Sarrebourg, they were allowed to be billeted and quartered among the inhabit-

ants in small parties, taking with them their respective portions of meat and vegetables, the inhabitants cheerfully finding them fire to cook it.

“At Phalsbourg the men had excellent barracks, but they were now in a most deplorable state from want of clothes, and lame from performing such a march barefoot. To supply the place of shoes, a number of sabots, or wooden shoes, in value about three pence per pair were sent in; but it was not until stern necessity rendered it necessary, that the sailors could be induced to put them on. One, actually with tears in his eyes, exclaimed with an expletive, “Who would have thought I should come to this:” so inseparable was the association between misery, slavery, and wooden shoes in his mind. M. Parmentier, the Mayor, treated them with the utmost humanity and benevolence. He filled the hospitals with them, that they might enjoy the comfort of good beds, and nourishing food; and used every exertion in his power to procure them supplies of clothing, but without success. A slender provision of old blankets had been made, but they were some that had been used by the army of the Meuse, and had been kept in depôt since that time. I previously had written to the Admiralty, stating the distresses of the prisoners, and requesting permission to procure them necessaries, and advance to them a small daily sum, to enable them to live. The answer reached me at Phalsbourg, approving of my suggestion, and sending me a credit of £2000 for the purpose. It arrived most opportunely, for the prisoners were again ordered to march. Verdun was their destination, as the journal transcribed has already shewn. The order to move was peremptory,

although the commandant was unprovided with funds to pay either the arrears due to the prisoners, or their daily allowance of money; and but for the remittance above-mentioned, they must have subsisted until their arrival at Nancy (three days) upon their allowance of bread only. The prisoners now amounted to four hundred, and were formed into three divisions, following each other on three successive days. With the first were all the officers, and nearly one hundred seamen. They began their march in the early part of December. On their arrival at Sarrebourg, the people were again confined in a place similar to that they had been put into at Rem; but such was the severity of the weather that few of them could have survived the night had they remained there. However, the commander of the escort declared he had neither authority, or means, to give them any other accommodation. It was in vain that I observed to him, that in that very town, only three weeks before, the men had been billeted amongst the inhabitants, and had shewn themselves worthy of such indulgence by their good conduct. I earnestly requested that application might be made to the municipality for permission for the people to be again billeted amongst the inhabitants; but this was objected to, from there being no security against their escape.

“However, on our way to consult a magistrate, I observed in the street a house to let; and it occurred to me that this house, a capacious one, might be hired for the night; and application being made to the owner, he consented to my proposal for a very small sum, about fifty francs. The officer of the escort also

consented, on the condition of a further sum being given for the soldiers, for the additional duty of a night guard; I giving my parole at the same time for the prisoners not attempting to escape. The number of people to be accommodated in this house was about one hundred and fifty; two remaining divisions being expected on the two following days. The supplies of food for the people were immediately ordered to be got ready; and in the meantime a quantity of firewood was sent in, and large fires made in every room. Heaps of straw were also provided, and the meat and soup were brought in in tubs, according to the number of inmates destined for each room. By the time all was completely prepared, the prisoners arrived, and were immediately distributed according to the previous arrangement. As no communication had been made to them, from the time I left them in their prison, their joy and delight at the sight of so much unexpected comfort, may be better conceived than described; tired, and perishing with cold and hunger, their food, their fire, and their straw, were indeed luxuries, which it requires a person to be in their situation thoroughly to appreciate. This they certainly did do, nor was their loyalty to their beneficent sovereign and grateful country forgotten, in their expressions of enjoyment. Fires under a proper watch were kept throughout the night; and day-break found the poor men refreshed, and grateful, ready to resume their march, in the most contented and willing state of discipline. The good effect produced by this arrangement led me to request of the magistrate, that the two following divisions might have the benefit of the house in the same

manner ; to which he at once assented. A sum was accordingly left in his hands for the payment of the rent, and the provision of food and fuel ; and each division enjoyed the unexpected treat that awaited them. My officers and myself, with the first division, marched on successively to Sarrebourg, Luneville, Nancy, and St. Michel to Verdun, where we arrived on the 17th of December, and were joined by the other two divisions. Here the people were allowed to repose for some days, previous to their continuing their march to their destined depot, Givet, on the banks of the Meuse ; and this time was taken advantage of, in clothing the prisoners from head to foot, in a warm substantial manner, and in providing them with blankets. In the course of a week they proceeded on their route, but having none of the officers to superintend their conduct, and watch over them ; they were soon again involved in misery ; and a large part of their clothes were disposed of for the merest trifle to provide for their wants. So true it is, that seamen even of experience, and of sterling abilities in the exercise of their profession, are but children of a larger growth when on shore ; and hence arises the necessity for that rigorous superintendence, so much blamed by those who are ignorant of the sailor's character. Hence also it is that officers whilst their men are under their command on board ship, are obliged to keep lists of every article of their clothing, and to call them to a rigid account, when any of them are missing. The consequence of the separation of these men from their officers in this case was, that when they arrived at Givet, after a march of five or six

days from Verdun, they were again in a state of destitution. The barracks at Givet not being in readiness to receive them; they were marched up to the fortress of Charlemont, and there confined in a souterrain, with all the old system of suttlers, and wet straw, and want of clothing renewed; and this in the last days of December, in that inclement climate.

The officers in the mean time were permanently settled at Verdun, to which place all the English detenus, from every part of France, were assembled; forming perhaps one of the most extraordinary groupes of character, that had ever been collected in the same spot. There were many highly respectable, and exemplary persons; some of whom had been travelling in France for their pleasure, some for the purpose of educating their children, and some for economy. There were others, whose sole object was curiosity, or dissipation. There were many skilful artificers, who had brought their talent to a French market, and were engaged in setting up manufactures, that might rival or surpass their own country. There were many, who from seditious conduct, and republican principles, had found it necessary to take shelter in France. There were fraudulent bankrupts, and broken tradesmen. There were many who had fled from their creditors, and even some who had fled from the gallows. With this motley assemblage the prisoners of war were involved, enveloped in one measure, subject to the same proscription, and the same parole. The amalgamation was not very favourable to the latter, particularly the younger branches of the service. Much good

was done, and some striking instances of conduct highly honourable to Great Britain occurred; but all know the influence of bad example, and how easily it captivates the unwary. This very soon became evident. Gaming houses were set up by the French government's authority, and a notice was stuck up against the door, that "They were exclusively for the English; and that the French were forbidden to frequent them."

Captain Brenton received a letter early in January from one of the prisoners at Charlemont, informing him of the situation to which they were again reduced, and imploring him to visit them if possible. He immediately waited upon the General commanding at Verdun, and requested and obtained permission, on condition that he would take a gens d'armes with him in the carriage, and consider himself for the time in his custody. To this he readily agreed, and proceeded to Givet, through Stenay, Sedan, Rocroy, and the Ardennes. On reaching the place he immediately went to Charlemont, and found that the statement he had received was not in the least exaggerated. It was a complete recurrence of the worst days, and all was to be done over again. It is but justice however to the French Military Authority to say, that every facility was given to Captain Brenton for the purpose of carrying out the object of his journey. The barracks, very spacious buildings on the banks of the Meuse, were now ready. The rooms were large, and capable of containing twenty men in each: and the following letter from Captain Brenton to the Transport Board, will best explain the measures taken for the comfort of the prisoners.

“ VERDUN, JANUARY 25, 1804.

“ GENTLEMEN,

“ The British seamen, prisoners of war, having been sent to Charlemont, in the department of Ardennes, I judged it necessary to apply to the French government for permission to go there, that I might see them properly clothed, and supplied with what might be indispensibly necessary for their comfort. This indulgence was instantly granted, and I have just returned from thence. I beg leave to lay before you an account of the measures, which I have thought proper to take for the present, until I receive your orders for my future guidance. The prisoners are allowed, by the French government, three sols per day, one pound and a half of bread, a bundle of straw, and a small quantity of wood. The latter is by no means sufficient to dress their victuals, and a part of it has always been stopped to pay for the hire of kettles to dress their meat, and earthen pans to put it in when cooked.

“ Upon my arrival at Charlemont, I found orders had been received there for the prisoners to be removed to the great barracks at Givet, upon the banks of the Meuse, in a healthy good situation. They are divided into rooms containing twenty men each, with brick floors. The rooms are however comfortable, spacious, well shaped, perfectly clean, with a good chimney in each. As no furniture of any kind is allowed them, I have hired ten bedsteads for each room. The bedstead with a palliasse is sufficient for two men. For the bedstead and palliasse I pay ten sols each per month. The prisoners are allowed a blanket by the French government, in addition to which I have furnished them with others, as I stated in my letter of the first. I considered this arrangement as better than purchasing bedding, which would create a great expense; and in the event of the depôt being changed, be impossible to carry. In order to prevent the stoppage taking place in the quantity of fuel, I have also hired a kettle, jug, and two earthen pans for each room, which costs thirty sols a month. Well aware that by putting any sum into the hands of the seamen, it might, in many instances, occasion intoxication and improper conduct; and that by supplying clothing only, without



adding to their allowance of provisions, I should have defeated his Majesty's most gracious intentions of succouring his distressed subjects, as their clothes would have been sold to supply their wants; I have judged it necessary, till I have received your directions, to continue their daily allowance, as mentioned in my last, viz. six sols to the people belonging to his Majesty's vessels and packets; four sols to those belonging to merchants' service; and three sols to boys. I have contracted with a butcher at Givet, to supply them with half a pound of good meat a day, at two sous per pound below the market price, which is brought to them every morning at nine o'clock, and distributed to the several rooms. The chiefs of the several rooms receive the payment due to their companions, from the French government, a certain part of which is appropriated to the purchase of vegetables, and the remainder distributed for the purpose of supplying their inferior wants. I have directed that the care of their clothes should be indispensibly necessary to their receiving a continuation of indulgence; that they should be regularly mustered every week; and that who-soever shall be found deficient, his allowance shall be stopped until the article missing can be purchased and committed to his charge.

"In order to insure obedience to these regulations, regularity in the payment, and good order in general, I have placed Mr. W. T. Bradshaw, acting clerk of the Minerve, a young man of excellent character, as superintendent, who will pay particular attention to the comfort and good order of the people, and have allowed him, until I can receive your directions on the subject, two shillings per day, and sixpence per league travelling expences from Verdun to Charlemont, as he belonged to this depôt, until removed by my application.

"I feel it a pleasing duty to say, that the prisoners are treated with the utmost kindness and attention by the French officer, charged with their superintendance; from whom I have received every possible assistance, and indulgence, in the performance of my duty; and it is with the most heartfelt satisfaction, I can state, that his Majesty's most gracious bounty has been attended with the happiest effects; and that I left my countrymen on the 16th instant, cheerful, contented, and grateful in the highest degree.

“ Upon my return to Verdun I found that Captain Gower and his officers had arrived there. Captain Gower, wishing to see the wants of his own ship’s company supplied, immediately set out for Valenciennes, where they are. I have in consequence given him a letter of credit on Messrs. Peregaux for £400 for the purpose.

“ We have a depôt here of nearly one hundred men, provided for, as those at Givet; there is also a depôt of prisoners at Bitché, who have as yet received very little assistance, for which purpose I mean to set out for that place on the 30th instant, having procured permission. I have also clothed fifty men, left in the hospital at Phalsbourg, through the assistance of the municipality. The clothes are of a higher price than those I have purchased, but at the same time of a much better quality, as I have observed by some of the people passing through this place, on their way to Givet, the prices vary very much at the different places. I have endeavoured to unite comfort with economy. I beg leave to annex the different prices. There are here a few commissioned and petty officers, who have been passed from Toulon, and having had no opportunity of procuring supplies from England, are consequently for the moment in great distress. I flatter myself that I have only anticipated your wishes, in giving to each a small sum on account of their pay, viz. to a lieutenant £10, and to a midshipman £5. I must request you will be pleased to grant me a further supply of money, as what now remains, must in a few weeks be exhausted.

“ Having met with ten masters of merchantmen in the forest of Ardenne, on their way to Verdun, totally destitute of money, having only three sols a day, and in the most wretched apparel, I gave to each of them a small sum of money for their present necessities, amounting to forty-four livres and four sols; and since my return to Verdun, have extended the like aid to several other masters in the same predicament. There is a number of men to whom such assistance would be highly useful, and who I really believe do not possess the means of procuring relief for themselves; but as they are allowed twenty-nine livres per month by the French government, I could not take upon myself to act in their favour, without your instructions for that purpose.—I have, &c. &c.

(SIGNED) “JAHLEEL BRENTON.”

Captain Brenton says, "On my return to Verdun, I found dissipation and extravagance the order of the day. The gaming tables were in full career, and frequented by the greater part of the prisoners, who could collect a stake whereby to try their fortune. The result was, as might have been expected, extensive misery and wretchedness, with many acts of gross misconduct. The studies of the young people were greatly interrupted, and a gloomy prospect presented itself for the remainder of the captivity." On another occasion, it appears to have been on a visit to the depôts and hospitals of Bitche, Captain Brenton says, "I set off on the day appointed, visiting on my way the hospitals of Metz, Nancy, Luneville, Blemont and Phalsbourg, in each of which I found many English prisoners. I was accompanied in this journey by the Rev. Lancelot Charles Lee, an English Clergyman, who having been travelling in France, at the period of the war breaking out, was included in the general arrest, and sent to Verdun. This gentleman, who devoted all his time and property to the relief of his fellow sufferers, volunteered accompanying me, in the expectation of finding many of his fellow detenus in the different prisons and hospitals, we were likely to visit; nor was he disappointed; for many were found, and all were relieved to the utmost extent of his power. The society of this amiable man was a source of much enjoyment to me; and the foundation of a friendship was laid at this time, which lasted during the remainder of Mr. Lee's life." He died at his living near Oxford in the year 1842 or 1843. A singular in-

stance of the ability of the persons employed in the charge of prisoners, and their fitness for the office they had to fill, occurred upon the occasion of their journey. "The gens d'armes who had been sent with me to Givet, upon my first visit there, appeared very anxious to learn English; enquiring the name of every article which presented itself in that language, and making awkward attempts to pronounce it. He at the same time gave some not obscure hints, as to his feelings respecting the situation of prisoners; shewing that he considered those who had left families at home, as almost justified, in any effort they might make to effect their escape. This at once put me on my guard, as to the treachery I might expect from my companion, if I were to give him the slightest advantage, even in common conversation; and I consequently avoided the subject of the prisoners with the greatest care, keeping my escort at as great a distance as circumstances would admit. But as it was customary for all prisoners who were placed under the particular custody of gens d'armes to admit them to their table; a custom I felt obliged to follow, as much of the good I hoped to do for the prisoners, would depend on my being on friendly terms with this man. This rendered my situation the more dangerous. The journey however was performed, and no effort made by the gens d'armes at mischief. On my next journey I was told that the same guard would attend me. He persevered in his apparent efforts to pick up a little English. Convinced as Mr. Lee and myself were of this man's utter ignorance of the English language, we felt under no restraint before him, but

indulged ourselves in talking freely upon every subject which presented itself. The French Government, the first Consul, the treatment of the prisoners, and even the conduct of this man himself, whose gluttony, and egregious vanity, and boasting, made him a very prominent subject for remark, and ridicule, were all very freely handled; but all this passed before him without producing the slightest effect upon the muscles of his countenance; and yet upon our return to Verdun, it was discovered that this very man spoke English as well as French; and had been five years in the Irish Brigade under General Stack, in the French service. This information was given to me by the General himself. That no mischief was done by this person, can only be accounted for, on the supposition, that the object of his espionage was to detect, if possible, the existence of any plan of importance, either respecting the escape of prisoners, or as connected with some of the diplomatic secrets at that time carried on by Mr. Drake, at Munich, whom Buonaparte considered as involved in the conspiracies of Georges, and his accomplices. Nothing having transpired that could have been brought to bear upon this subject, silence was imposed upon the spy, on every other point, as no good could result from the disclosure.

“ Whilst changing horses on the road to Givet, a beggar came to the carriage to whom I gave a sol; which my companion, the gens d’armes, observing, said, ‘ Monsieur, voila un de mes defants. Je suis trop charitableo Je ne vois jamais la misère, sans que les larmes me viennent aux yeux.’ None were however observable on this

occasion, nor did he give any other testimony of his being 'trop charitable.' On our arriving in the evening at Rocroix, where we were to sleep, another *gens d'armes* presented himself, who being a brother Brigadier to my escort, was invited to join the dinner party; and the prowess of the French troops became naturally a subject of conversation. The charitable *gens d'armes* then observed to me, 'Ah, Monsieur, voila un autre de mes defants. Je suis, trop brave o si vous pourriez me voir marcher contre une redonte—ah, vraiment c'est une chose a voir.'

"On our arrival at Phalsbourg we found nearly fifty men still in the hospital, of those who had been left there on the breaking up of the *depôt* in December; and it is but justice to that worthy man, Monsieur Parmentier, the mayor, (whose kindness to the prisoners I before mentioned) to say, that it is impossible any people could have been treated with more kindness, and real benevolence, than these people were; much praise is also due to M. Geville, the surgeon of the hospital. I mentioned in my official letter to the Transport Board, the conduct of M. Parmentier, and stated that he had a relation, M. Leopold Liot, who had been taken prisoner at St. Domingo; and requested that he might be liberated, as an expression of gratitude to M. Parmentier, and I have the impression on my mind that this was granted. From Phalsbourg we proceeded to Bitche, where we found forty men confined in a *souterrain*. These were generally persons who had been detected in an attempt to make their escape, and were sent here as a punishment, and

at the same time for greater security. On our return we visited Nancy and Metz, relieving the prisoners in the hospitals at those places; and reached Verdun in the early part of March."

Soon after the prisoners had assembled at Verdun, the Rev. Robert B. Wolfe, a Clergyman of the Church of England, who was a *detenu*, arrested while living at Fontainebleau, made an offer of his services for the performance of divine worship. Applications were in consequence made to the General, for the use of a Government building, then vacant, which had formerly been the chapel of a convent: and this being granted, the service was regularly performed every Sunday, to a congregation consisting of by far the greater part of the prisoners, and amounting to more than one hundred persons. Mr. Wolfe received frequent assistance from the Rev. W. Gordon, another very amiable young clergyman, amongst the *detenus*. A school was at the same time established for the children of the prisoners, and for the boys taken in the vessels of war, and merchant vessels; all of whom under a certain age had been permitted to remain at Verdun. These boys having been clothed uniformly in neat jackets and trowsers, were marched to church on the Sunday, but the display proved to be unwise. The French authorities took umbrage at it, and an order was soon received from Paris, that the whole of these children should be sent off to Sarrelibre, to a new *depôt* which had been formed at that place, to the great detriment of these young people, indeed it may be said, to the utter ruin of many.

In the course of the spring a very great increase had been made in the number of prisoners. The officers of several ships of war, of Indiamen, and other vessels, had arrived, as well as detenus from the more remote parts of France. Verdun began to lose the appearance of a French town; and many shops with English signs and English designations were seen, such as "Anderson, grocer and tea dealer, from London; Stuckey, tailor and ladies' habit maker, from London, &c. &c." The Rue Moselle, the principal street in Verdun, got the nom de guerre of Bond Street, and was often called by the French themselves, "Bon Street." Races were established, and a race course hired, and fitted up, near the village of Charni, with distance posts, stewards' box, &c. &c. A pack of beagles was procured, which was hunted regularly three times a week, and became a very favourite amusement. A motley groupe followed them, consisting entirely of prisoners, with horses of every description; sometimes as many as forty horsemen being seen in the field; but it was an amusement eagerly followed up, and seemed to break the monotony of the prisoner's life, being something to look forward to.

The General in allowing the exercise of hunting, granted a Rayon of two leagues on each side of Verdun; but this was qualified by the necessity each prisoner was under of signing his name in a book kept for the purpose in an office at Verdun, twice in the course of the day; viz., once between eight and ten in the morning, and again between two and four in the afternoon. Those who wished to hunt therefore, took



care to sign as early as they could in the morning, and provided they could ensure returning before four, they felt secure as to their last signature. It was necessary in consequence that the hunt should begin early, and it was seldom of long duration. This necessity of appearing twice a day was felt by the superior officers, who had been taken in arms, as a great indignity, and forcibly remonstrated against by them in the following letter.

“SIR,

“We feel it a duty we owe to ourselves, and the rank we hold in the British Navy, to remonstrate against the treatment we receive as prisoners of war. When under the necessity of surrendering the ships we commanded to the arms of the French republic, we considered ourselves under its protection. We were taken in the performance of our duty, which in all ages, and in every part of the world, has been considered as the most noble either in public or in private life; that of supporting the cause of our country in open and honourable warfare. No exertions could save us from captivity under the circumstances attending our ships; no honour was consequently lost, and misfortune ought to strengthen our claims to hospitality. The fate of war has placed us in the hands of the French republic, and from it, Sir, we have a right to demand that respect, which the customs of all civilized nations accord to officers of our rank, who have not forfeited their titles to it by improper conduct. Ours has been invariably regulated by a sacred attention to the word of honour exacted from us upon landing in France, nor can we recollect having given the slightest cause of complaint. We are now placed on a level with the lowest description of prisoner, and enjoy no distinction whatever above them. Notwithstanding we have pledged our honour not to leave Verdun without permission, we are ordered to present ourselves twice in each day, to verify our keeping it. The Captains of the French ships *Carrieré*, *St. Nicholas*, and

Success, taken by the ships we commanded in the late war, can testify how differently they were treated whilst our prisoners.

“You must naturally expect, Sir, that under such circumstances we should feel and act as we do in laying a statement of these facts before you.

“We are, Sir, &c.

E. L. GOWER,  
JAHLEEL BRENTON.”

“TO HIS EXCELLENCY  
THE MINISTER OF MARINE.”

No answer was returned to this letter; the cause probably was, that it was referred to the Bureau of the Minister of war, who was charged with the control of the prisoners, for from the invariable kindness of Mons. Decrès, the Minister of Marine, there can be but little doubt of his readiness to attend to so just a complaint. In the course of a few weeks, however, an indulgence was granted to the officers of rank to sign only every fifth day, and the same privilege was extended to the principal of the detenus.

It is proper to mention here a fact, which occurred at this period of Captain Brenton's confinement, which is not only interesting in itself, but which eventually may have led to some important consequences to him and his associates in captivity. He was visiting at the house of a French gentleman in Verdun, and was struck by a large picture hanging up in the room, in which a person strikingly resembling the master of the house was painted, in the act of giving charity to a ragged little boy; and on enquiring what the picture was intended to represent, he received the following affecting little narrative from M. Godard, the gentleman

himself. During the reign of terror," he stated that "both Madame Godard and himself were arrested, and confined in prison, in the hourly expectation of being sent to the guillotine; while their family, consisting of six young children, were left totally unprotected. After some days passed under the most dreadful anxiety, Robespierre having been put to death, the prisoners were released, and flying to their home found all their children but one; and after the most indefatigable search, they could obtain no information respecting him. It was supposed that he must have perished in some of the conflicts which were of daily occurrence in Paris; and he was accordingly given up and mourned over as dead. Three or four years afterwards M. Godard, having business in Holland, went to Rotterdam, and was accosted in the streets by a boy in rags, begging. The child's accent was evidently French, and attracted M. Godard's notice. On asking his country, he said that it was France, and that his name was Romain. And what besides, asked the gentleman with great agitation? The boy replied, Romain Godard. In fact it was the missing child. The father's joy may be easily conceived. He found that the child expecting to be put to death at Paris, had contrived to join a party going to Holland, where he had long subsisted upon charity. He was of course soon returned to the bosom of his family, and received as one from the dead by his afflicted mother.

On Captain Brenton's continuing his enquiries respecting the youth, he was told that he had been sent out to St. Domingo on employment; and on that island

being evacuated by General Rochambeau, in 1803, Romain had embarked in a merchant vessel for France ; but he was taken on the passage by an English cruizer ; and was at that time actually on board the Sultan, prison ship, in Portsmouth harbour.

Captain Brenton immediately wrote to the Transport Board, stating all the circumstances of this most affecting case, and suggesting that as M. Godard was very much respected at Verdun, the indulgence of his son's release might have a happy effect upon the welfare of the British prisoners in that depôt. The Transport Board immediately obtained the sanction of the Admiralty to his being liberated ; and in a few weeks he arrived once more in the paternal dwelling.

No comment need be made on this simple but affecting story. It shews how wonderfully, and yet how mysteriously, the purposes of Providence are accomplished ; but it also shews how various are the opportunities of doing good, which are placed within the reach of those who are diligent in seeking for them.

Much real good probably did arise from this conversation. The young Godard was delivered from a very miserable and protracted captivity, and his family were made happy by his restoration. But beyond this, we cannot doubt that a kindly feeling was generated towards the English prisoners by the interference which led to his release ; the bitter feelings which war has a tendency to produce in hostile nations were mitigated, and an interchange of kindness must have reminded the parties concerned, that the real happiness of man is the making others happy.

But while these were the apparent occupations of Captain Brenton, while he was thus busily employed in relieving the distresses and promoting the welfare of all around him, there was much passing within his own mind of which the world knew nothing; and his labours for the good of others were secretly promoting his own. Light broke in on his own mind, while he was endeavouring to enlighten others. His work and labour of love were made the means of awakening his mind to truths which had hitherto been partially considered and imperfectly felt; and these benevolent employments which withdrew him from the ordinary dissipations of the world led him to meditate more deeply and seriously on the real interests of man, on his own state before God, and his future final prospects.

“At this time,” his private journal says, “I began to reflect seriously upon my religious opinions. I had indeed long been in the habit of attending to the form of religion, particularly from the period of my having served under that exemplary character, Sir James Saumarez. It had been habitual to me on the approach of danger or battle, to offer up a mental prayer for support; but upon a more deliberate examination I came to the conclusion, that *christianity made no part of my religion*; that it was almost entirely confined to the first sentence in the Prayer book, ‘When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness,’ &c. I had always felt some indefinite purpose of doing this, and of amending my life; but then it was only done in trying myself by the letter of the commandment; and when there was not a decided breach of duty, I felt perfectly satisfied. With

regard to the New Testament, it hardly appeared to me as of any importance; it was seldom read, and less meditated upon. I was scrupulous in performing a certain round of duties, in the cold and heartless manner which may be supposed; but they were all tasks performed in fear, and none in love. The only light which seemed to break through the thick mist of utter darkness, arose from occasional glimpses of the working of Divine Providence. I had very long been in the habit of attributing my successes, and my preservation from danger, to Omnipotence, and not to second causes; but this is the utmost amount of religious feeling to which at that period I could lay any claim. The same merciful and long-suffering Being, who had spared and prospered me, still continued his divine and wonderful forbearance; and I may have been made, even under these appalling circumstances of ignorance and error, an instrument in keeping up among those around me, some faint recollection of spiritual things, so far at least as shewing the worship of God to be a duty, if it were lost sight of as a privilege."

It may be profitable that the reader's attention should be drawn to these expressions; and that he should trace the progress of light in the mind of the subject of this memoir, by considering the way in which he here viewed and judged himself. That the journal contains a simple artless narrative of his own experience, must be evident to every one who reads it. It was designed for the perusal of those who knew him best, to whom his heart was always open with all its workings, and who were in consequence capable of

interpreting its language, and understanding its meaning ; and that the writer could have wished to impose on them a notion which did not exist in his own mind, or in any degree to disguise or exaggerate his own feelings, is impossible to be believed. Still we must be surprised at hearing the language which he uses concerning his own state, and in particular the description here given of his religious feelings. At the period spoken of, he was not only a moral character, but an exemplary man. The world had not only known him as a distinguished officer, but had seen him discharging accurately and fully all the relative duties of society, as a son, as a brother, as a husband, as a friend. In the circle at Verdun, the humanity and kindness which he had exhibited towards the poorer prisoners, and the exertions and self-denial he was submitting to in their service, had probably caused him to be considered as a model of benevolence and charity ; while the regularity with which he attended to his religious duties, and the efforts which he made for the moral improvement of the people, led them to regard him as a man of piety.

We cannot be surprised at this having been the conclusion which was drawn by others from what was seen ; but we may with reason be surprised at the confession which we read, and at the acknowledgment thus recorded, by the object of the world's admiration, that he was at the moment so far from what they thought him. Some allowance must be made for the humility with which a man, once awakened to the real state of his heart, will speak of his own attain-

ments ; some further allowance must be made for the circumstances of dejection under which he first drew up this memorial ; but it still may be expedient to state the causes which may have occasioned this remarkable difference between the apparent character, and that which he considered to be the truth, and which raised him in appearance, so high above that which he knew and felt to be his real condition. Those who had the advantage of knowing Sir Jahleel Brenton personally, can bear witness to what may be stated of the singular amenity of his character. His natural affections were so strong, his tastes so refined, his manners so gentle, his kindness so consistent ; that much of what the world calls goodness, seemed to grow up in him spontaneously, and cost him nothing. He was amiable without an effort, benevolent without reflection ; and habitually thinking more of others than himself, he exhibited from his earliest years much of that love which is the fulfilling of the law, as a rule of life, without feeling that love which supersedes the law as a ground of hope. The active habits of his profession, a high sense of the character that he was to maintain as a British officer, and that thirst for glory, but too justly described as the last infirmity of noble minds ; conspired to give vigour and animation to his moral feelings, and to raise him above all that was base or degrading. To these high toned principles of action, his early and persevering attachment added delicacy and tenderness of sentiment ; and it is not impossible to trace the effect which these united and combined circumstances must have had, in producing as fine a



substitute for that, which in reality is the work of grace on the heart, as can well be conceived. Under the influence of these impressions he was in the fullest sense what the world thought him. He was excellent in all social relations ; he was brave, kind, generous, and forgiving ; but he was not what he had flattered himself with being, a real Christian. Acquaintance with himself, the result of leisure, meditation, trial, all used by the Holy Spirit, and employed for the purpose of awakening his conscience, and enlightening his mind, enabled him to see the source from which these qualities proceeded, and thus to understand their real nature. He then saw, that through life he had been striving to obtain the favour of man rather than that of God. He saw that the love of men, and the praise of men had been desired, and not the praise of God. He felt that he had been touched by the love which his fellow creatures bore to him, while strange to say, he had been indifferent to the love which he believed that his Redeemer had evinced towards him. He saw that his own glory, not the glory of God had been the object of his ambition ; and that though his life had been led in a very different way from that in which it was spent by others, it had not been lived to God as in duty it ought to have been. He thus learnt, that that which was highly esteemed among men, might be an abomination to God ; and the twilight of his former state seemed nothing less than darkness, when compared with the brightness of the truth which burst on his mind as revealed in the Gospel. Those qualities which had won him the affections of his family and his

friends, that warm and disinterested benevolence which had made him the instrument of mercy to so many in distress, were considered in a very different way, when their principles were analysed, and their real nature ascertained ; and he no doubt was astonished at finding how far it was possible to go in what seemed to be the ways of God, without having really known the motives by which he was actuated. Other men less happily constituted, would have been in less danger of self deception. The evil that was in them, lay nearer to the surface, and would have germinated and shewn itself sooner. His danger arose from that which seemed to be his security ; and the man whom all the world was agreeing to admire and to love, was likely to be lost, because nothing occurred to awaken his anxiety, or to lead him to suspect himself.

Adverting to the time that the British seamen remained at Epinal, during the first months of their captivity, from August to the commencement of December, Captain Brenton says, " Their conduct in general was such as to procure them the respect of the inhabitants. Some of them remarked to me, that their town had in the previous war, been made a general depôt for prisoners ; that they had had Austrians, Poles, Russians, and in short men of all nations in Europe confined there ; and that the consequence was, that the whole district was infested by beggars ; but that although the British seamen were evidently worse off than any who had preceded them, there was no instance of any of them being seen begging. Another circumstance very creditable to the British sailor was, that the inhabitants of Epinal were