

LETTERS FROM THE PENINSULA 1812-1814—Part II

WITH NOTES BY

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Author's Note.

For the benefit of those readers who did not see the first instalment* of these letters in the *Journal* for Autumn, 1958, it should be explained that the writer was Lieutenant Richard Hardinge (Kane 1318) of E Troop, R.H.A. (Capt. R. W. Gardiner) younger brother of Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Hardinge of the Portuguese service, who later became Governor General of India and a Field-Marshal. The letters were written to Second Captain Charles Cornwallis Dansey, R.A. (Kane 1138), of Captain L. Carmichael's (formerly S. du Bourdieu's and previously Capt. R. W. Gardiner's) Company, 8 Battalion, R.A., with whom Hardinge had served from November, 1812, to November, 1813. Carmichael's Company, 8 Battalion was disbanded in 1819.

* This includes notes 1 to 54—Editor.

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Hardinge's anxiety about his posting was reflected in his letter of 28 January 1814. He was evidently not very happy in E Troop, complaining of Gardiner's fussiness, of excessive mess bills and of the cost of re-equipping himself "in cavalry style" The letter reads as under:

"Near Hasparren⁵⁵. Jan.28th [1814]

My dear Dansey,

My philosophy is hard put to the test, my Horse Artillery plans being terribly thwarted. Dickson and Frazer also seem determined to keep me on tenter hooks of suspense. Thus it stands at present.

The exchange with Bell⁵⁶ failed, to the surprise of us all after the notorious dislike Ross³⁷ and he have for one another. I wrote to Dickson³⁰ and Frazer³³ on the 20th; to the first a letter of thanks and that I was ready to meet any arrangements he might make, and to the latter more fully, reminding him of my sentiments as to remaining with Gardiner, and that I should prefer going Home according to my appointment to being bandied about here from one Troop to another. The devil an answer from them yet.

This morning Gardiner showed me in confidence a letter from Swabey⁷, saying that he had been at Head Quarters [on] the 28th December when he found himself posted to (Robert) Macdonald's Troop⁵⁷ and me to this, E. He immediately wrote officially to Walcott⁵⁸ saying he was well and ready to go out, also remonstrating

⁵⁵ Hasparren. 11½ miles south-east of Bayonne.

⁵⁶ Lieutenant W. Bell (Kane 1242) was on the strength of G Troop, R.H.A., in England, but was employed as Adjutant to Brevet Lt.-Col. A. S. Frazer, commanding the R.H.A. with Wellington's army. Hardinge had tried to arrange an exchange with Bell on the assumption that the latter would be posted to A Troop. (Ross's Troop.)

⁵⁷ Captain (Brevet Major) Robert Macdonald (Kane 858) was commanding L Troop, R.H.A., in England. Swabey's posting to L Troop was later cancelled.

⁵⁸ Second Captain E. Y. Walcott (Kane 1127) was Adjutant of the Brigade of Royal Horse Artillery in England.

against the transfer and finally that he hopes to start in February with the remounts. Thus I am chock a block and belay. If Swabey comes out I shall go with pleasure into any Troop to give him his proper and rightful place; by that time the Army probably will be moving, when some other temporary vacancy will be found to put me in. In the meantime I expect to be obliged to remain with this Troop. Gardiner [is] entirely an altered man, and within this last week has been writing volumes of *Orders & Hints* to us three sub[altern]s, which has startled and annoyed us a good deal. The messing is so expensive that we three subs are going to have a talk against it. 60 dollars for December, which amounts to my full Horse [Artillery] pay, which is truly absurd as I have never had a single friend of mine to the Mess in the three months, and am paying the piper for quality friends who don't acknowledge me at other times. In short I not only dislike Gardiner, but am disgusted with him as a Commanding Officer. Had you come with me to the Troop, affairs would have gone on differently as it is Parker²⁹ [who] eggs him on to expense, but in other respects Gardiner has entirely lost my regard. My wish was certainly to have gone to England if I could not get into Ross's Troop⁵⁹, both to get quit of Gardiner and as I can gain nothing but honour and glory here. Short in money—rather in debt I may say—instead of your capital to rig out with. And how to rig out in cavalry style now, without any interest in my plans, Lud a Mercy! Oh dear, what will become of me?

Your brother⁴⁹ I have never seen since General Brisbane's Brigade moved to the left of Hasparren, about a league and a half from us. The Troop in middling condition; turn out by day to grass, except the Division on picquet, and bruised furze (which I strongly recommend though I dare say you have long patronised it) by night. I shall write to Carmichael to ask his leave to getting my two servants into the Horse Artillery. You can add that I brought them both from Lisbon independently to the Brigade as Shaw would have gone with Ingilby⁶⁰ had I not got him. Mills deserves it for good service to me and long service in the country.

Adieu for today. Buckner⁴¹ is Lieutenant-Colonel for *lots* of service done in the country. My letter to Monro¹² by some neglect at Hd Qrs came back directed to the 3rd Division. I have not received his answer, but as Christie⁶¹ is in orders, I am afraid he has failed. Manners⁴⁰, my old crony, lives in Hasparren and is my staunchest ally in these parts.

January 29th. You talked in one of your letters that as soon as a fit which you had then on you was over, I might expect to see you here. Had I not been so uncertain of my own movements, I should have asked you ere this to have ploughed through the mud, though I can offer you but very sorry lodging, our cantonment being the worst in the neighbourhood.

Say something handsome for me to Carmichael on my quitting the Brigade³⁴ and that Division I was so proud of. Was it not for those damned Drivers, I prefer a Brigade⁶² with fellows of my own kidney to live with, to Hussar Troops and affectation. Gardiner absolutely chuckled yesterday to see me foiled in my plans of getting away from him, particularly as one of his old Cadiz subs⁶³ declined coming to him had I gone.

⁵⁹ A Troop, R.H.A.

⁶⁰ Lieutenant W. Ingilby (Kane 1464).

⁶¹ Lieut. James Christie (Kane 1504) had joined Carmichael's Company, 8 Battalion, R.A., in place of Hardinge, thus filling the vacancy which F. Monro (Kane 1498) had applied for on his promotion to Lieut.

⁶² Brigade, meaning "Brigade of Guns", or a field battery as opposed to a Troop of R.H.A. The Corps of R.A. Drivers supplied the drivers for the field batteries, but not for R.H.A. Troops.

⁶³ R. W. Gardiner (Kane 979) had served for a short time in 1811 as Second Captain of Capt. W. Roberts's Coy, 10 Bn. R.A., at Cadiz prior to his promotion to Captain on 18th November, 1811. The two subalterns of that Company at Cadiz were W. B. Dundas (Kane 1150) and W. Cozens (Kane 1485).

I write to Bell⁵⁶ today about the transfer of my domestics and also to extract some information from him why Frazer don't answer my letter.

The shave⁶⁴ here is that the Bourbon standard is going to be hoisted, that it is believed that Schartzenberg is at Dijon or Metz [and] that certainly the Danes broke the armistice, which I think will keep the Crown Prince in that country (Holstein) and deprive the main army of the best General and councils.”

In his next letter dated 15 February 1814, Hardinge, described the moves of Hill's corps in the opening phase of Wellington's operations which resulted in the crossing of the River Adour.

“Near Hasparren Feb. 15th
3 p.m.

My dear Dansey,

I got yours and Christie's notes by our orderly, but did not like the idea of crossing the mud no more than you. As I know you expect and as I hold it a bargain between us, I take the earliest opportunity of giving you some idea of Sir Rowland's corps movements yesterday, who generally opens the ball and this I think may be called the opening of the campaign. On the 12th the 2nd and 7th Divisions exchanged places, excepting Maxwell⁶⁵ (whom they had however mentioned in the Qr Mr Genl's orders to take the 7th Divisional Artillery cantonments, no such existing) and came near us. Sunday the 13th. E Troop was inspected by Sir Stapleton [Cotton]⁶⁶ and met with his praise. The Whigs rode out to the outposts and looked about them. Yesterday at 10 o'clock the Corps advanced—Morillo on the right, General Barnes on his left, Pringle's, Byng's and Hardinge's Brigades along the main road to St. Jean Pied de Port, Col. Keane's Brigade through General Power's by Bonloc and Brisbane's by Bastide. The enemy retired in all directions till they came near St. Estevan and had left Helette and the main road, when the skirmishing became heavy and the two guns of Beane's Troop⁶⁷ under Brereton⁶⁸ came into play as also three mountain guns under a Portuguese officer, but with little effect and bad practice. Two squadrons of the 14th [Light Dragoons] moved along the road, but were of no service. The Light Companies were almost the only people that fired a shot. The 3rd Division did not advance above three-quarters of a league, Morillo and the 2nd Division wheeling to the left at Helette and coming into line with the 3rd. The high hill in front of Grecieth they did not defend, but the two nob's (sic) beyond connected by a ridge they retired all their troops to by 3 o'clock, but have retired during the night, and the Corps is this morning moving on St. Palais with little opposition. Our Brigade had no part in the business. We expect to follow them tomorrow. I did not see above two or three dead.

My brother's Brigade⁶⁹ was not engaged. I was however ready to [do] A.D.C. had there been occasion. The enemy were never pressed. We hear the left is to have some boat work, so report says.

Turner⁷⁰ relieved Douglas a week ago. His and Maxwell's⁶⁵ Brigades made a crawl of it along the main road. Beane⁶⁷ is also terribly cut up with his march. We are middling; the Centre Division (mine) has lost 10 horses and mules for farcy which seems as if it would go through the Troop.

⁶⁴ Shave. A slang word meaning rumour.

⁶⁵ Captain S. Maxwell's Company, 4 Battalion, R.A. (disbanded 1920 as 156 Battery, R.F.A.), manning a 9-pdr. field battery with 2nd Division.

⁶⁶ Sir Stapleton Cotton was commanding the cavalry of the Army.

⁶⁷ Captain G. Beanes Troop was D Troop, R.H.A.

⁶⁸ Lieutenant W. Brereton (Kane 1258) of D Troop, R.H.A.

⁶⁹ Late Ashworth's Portuguese Brigade of the 2nd Division.

⁷⁰ Captain R. Douglas (Kane 958) of 9 Battalion, PLA., exchanged with Capt. G. Turner (Kane 974) of 3 Battalion, R.A. Captain Turner's (late Captain Douglas's) Company, 9 Battalion, R.A., later became 108 H.A.A. Battery, R.A.

We turn out our horses during the day, and bruised furze at night still. I saw a very strong letter from Dickson to my brother²² offering to do anything that would be most agreeable to me. I of course, as Swabey is coming out, remain here for the present and am all alive to see a little fun. I am posted to Frazer's Troop⁷¹, as also Ingilby⁶⁰. You should have been with me yesterday on the old mare. My black escaped the spent shots. An officer of the 7th Hussars in my rear talking to Parker got his best mare shot in the knee, on which I fell back, being only an amateur.

The 3rd Division is now in Sir Rowland [Hill's] Corps. We are all well here. Gardiner and I carry on very well though I did so abuse him to you the other day. Latterly I have found them all very pleasant. In haste Adieu. Remembrances to Car[michael] and Christie and Medico.

Yours,

R.H.

I expected the advance would be like that of the 7th October, but it was quite different, the Light Companies feeling their ground slowly, and little running at them. Morillo's fellows skirmish very well."

Though E Troop was not engaged in the fighting of 18 February, Lieutenant Hardinge was present unofficially while visiting his brother Henry, who commanded a Portuguese Infantry Brigade (late Ashworth's), and described the fighting during the crossing of the River Adour as follows:

"Village of Mauleon. 2nd Division
Hd Qtrs. Feby 19th (1814)
Half a league from Sauveterre

Dear Dansey,

I wrote to you on 15th after the ball had opened. Yesterday I came up here from the rear, not being able to leave the Troop before, and slept last night with my brother here. This is the last village of Basque. Lots of fowls, etc. Men in white frocks, almost every one talks French. I was perfectly enchanted yesterday to see the troops closing up the enemy to the *tête de pont* at the bridge of Sauveterre. Weather also fine. Peer⁷², Sir Rowland [Hill] and William Stewart⁷³ were present. On the 15th at 6 p.m. the four Brigades of [the] 2nd Division—Barnes, Byng, Pringle and Hardinge—attacked a wooded hill commanding the road to, and at 2 miles from, St. Palais, and carried it in style. Pringle shot through the body, [but it is] hoped he will recover. Clitherow, Byng's A.D.C., killed, also your friend Fearon⁷⁴, the very best officer of my brother's Brigade. Our loss 150 killed and wounded. Enemy's—lots killed by Beane's⁷⁶ 6 and Maxwell's⁶⁵ 2 guns, also by the bayonet. Prisoners about 400.

The 16th. Followed up still by 2nd Division. (Le Cor's Division⁷⁵ joined; 57th and 34th Regiments absent though for clothing⁷⁶). Enemy lost prisoners and retired across the Mauleon stream to the island, half mile broad (Lord knows how long it is). Not much done that day. 17th. The cavalry (13th and 14th Light Dragoons⁷⁷ is (sic) only up) and 92nd Regiment covered by Beane's guns (who recocked⁷⁸ over the enemy and made them run in the sight of Peer⁷² and our troops)

⁷¹ Frazer's Troop was G Troop, R.H.A., in England.

⁷² The Duke of Wellington.

⁷³ Commanding 2nd Division.

⁷⁴ Captain and Brevet Major Fearon, 31st Regiment, who was a Lieutenant-Colonel in the Portuguese Army, commanding the 6th Cacadores.

⁷⁵ Major General Le Cor's Portuguese Division of two weak Brigades.

⁷⁶ These two regiments had been withdrawn to collect new clothing.

⁷⁷ Both regiments were in Major General Fane's Cavalry Brigade.

⁷⁸ "Recocked"—ricochetted.

crossed at Revorette on to the island and closed up the enemy to their *tête de pont* at Sauveterre. Lieut. Dale, 13th Dragoons, killed. 18th. Skirmishing. A picquethouse of theirs taken close to their *tête de pont* by the 14th Portuguese, but which [the] enemy retook last night. There was a connonade from 6 of their guns behind breastworks on each side of the bridge and 2 of Beane's⁶⁷. 4 or 5 killed on each side. Enemy shows 10 or 12,000 men in and around Sauveterre, and a strong ground. Their bank of the river of Gave d'Oleron commanding us at proper cannon height. E Troop moved yesterday morning to Garis if it could get there; road from Helette to Garis shocking. Maxwell⁶⁵ is up. The 3rd Division have hardly fired a shot. Their right was only at St. Palais yesterday. The 2nd Division and Spaniards on right have been wheeling since Helette. Nothing known of general plan to cross Adour.

The Curé dined with us yesterday. The account he gave of forcing conscripts to [illegible] was almost beyond belief. I must get another horse. Am posted in Orders to Frazer's Troop⁷¹ and don't care how soon Swabey comes out to put my dreams in execution.

3rd Division Artillery at Garis. Marshal's⁷⁹ Hd Qrts of 6th and 7th Divisions (Corps) at Bastide.

On dit that a 3rd Division [illegible] came up yesterday. Here it is said the [illegible] is gone from their flank. A fat turkey my brother snipped up for 4 francs. Plenty of forage with the advance.

I never wished more for 2 good horses and a gentlemanly rig out, to ride everywhere and see all possible. No news.

P.S.—None of us of E [Troop] saw any of these affairs except I."

The battle of Orthez and the subsequent advance towards Toulouse was described in the next letter as follows:

"Barcelona [Barcelonne] March 4th
5 leagues from St. Sever
20 leagues from Thoulo [Toulouse]

Dear Dansey,

Your brother and I are both safe and sound after the battle of Orthes. The 88th⁸⁰ suffered severely. I have not the time to give you the particulars of the fight, which would require a sheet to describe the business without going into particulars, and as we have been marching, except yesterday, for the last 10 days and tolerably harassed, I prefer making an effort to visit the old Brigade to attempting an account and a sketch.

What you have been doing on the left we have no particulars of. We are therefore equal that far. Green⁸¹ said the other day that Col. Frazer⁸² was shot through the thigh; I hope he is doing well. Poor excellent Sympher⁸³ was killed by cannon shot. Ward⁸⁴, your late sub, shot in the thigh. Parker⁸⁵, Eng[ineer], killed near Turner's guns. Pitts⁸⁶, Eng[ineer], killed while speaking to Cole at the end of the business near Hartingues. Lord March shot, it is supposed mortally, through the body. Harding, 10th Hussars, wounded badly in a small charge of cavalry pursuing enemy's rear guard on the 28th. Col. Hood killed and Barnes wounded in the attack of Harispe's [French] Division on the left bank of Adour [on] 2nd March.

⁷⁹ Marshal Sir William Beresford, who held that rank in the Portuguese Army.

⁸⁰ The 88th Regt., in which Capt. G. H. Dansey was serving, lost 268 all ranks killed and wounded in this battle.

⁸¹ Second Captain W. Greene, R.A. (Kane 1105).

⁸² Col. Frazer was wounded on 27th February, by a musket ball in the shoulder.

⁸³ Major Frederick Sympher, King's German Legion Artillery (Beamish 785), commanding 4 Company, Foot Artillery, K.G.L.

⁸⁴ Probably Lt. A. Ward (Kane 1428).

⁸⁵ Captain Edward Parker, R.E. (Edwards 332).

⁸⁶ Second Captain Thomas James Heblethwayte Pitts, PLE. (Edwards 385).

Battle of Orthes commenced at 10 o'clock 27th February and lasted till 5 in the evening. 4th Division commenced by attacking the enemy's right, fire [being] taken up successively by the Light, 3rd and 6th Divisions to our right. 7th Division in reserve. Ross's⁵⁹ and Gardiner's⁸⁸ Troops, Sympher's⁸³, Michell's⁸⁹ and Turner's⁷⁰ Brigades inaction. Maxwell⁶⁵ in reserve.. 2nd Division forded the river and came in at the end of the action on our right near Sallespisse. Middling practice made by us at middling distance.

At 11 o'clock their right driven in, at 12 their centre, and at one and a half their left. They fought obstinately to our surprise, egged on by propagated reports of their Emperor having beat the Allies on 3 successive days, and that Soult hoped his Army would emulate their countrymen in the north. Their rear was never well or sharply pressed on 27th, 28th, 1st or 2nd instant, on each of which days we got a division of guns into skirmishing action, as also [on] 26th Feb. and fired 300 rounds on 28th.

Gardiner, we all expect, will get his Lt.-Colonelcy for the affair⁹⁰. 24th Feb.—Our Brigade marched to assemble in front of Sauveterre and assisted in demonstration when they blew up the bridge.

25th Forded the [Gave d'] Oleron and marched two leagues.

26th Marched one and a half [leagues] and forded the [Gave de] Pau.

27th Marched two and a quarter leagues of advance.

28th Three leagues near to St. Sever.

1st Forded Adour. [Marched] 3 leagues to Grenade.

2nd Two leagues to Cazères.

3rd Halt.

4th One and a half [leagues] to Barcelonne.

Part of the 7th Hussars charged well and took 500 prisoners on 28th. We are a long time without papers or a letter of any kind.

Yours with remembrance,
R.H."

On 25 March 1814 Hardinge wrote again describing the fight at Tarbes five days previously and the subsequent advance to the outskirts of Toulouse.

“Village of St. Lys. 3 leagues from Toulouse
March 25th 1814

Dear Dansey,

Your few lines of the 14th I got this morning. Since the Army got into motion on the 18th we have been marching incessantly, latterly with bad roads and bad weather. On the 20th we (the Light Division and Hussars) marched 4 leagues to near Tarbes, which Soult had evacuated in the morning, and when we came up with some of his light troops on the hills covering the road to Toulouse by Auch, St. Gaudens and Tournay. After an attack by part of the 95th on a hill (which they went up without firing a shot till at the top) and some ridges carried in good style, the enemy's infantry and artillery stole away, skirmishing in a most surprising style, our people never getting up with them at all. After most of us had bargained for a day at least equal to Orthes, it being only two o'clock when the firing commenced. The 2nd and 3rd Divisions in Tarbes, the Light, 6th and 4th on the road from Rabastens, and lots of Spaniards streaming along in their wake. After a hell of a fatiguing day for

⁸⁷ Presumably Lieutenant-General. Sir Lowry Cole, commanding 4th Division.

⁸⁸ Gardiner's Troop is today E Battery, R.H.A.

⁸⁹ Capt. J. Michell's Company, 9 Battalion, R.A., equipped as a field battery. This unit was disbanded in 1906 as 92 Company, R.G.A.

⁹⁰ Gardiner was appointed Brevet Lieutenant-Colonel on 3rd March, 1814.

the other four guns which went with the Light Division (Jenkinson⁹¹ being at Bourdeaux) with a bivouac (near to us) at night, they were glad to get back to the Brigade, with which I had remained with my Duck Gun and Switzer⁹² and fired half a dozen long shots and got cover at night, we finished the skirmish of Tarbes and got together again next morning.

The enemy retired *in toto* during the night, since which we have seen nothing of him on our front. The 21st —long march over hills and cross roads; Hussar Brigade and 6th Division head of column, followed by the 4th and Light making the Left Column; 2nd and 3rd the Right [Column]. Where the Spaniards are I don't know.

Enemy retired on the St. Gaudens road at a devil of a pace. My journal says

March 18th	To Plaisance	4 leagues
March 19th		ditto
March 20th	Village	5½
March 21st		ditto
March 22nd	Ternies	ditto
March 23rd	L'isle an Doudon	4 leagues. Heavy road
March 24th	Village	4 leagues. Very heavy
March 25th	St. Lys	2 leagues. Good road

[The dates 22nd to 25th are bracketted with the comment—"wet weather".]

Rumour says the people of Toulouse expect us with impatience and that they won't allow Soult to blow up the bridge, which is one of the finest in Europe. Our reception has been very good on our route, and Hd Qrts information [is] supposed to be very correct at present. Affairs wear a good aspect.

So you are not going to have any broken heads at Bayonne you think. This I am certain of—that orders were sent on the 8th in good earnest, but whether they may have been recalled I don't know, and most people here expect to hear of the batteries at work soon, as we understood all your horses of the Light were to be employed *without appeal* for mercy or pity—both Horse and Foot.

I have not seen your brother [for] some time. The 3rd Division lost 200 men in attacking Vic de Bigorre on the 19th, but the loss was amongst Colonel Keane's Brigade, chiefly by cannon shot. Poor ill-fated Ward⁹³ had his heel and ankle [sic] carried away. I have not heard how he is going on. No papers, no letters since 23rd February.

On dit that old Graham and (the) Alicant army are coming to us, when the Beau⁹⁴ will be able to cut a figure.

We don't know whether Swabey⁹⁵ is on his way to join us or not. Dickson has given me leave on his joining the Troop to go and do Amateur with my brother with whom I shall not, I think, remain long, but shall either go home or be put into Ross's Troop, as I am tired of a visiting life.

Tell Christie⁶¹ Old Benbow Bentham⁹⁶ never writes to me. Best regards to the

⁹¹ Second Captain and Brevet Major G. Jenkinson (Kane 1032) was for the time being in command of A Troop, R.H.A., during the absence of Captain and Brevet Major H. D. Ross. A Troop was normally in support of the Light Division, but in its absence, E. Troop (less Hardinge's Division (i.e. Section) worked with the Light Div. Hardinges Section remained this day in support of the Hussar Brigade.

⁹² Duck Gun and Switzer—probably a slang term for the Section consisting of a long 6-pdr and a howitzer.

⁹³ Lieutenant A. Ward (Kane 1428), who lost a leg as a result of this wound.

⁹⁴ The Duke of Wellington.

⁹⁵ Lieutenant Swabey rejoined E Troop, R.H.A., from England on 1st April, 1814, and Hardinge, who had been doing duty in his vacancy, was therefore free to return to England to join G Troop, to which he had been posted. But before doing so he was given leave to attach himself unofficially to his brother.

⁹⁶ Perhaps Second Captain William Bentham (Kane 1133).

Doc. Gardiner sold his mare and horse that he bought from Dyneley¹¹ for [the] same money—200 guineas. My stud same as ever. The black in good fig.

Adieu, with regards to Carmichael,

Yours

R.H.

Whether we are to have a fight here or not is uncertain. The enemy have pallisaded this side of Toulouse and put some guns in unfinished redoubts. Suchet,⁹⁷ is said to be near at hand and pushing for a junction with Soult. Bonaparte at Paris *still*.”

⁹⁷ Marshal Suchet commanding the French forces in Catalonia.

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