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Gareth Glover, ed. *From Corunna to Waterloo: The Letters and Journals of Two Napoleonic Hussars, 1801-1816*. London: Greenhill Books, 1999. 287 pp. Notes, bibliography, and index. \$39.95 U.S. (cl). ISBN 978-1-85367-709-0.

Review by Michael V. Leggiere, Louisiana State University in Shreveport.

Throughout the eighteenth century a class that can be identified as the educated general reader steadily grew. The growing demand for books, newspapers, periodicals, and journals during the eighteenth century indicates that print culture commanded an insatiable audience. Specifically, the ever increasing amount of printed material, the ability of publishing houses and presses to not only sustain themselves but to turn a profit, the growing popularity of private literary societies, provincial academies, public libraries, and reading rooms all indicate that an international community of educated men and women was forming. Even the illiterate sought to have printed matter read to them. .

The occasion of war in the last decade of the eighteenth century provided tens of thousands of men and women the opportunity to take up the quill and demonstrate the extent of their generation's new-found knowledge through extensive letter writing. Gareth Glover's edited volume concerning the letters and journals of two British cavalry officers who served at the time the Napoleonic wars raged across Europe provides beautiful testimony of the extent to which the general educated reader thrived. Unlike the First World War in which literacy rates and the level of general education transcended all ranks so that both officers and enlisted men recorded the horrors of war in letters and journals, the peasants who served in the mass armies of the Napoleonic wars rarely enjoyed the benefits of an education that allowed them to relate their experiences in writing. Yet this is not absolute, and historians are steadily finding autobiographies, letters, journals, and memoirs composed by the common soldiers who fought in the Napoleonic wars. By and large, however, the published literature has mainly come from the writings of officers, who themselves came from the educated moneyed classes. Officers certainly did not suffer from the hardships and privations of war to the same extent as did the commoners who served in the enlisted ranks. This means their writings focused more on military objectives, political outcomes, the pleasures of the table, keeping company with the fairer sex, and of course gossip. While this does not always provide the reader with the same perspective that is found in the writings of a common soldier, who quite often was more concerned with basic survival as opposed to the virtues and vices of a salon, they are no less interesting.

Glover clearly explains the purpose of this work by quoting one of the two officers whose writings provide the meat of the book: "One line on the spot is worth half a page of recollections." In the preface the editor likewise provides an admirable explanation of the dubious nature of memoirs and recollections. Claiming that writings composed after the fact rather than on the spot, contain distortions that "can sometimes affect our understanding of these momentous events; for at best some are guilty of bending the truth; at worst some completely distort facts and mislead," Glover states what we are all struggling to impress on our students (p. 8). With this introduction Glover delves into the adventures of the two young gentlemen—Major Edwin Griffith and his nephew, Captain Frederick Philips—who served in the British cavalry. Both officers wrote extensive letters to relations back in England, and kept journals of varying degrees of detail. Glover divides his book into eight chapters: Home Service; Deep into Spain; A Glorious Night; Riots and Reviews; Spain Again; Invading France; France to Ireland; and Waterloo. The work is equipped with an introduction, preface, a brief historical

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background on the lineage of the two officers, one map, an epilogue, a two-page bibliography, and index.

This work contains many qualities. The letters and journals do a superb job describing the daily routine of a junior cavalry officer in the British army. In this reader's opinion, the authors' frank observations provide the true strength of this work. Edwin kept a journal during his deployment for the Corunna Campaign, titled: "Journal of my proceedings during the campaign in Spain in the winter of 1808-9 with observations on the dispositions, manners, etc. of the people of that Country." After serving in Ireland, Edwin returned to Spain. Again he recorded his experiences in a journal, which begins with 16 January 1813, the day after his twenty-seventh birthday. This second journal abruptly ends on 31 December 1813; Glover believes that the passages for 1814 have been lost. Both of Edwin's journals are superbly written. His beautiful descriptions of the countryside from the Tagus to the Seine are simply wonderful. His commentaries range from a gross account of the making of Spanish wine to a brutal description of Spain's Basque population. Unfortunately, space permits me to share only a few such passages. "The swell in the Channel being very great," notes Edwin in 1808, "I this day experienced the horrors of that disease called sea sickness; no words can describe so distressing a sensation and yet the seamen kept laughing and telling me all the time not to think about it for it was nothing at all. . ." (p. 45). Upon reaching shore he wrote: "Corunna is a large irregular built town. . . the streets are in general narrow, the principal ones are flagged, but they are universally filthy to the greatest degree; the houses have in general gloomy appearance and are comfortless in the extreme; the walls of the rooms are bare, curtains and carpets are seldom to be seen and fireplaces never. A few skins of beasts scattered about the floors add nothing to the comfort, but form a safe retreat for an inexhaustible establishment of fleas, with which the bed and every place swarm. But the natives themselves are the greatest objects of attraction; the men bustling along wrapped up in their cloaks. . . the women ill dressed and dirty looking; the squalid, meager, and dissatisfied countenance of both soon convince the Englishman that he is among a different race of beings. . ." (p. 47).

Edwin continues his merciless assault on the people of Spain in a 13 November 1808 letter from Corunna: "At present I can only say that it [Spain] appears some centuries behind England in everything; the extreme poverty and wretchedness is past all description; and to give you some small idea of the general appearance of the natives I can only declare that the most ludicrous and absurd figure you ever saw dressed up for an English stage, male or female, might walk the streets of Corunna without being noticed as at all odd or particular; this I would forgive them if they were cleanly in their habitations, persons, etc., but I am sorry to say they are quite in the opposite extreme. The ladies have sallow complexions, bad legs, and worse teeth; the men are equal in point of beauty with the addition of a discontented and suspicious look, and both dress very ill. So much for the Dons and Donnas at present" (p. 53). In a letter to his sister Edwin notes: "There are very few tolerably pretty women to be seen, and as they have all got teeth of any color but white, I don't think there is much a chance of my losing my heart to a Donna" (p. 54).

Later he describes his first encounter with Spanish nuns: "I pictured to myself beautiful and interesting young women who from some cross in love or rather disappointment in early life had sought for that peace of mind and happiness in the arms of a religion of which the uncertainty of world affairs had bereft them. However right I might have been with regard to the causes of this seclusion, certain it is that I was very far from picturing the objects of it, as neither youth or beauty were visible within the walls of a convent, or at least never presented themselves at the gates; on the contrary I found them in general old and ugly, with beards, without teeth; they however covered a multitude of imperfections by their vivacity and affability, by their expressions of love and veneration for the English character, and particularly for English officers who they declared were the first of men" (p. 67). Finally: "Of all the miserable beings on the face of the earth a Spanish beggar appears the most so; I have heard somebody once remarked, that until they had visited Ireland they never knew what the English beggars did with their old cloths; had this person extended his travels to Spain he might perhaps have accounted for the fate of the garments after they had been thrown aside by the beggars of Ireland" (p. 94).

The author of the journal also provides some insight into the cruel nature of the war in Iberia. For example: "There cannot be a better specimen of the Spanish character than these people gave us; far from resisting the entrance of the French to Sahagun, they were on the contrary eager to serve them; but they no sooner found that the monsieurs were not the strongest party, than they exercised every species of cruelty upon them. One poor Frenchman too sick to turn out with his comrades was found murdered in his bed; and a party of ours who were sent out to collect the dead found that the Spaniards had already stripped them all to the skin, and for fear they should not be quite dead, had perforated their bodies with knives, etc. in twenty different places" (p. 81). In particular British frustration with their Spanish allies generated an interesting polemic on war crimes during Sir John Moore's inglorious retreat to escape destruction at the hands of the French:

"... I will not trespass upon the reader by detailing all the particulars of a most dismal retreat, or the various scenes of distress and wretchedness that it gave rise to. The enemy close upon our rear. . . . The Spaniards although not at open war were equally hostile; not contented with running away themselves they took all the cattle and provisions with them that they could, and depriving us of the very necessaries of life, left us only the alternative of starving or plundering. Of course there was no hesitation which of the two to chose and I grieve to say that the British army for the last two hundred miles were guilty of excesses which heaven forbid they should ever be again driven to! But there is a great deal to be said in extenuation of their offence; exasperated by the numerous instances of perfidy that the Spanish daily exhibited, they rejoiced in any opportunity of revenge; they were sent to Spain as auxiliaries but on their arrival found themselves principals; the natives so far from receiving them as their deliverers, treated them with a jealousy and indifference that soon created disgust; the rations of bread, meat, and wine for the troops, for which they were regularly and scrupulously paid the full value, were furnished and delivered in an ungracious manner; and they practiced every species of fraud and imposition on our men to a scandalous and infamous degree. Added to this we were suffering privations and hardships that may have been equaled but never exceeded in any campaign" (p. 86).

While these passages attest to the great strength of the work, there are some shortcomings. Glover provides the exact early nineteenth century figures for the cost of a cavalry officer's commission and upkeep, yet the modern equivalency in pounds, euros, or dollars would help the reader better comprehend the point he is trying to make. The work is very English in that the painstaking genealogical research, although commendable, would appeal only to an audience interested in the minutia of every British officer mentioned in the book right down to where a particular officer's family resided. This of course serves a purpose, but the general reader might be more interested in the problems of military discipline that occurred in November 1808, which Glover merely touches on, rather than the fact that a Major Forester returned to England soon after the Corunna Campaign by selling his commission (P. 55). Moreover, at times Glover loses historical objectivity: "The bad news from the East Indies was that of the near disastrous retreat of General Monson's force in early 1805. This fortunately did not lead to any further reverses in India" (p. 36).

To his credit, Glover achieved his objective. Utilizing these unpublished papers, which were located at the County Record Office in Hawarden, Flint, he did indeed incorporate them into a highly-readable work that presents a snap-shot told "on the spot" by the participants of just one of the many conflicts collectively known as the Napoleonic wars. Yet, this work could have been both much more and a little less at the same time. More in the sense that Glover could have provided much more military history so that more than just experts on the Peninsular War can follow the action. For example, why was the British army deployed to Iberia in the first place? Glover depends too heavily on the authors' writings and does not offer adequate historical context. He states that "the discovery of a mass of letters written home from Spain and France and daily diaries full of entries made on the spot. . . provides a vital source of information on life as a soldier in Wellington's army and a very valuable aid to our understanding of the military history of this period" (p. 8). On the contrary, Glover provides the story of two young

English gentlemen who hardly shared the hardships of their soldiers. As for increasing our knowledge of the military history of the period, the work falls far short of this objective. The title itself is somewhat misleading: *From Corunna to Waterloo*. While Glover's two officers did indeed see action in both campaigns, they spent the years 1809-1812 policing Great Britain rather than fighting in Iberia. On the other hand, there could have been less. Not all letters that are found in an archive, stored in an attic, or cherished by a descendant need to be published. While most of the letters penned by Griffith and Philips are exciting and interesting, some are not and simply should not have been included. Instead, Glover could have used this space to provide more details on the war in which these two "Napoleonic Hussars" participated.

Because of the lack of sufficient historical contextualization, it is difficult to determine which scholarly audience—if any—would be most impacted by this work. It suffices to say that the wonderful accounts and descriptions provided by Edwin Griffith will interest social, cultural, and military historians, as well as scholars who specialize in Iberia.

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