

NO. V.—SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 1807.

FROM MY ELBOW-CHAIR.

THE following letter of my friend Mustapha appears to have been written some time subsequent to the one already published. Were I to judge from its contents, I should suppose it was suggested by the splendid review of the twenty-fifth of last November; when a pair of colours was presented, at the City-Hall, to the regiments of artillery, and when a huge dinner was devoured, by our corporation, in the honourable remembrance of the evacuation of this city. I am happy to find that the laudable spirit of military emulation which prevails in our city has attracted the attention of a stranger of Mustapha's sagacity; by military emulation I mean that spirited rivalry in the size of a hat, the length of a feather, and the gingerbread finery of a sword belt.

LETTER

FROM MUSTAPHA RUB-A-DUB KELI KHAN,

To Abdallah Eb'n al Rahab, surnamed the Snorer, military centinel at the gate of his Highness' Palace.

THOU hast heard, O! Abdallah, of the great magician, Muley Fuz, who could change a blooming land, blessed with all the elysian charms of hill and dale, of glade and grove, of fruit and flower, into a desert, frightful, solitary and forlorn;—who with the wave of his wand could transform even the disciples of Mahomet into grinning apes and chattering monkeys. Surely,

thought I to myself this morning, the dreadful Muley has been exercising his infernal enchantments on these unhappy infidels. Listen, O! Abdallah, and wonder! Last night I committed myself to tranquil slumber, encompassed with all the monotonous tokens of peace, and this morning I awoke, enveloped in the noise, the bustle, the clangor, and the shouts of war. Every thing was changed as if by magic. An immense army had sprung up, like mushrooms, in a night; and all the cobblers, tailors, and tinkers of the city had mounted the nodding plume; had become, in the twinkling of an eye, helmeted heroes and war-worn veterans.

Alarmed at the beating of drums, the braying of trumpets, and the shouting of the multitude, I dressed myself in haste, sallied forth, and followed a prodigious crowd of people to a place called the battery. This is so denominated, I am told, from having once been defended with formidable *wooden* bulwarks, which in the course of a hard winter were *thriftilly* pulled to pieces by an *economic* corporation, to be distributed for fire-wood among the poor; this was done at the hint of a cunning old engineer, who assured them it was the only way in which their fortifications would ever be able to keep up a warm fire. ECONOMY, my friend, is the watch-word of this nation; I have been studying for a month past to divine its meaning, but truly am as much perplexed as ever. It is a kind of national starvation; an experiment how many comforts and necessaries the body politic can be deprived of before it perishes.—It has already arrived to a lamentable degree of debility, and promises to share the fate of the Arabian philosopher, who proved that he could

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live without food, but unfortunately died just as he had brought his experiment to perfection.

On arriving at the battery I found an immense army of *six hundred men*, drawn up in a true Musulman crescent. At first I supposed this was in compliment to myself, but my interpreter informed me that it was done merely for want of room; the corporation not being able to afford them sufficient to display in a straight line. As I expected a display of some grand evolutions and military manoeuvres, I determined to remain a tranquil spectator, in hopes that I might possibly collect some hints which might be of service to his Highness.

This great body of men I perceived was under the command of a small *bashaw*, in yellow and gold, with white nodding plumes and most formidable whiskers; which, contrary to the Tripolitan fashion, were in the neighbourhood of his ears instead of his nose.—He had two attendants called aids-de-camp (or *tails*), being similar to a bashaw with two tails. The bashaw, though commander-in-chief, seemed to have little more to do than myself; he was a spectator within the lines and I without: he was clear of the rabble, and I was encompassed by them; this was the only difference between us, except that he had the best opportunity of showing his clothes. I waited an hour or two with exemplary patience, expecting to see some grand military evolutions or a sham battle exhibited; but no such thing took place; the men stood stock still, supporting their arms, groaning under the fatigues of war, and now and then sending out a foraging party to levy contributions of beer and a favourite beverage which

they denominate *grog*. As I perceived the crowd very active in examining the line, from one extreme to the other, and as I could see no other purpose for which these sunshine warriors should be exposed so long to the merciless attacks of wind and weather, I of course concluded that this must be *the review*.

In about two hours the army was put in motion, and marched through some narrow streets, where the economic corporation had carefully provided a soft carpet of mud, to a magnificent castle of painted brick, decorated with grand pillars of pine boards. By the ardour which brightened in each countenance, I soon perceived that this castle was to undergo a vigorous attack. As the ordnance of the castle was perfectly silent, and as they had nothing but a straight street to advance through, they made their approaches with great courage and admirable regularity, until within about a hundred feet of the castle a pump opposed a formidable obstacle in their way, and put the whole army to a nonplus. The circumstance was sudden and unlooked for: the commanding officer ran over all the military tactics with which his head was crammed, but none offered any expedient for the present awful emergency. The pump maintained its post, and so did the commander;—these was no knowing which was most at a stand. The commanding officer ordered his men to wheel and take it in flank;—the army accordingly wheeled and came full butt against it in the rear, exactly as they were before.—“Wheel to the left!” cried the officer: they did so, and again as before, the inveterate pump intercepted their progress. “Right about, face!” cried the officer: the men obeyed, but bungled—they *faced back to back*. Upon

this the bashaw with two tails, with great coolness, undauntedly ordered his men to push right forward, pell-mell, pump or no pump: they gallantly obeyed.—After unheard-of acts of bravery, the pump was carried, without the loss of a man, and the army firmly entrenched itself under the very walls of the castle. The bashaw had then a council of war with his officers; the most vigorous measures were resolved on. An advance guard of musicians were ordered to attack the castle without mercy. Then the whole band opened a most tremendous battery of drums, fifes, tambourines, and trumpets, and kept up a thundering assault, as if the castle, like the walls of Jericho, spoken of in the Jewish Chronicles, would tumble down at the blowing of rams' horns. After some time a parley ensued. The grand bashaw of the city appeared on the battlements of the castle, and, as far as I could understand from circumstances, dared the little bashaw of two tails to single combat;—this, thou knowest, was in the style of ancient chivalry. The little bashaw dismounted with great intrepidity, and ascended the battlements of the castle, where the great bashaw waited to receive him, attended by numerous dignitaries and worthies of his court, one of whom bore the splendid banners of the castle. The battle was carried on entirely by words, according to the universal custom of this country, of which I shall speak to thee more fully hereafter. The grand bashaw made a furious attack in a speech of considerable length; the little bashaw, by no means appalled, retorted with great spirit. The grand bashaw attempted to rip him up with an argument, or stun him with a solid fact; but the little bashaw parried them both with admirable adroitness, and run him clean through

and through with a syllogism. The grand bashaw was overthrown, the banners of the castle yielded up to the little bashaw, and the castle surrendered after a vigorous defence of three hours—during which the besiegers suffered great extremity from muddy streets and a drizzling atmosphere.

On returning to dinner, I soon discovered that as usual I had been indulging in a great mistake. The matter was all clearly explained to me by a fellow lodger, who on ordinary occasions moves in the humble character of a tailor, but in the present instance figured in a high military station, denominated *corporal*. He informed me that what I had mistaken for a castle was the splendid palace of the municipality, and that the supposed attack was nothing more than the delivery of a flag given by the authorities to the army, for its magnanimous defence of the town for upwards of twenty years past, that is, ever since the last war! O! my friend, surely every thing in this country is on a great scale! The conversation insensibly turned upon the military establishment of the nation; and I do assure thee that my friend, the tailor, though being, according to the national proverb, but the ninth part of a man, yet acquitted himself on military concerns as ably as the grand bashaw of the empire himself. He observed that their rulers had decided that wars were very useless and expensive, and ill befitting an economic, philosophic, nation; they had therefore made up their minds never to have any wars, and consequently there was no need of soldiers or military discipline. As, however, it was thought highly ornamental to a city to have a number of men drest in fine clothes and *feathers* strutting about the streets on a holiday—and

as the women and children were particularly fond of such *raree shows*, it was ordered that the tailors of the different cities throughout the empire should forthwith go to work, and cut out and manufacture soldiers as fast as their sheers and needles would permit.

These soldiers have no pecuniary pay; and their only recompense for the immense services which they render their country, in their voluntary parades, is the plunder of smiles, and winks, and nods, which they extort from the ladies. As they have no opportunity, like the vagrant Arabs, of making inroads on their neighbours, and as it is necessary to keep up their military spirit, the town is therefore now and then, but particularly on two days of the year, given up to their ravages. The arrangements are contrived with admirable address, so that every officer from the bashaw down to the drum-major, the chief of the eunuchs or musicians, shall have his share of that invaluable booty—the admiration of the fair. As to the soldiers, poor animals, they, like the privates in all great armies, have to bear the brunt of danger and fatigue, while the officers receive all the glory and reward. The narrative of a parade day will exemplify this more clearly.

The chief bashaw, in the plenitude of his authority, orders a grand review of the whole army at two o'clock. The bashaw with two tails, that he may have an opportunity of vapouring about as the greatest man on the field, orders the army to assemble at twelve. The kiaya, or colonel, as he is called, that is, commander of one hundred and twenty men, orders his regiment or tribe to collect one mile at least from the place of parade at eleven. Each captain, or fag-rag as we term them, commands his squad to meet at ten at least a

half mile from the regimental parade ; and to close all, the chief of the eunuchs orders his infernal concert of fifes, trumpets, cymbals, and kettle-drums to assemble at ten ! From that moment the city receives no quarter. All is noise, hooting, hubbub and combustion. Every window, door, crack, and loop-hole, from the garret to the cellar, is crowded with the fascinating fair of all ages and of all complexions. The mistress smiles through the windows of the drawing-room ; the chubby chambermaid lolls out of the attic casement, and a host of sooty wenches roll their white eyes and grin and chatter from the cellar door. Every nymph seems anxious to yield voluntarily that tribute which the heroes of their country demand. First struts the chief eunuch or drum-major, at the head of his sable band, magnificently arrayed in tarnished scarlet. Alexander himself could not have spurned the earth more superbly. A host of ragged boys shout in his train, and inflate the bosom of the warrior with tenfold self-complacency. After he has rattled his kettle-drums through the town, and swelled and swaggered like a turkey-cock before all the dingy Floras, and Dianas, and Junos, and Didos of his acquaintance, he repairs to his place of destination loaded with a rich booty of smiles and approbation. Next comes the *fug-rag*, or captain, at the head of his mighty band, consisting of one lieutenant, one ensign or mute, four sergeants, four corporals, one drummer, one fifer, and if he has any privates so much the better for himself. In marching to the regimental parade he is sure to paddle through the street or lane which is honoured with the residence of his mistress or intended, whom he resolutely lays under a heavy contribution. Truly it is delectable to behold these

heroes, as they march along, cast side glances at the upper windows ; to collect the smiles, the nods, and the winks, which the enraptured fair ones lavish profusely on the magnanimous defenders of their country.

The fag-rags having conducted their squads to their respective regiments, then comes the turn of the colonel, a bashaw with no tails, for all eyes are now directed to him ; and the fag-rags, and the eunuchs, and the kettle-drummers, having had their hour of notoriety, are confounded and lost in the military crowd. The colonel sets his whole regiment in motion ; and mounted on a mettlesome charger, frisks and fidgets, and capers, and plunges in front, to the great entertainment of the multitude, and the great hazard of himself and his neighbours. Having displayed himself, his trappings, his horse, and his horsemanship, he at length arrives at the place of general rendezvous ; blessed with the universal admiration of his country women. I should, perhaps, mention a squadron of hardy veterans, most of whom have seen a deal of service during the nineteen or twenty years of their existence, and who, most gorgeously equipped in tight green jackets and breeches, trot and amble, and gallop, and scamper like little devils through every street, and nook, and corner, and poke-hole, of the city, to the great dread of all old people and sage matrons with young children. This is truly sublime ! this is what I call making a mountain out of a mole-hill. Oh, my friend, on what a great scale is every thing in this country. It is in the style of the wandering Arabs of the desert *El-tih*. Is a village to be attacked, or a hamlet to be plundered, the whole desert, for weeks beforehand, is in a buzz ;—such marching and counter-marching, ere they can con-

centrate their ragged forces! and the consequence is, that before they can bring their troops into action the whole enterprise is blown.

The army being all happily collected on the battery, though, perhaps, two hours after the time appointed, it is now the turn of the bashaw, with two tails, to distinguish himself. Ambition, my friend, is implanted alike in every heart; it pervades each bosom from the bashaw to the drum-major. This is a sage truism, and I trust, therefore, it will not be disputed. The bashaw fired with that thirst for glory, inseparable from the noble mind, is anxious to reap a full share of the laurels of the day, and bear off his portion of female plunder. The drums beat, the fifes whistle, the standards wave proudly in the air. The signal is given! thunder roars the cannon! away goes the bashaw, and away go the tails! The review finished, evolutions and military manœuvres are generally dispensed with for three excellent reasons;—first, because the army knows very little about them; second, because as the country has determined to remain always at peace, there is no necessity for them to know any thing about them; and third, as it is growing late, the bashaw must despatch, or it will be too dark for him to get his quota of the plunder. He of course orders the whole army to march; and now, my friend, now comes the tug of war, now is the city completely sacked. Open fly the battery-gates—forth sallies the bashaw with his two tails, surrounded by a shouting body-guard of boys and negroes! then pour forth his legions, potent as the pismires of the desert! the customary salutations of the country commence—those tokens of joy and admiration which so much annoyed me on first landing:

the air is darkened with old hats, shoes, and dead cats; they fly in showers like the arrows of the Parthians. The soldiers, no ways disheartened, like the intrepid followers of Leonidas, march gallantly under their shade. On they push, splash-dash, mud or no mud, down one lane, up another;—the martial music resounds through every street; the fair ones throng to their windows,—the soldiers look every way but straight forward. “Carry arms!” cries the bashaw—“tanta-ra-ra,” brays the trumpet—“rub-a-dub,” roars the drum—“hurraw,” shout the ragamuffins. The bashaw smiles with exultation—every fag-rag feels himself a hero—“none but the brave deserve the fair!” Head of the immortal Amrou, on what a great scale is every thing in this country!

Ay, but you’ll say, is not this unfair that the officers should share all the sports while the privates undergo all the fatigue? Truly, my friend, I indulged the same idea, and pitied from my heart the poor fellows who had to drabble through the mud and the mire, toiling under ponderous cocked hats, which seemed as unweildy, and cumbrous, as the shell which the snail lumbers along on his back. I soon found out, however, that they have their quantum of notoriety. As soon as the army is dismissed, the city swarms with little scouting parties, who fire off their guns at every corner, to the great delight of all the women and children in their vicinity; and wo unto any dog, or pig, or hog, that falls in the way of these magnanimous warriors; they are shown no quarter. Every gentle swain repairs to pass the evening at the feet of his dulcinea, to play “the soldier tired of war’s alarms,” and to captivate her with the glare of his regimentals;

excepting some ambitious heroes who strut to the theatre, flame away in the front boxes, and hector every old apple-woman in the lobbies.

Such, my friend, is the gigantic genius of this nation, and its faculty of swelling up nothings into importance. Our bashaw of Tripoli will review his troops, of some thousands, by an early hour in the morning. Here a review of six hundred men is made the mighty work of a day! With us a bashaw of two tails is never appointed to a command of less than ten thousand men; but here we behold every grade, from the bashaw down to the drum-major, in a force of less than one-tenth of the number. By the beard of Mahomet, but every thing here is indeed on a great scale!

BY ANTHONY EVERGREEN, GENT.

I was not a little surprised the other morning at a request from Will Wizard that I would accompany him that evening to Mrs. ——'s ball. The request was simple enough in itself, it was only singular as coming from Will;—of all my acquaintance Wizard is the least calculated and disposed for the society of ladies—not that he dislikes their company; on the contrary, like every man of pith and marrow, he is a professed admirer of the sex; and had he been born a poet, would undoubtedly have bespattered and berhymed some hard named goddess, until she became as famous as Petrarch's Laura, or Waller's Sacharissa; but Will is such a confounded bungler at a bow, has so many odd bachelor habits, and finds it so troublesome to be gallant, that he generally prefers smoking