

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 instalments of these letters in the *Journal*, it should be explained that the writer was Lieutenant Richard Hardinge (Kane 1318) of E Troop, R.H.A. (Captain R. W. Gardiner). He was the 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.

ON 1st April, Lieutenant Swabey rejoined E Troop, R.H.A., from England, and Hardinge, who had been posted to G Troops and was only doing duty in E Troop, was permitted to join his brother Henry, who was commanding a Portuguese Infantry Brigade in the 2nd Division, as unofficial A.D.C. He was thus employed during the battle of Toulouse, which he described in the following letter;

Near Toulouse. April 6th [1814]

My dear Dansey,

I wrote to you last on the 25th in answer to yours of the 24th March. We hear that orders have certainly gone down for the siege,⁹⁸ and breaking heads to commence.

** Siege of Bayonne.

March 26th. The Army got into position, the 2nd Division on the Muret road, the Light and 3rd on Plaisance road and the 4th and 6th on the Auch road. Freire's Spaniards in reserve. The enemy were never pressed by the 2nd Division, which followed them from Tarbes except at St. Gaudens, when Captain MacAllister of the 13th [Light Dragoons] with a small squadron charged their Chasseurs and took more men and horses than his own numbers.⁹⁹

27th March. Part of the Light Division and my long six [pounder gun] drove their picquets out of Tournefeuille across the bridge. Cantonments of the Army advanced.

28th. Failure for want of boats of passing the river at Portet, which was to have been crossed by 2nd Division, Light and 3rd. The intention given up though the enemy had not discovered us. This day's failure a sad business, as long ere this we should have been in Toulouse. Picquets advanced to present line. 29th and 30th—Army quiet.

31st March. Sir Rowland Hill crossed by pontoon bridge at Roques and marched up the Ariege river to Cintegabelle, 5 leagues, when after a reconnaissance the country was found so difficult that he came back to his old cantonments on the 2nd, to the great mortification of the whole of us, who did not admire such shades on the Peer's¹⁰⁰ star.

3rd April. pontoons moved to the left.

4th April. Bridge laid at Grenade, 4 leagues below Toulouse.

6th April. 4th and 3rd Divisions and some cavalry passed over before night without opposition under the Marshal,¹⁰¹ who was now to try his luck. Their posts and picquets were relieved by 2nd Division. The night of the 4th down came the rain and wind and up was taken the bridge, which is not yet re-established I believe, [but] perhaps may [be] this evening. The intervening two days being still rainy, which mornings we have been on the alert expecting Soult to attack us, the situation being very similar to that in December near Bayonne. I forgot to mention that I am now living with my brother whom I came to on the 2nd, Swabey joining Gardiner the day before.

As today the weather is beautiful and appears settled, we hope in two days to do something. Our little front here is very good as you will observe a little rise which runs along two thirds of our position and which we have strengthened.

This last advance has not pleased me, who am daring enough not to admire the Peer¹⁰⁰ so much as his adversary in their respective measure. Certain it is that our character cannot stand so high with the numerous inhabitants of Toulouse, into which have retired the gentry of the country, when they see us so foiled and delayed, whilst Soult by his stay in the place is draining it of every

⁹⁹ Captain MacAllister, 13th Light Dragoons, surprised the French 10th Chasseurs and inflicted over 100 casualties.

¹⁰⁰ The Duke of Wellington.

¹⁰¹ Sir William Beresford, who held the rank of Marshal in the Portuguese Army.

resource and whose credit proportionately increases as ours diminishes. He had redoubted this side which we should never think of attacking on account of the bridge (which is not blown) and he has since thrown up Redoubt No. 3 which gives him with the river on his right the canal covering [his] left as also the town, and it is a tight position, liable however to be cut off from the Lyons road, but not from Perpignan. What we expect to be done is that the Marshal's¹⁰¹ corps will advance tomorrow morning opposite Blagnac or thereabouts when the Light Division and Spaniards, and perhaps ourselves, all cross over a bridge and turn Mr. Soult out of Toulouse. This is a conjecture. I keep this back a few days to close it (after croaking) with an account of our entry into the place.

The country people, when they see our line of march—cavalry, baggage, etc.—always reckon us at 5 to 1, which annoys me, that they expect too much, we not being 2 to 1. I have seen Frazer since his return looking well.¹⁰² Gardiner and I parted good friends; it is really a curious fact that, when not in Parker's¹⁰³ company, he is almost as he used to be—a pleasant, good fellow—but at other times when he affects more than he can carry off in manner and appearance whilst aping the Cavalry so, he fails. Our sentiments as to his *interior* character you and I have canvassed and agreed upon. But let us always try to look on the bright side of all people; its a good maxim.

The Brigadier¹⁰⁴ and I hit it off pretty fairly. What will become of me bye and bye I cannot foresee. Dickson¹⁰⁵ will keep me as long as he can; meanwhile I am tired of visiting about without any permanent interest in a Troop or Brigade and shall like my present berth capitally when I get a little set up in Toulouse and another horse.

The city before us looks beautiful and we understand all kinds of luxuries and debaucheries await us there.

Blucher's last success is good news. I am clear for killing the Destroyer by any means. Green⁸¹ has been ordered to take charge of the pontoon horses of Captain English's Division,¹⁰⁶ and some subalterns are also going on the same duty, the Driver officers¹⁰⁷ not being *equal or competent* to the charge. On dit that Green gets his majority for late services. Turner¹⁰⁸ is not popular. Beane's Troop¹⁰⁹ is in good order, Gardiner's¹¹⁰ rather better. The Brigades¹¹¹ all very so so.

¹⁰² Captain (Brevet Lieut.-Colonel) A. S. Frazer (Kane 765) had been wounded on 27 February 1814.

¹⁰³ Second Captain J. B. Parker (Kane 1117) had been doing duty with E Troop, R.H.A., in the place of T. Dyneley, who was in England.

¹⁰⁴ The writer's brother, who was commanding a Portuguese Infantry Bde.

¹⁰⁵ Captain (Brevet Lieut.-Colonel) A. Dickson (Kane 844) was Commanding the Allied Artillery of Wellington's army.

¹⁰⁶ Second Captain Frederick English, R.E. (Edwards 384).

¹⁰⁷ Officers of the Corps of Royal Artillery Drivers.

¹⁰⁸ Capt. G. Turner (Kane 974), commanding a Company of the 9th Battalion, R.A., which later became 108 H.A.A. Battery, R.A.

¹⁰⁹ Capt. G. Beane's Troop is now D Battery, R.H.A.

¹¹⁰ Capt. (Brevet Lieut.-Colonel) R. W. Gardiner's Troop is now E Battery, R.H.A.

¹¹¹ The Brigades—meaning field batteries.

5 leagues from Toulouse. April 14th [1814].

Yesterday morning the news from Paris of Bonaparte's downfall reached us, and today I saw the printed Article decreed by the Senate on which they call Louis XVIII to the throne.

I think it is all *glorious*—and three-quarters of this Army are certainly devilish glad it is all over; what such fire eaters and ambitious fellows as you think I don't care about. Colonel Cook accompanied by Colonel St. Simon, a French officer both from Paris, went on to Soult yesterday, who seemed rather hesitating, and asked for an armistice which was refused. Today Colonel Gordon is gone out to him.

On the 10th April was fought the Battle of Toulouse commencing at half past eight and ending at dark. The 4th and 6th Divisions signalized themselves, the Spaniards on the contrary ran away. At 11 o'clock action was general. At 12 the head of the 6th and 4th Divisions gained their objects, when that wing was in great danger of being cut off from the Spaniards running away pursued by the French, which was however remedied by part of the Light Division Cacadores¹¹² advancing steadily and gallantly through the fugitives and beating back the enemy in their turn, when the redoubts were finally taken by the Spaniards, not so much from their attack as by the enemy's fears of the 6th and 4th Divisions on their right flank turning them. The last I heard of your brother¹¹³ about 10 days ago was that he was left at Tarbes sick. The 45th and 87th suffered severely from old Picton¹¹⁴ wishing to turn his feint attack into a real one. Poor Blumenbach¹¹⁵ of the German Artillery was killed, as also Colonel Douglas,¹¹⁶ Com[mandin]g [a] [Portuguese] Brigade in the 6th Division, Col. Coghlan, 61st Regt., Col. Ford¹¹⁷ 45th, the Colonel of the 87th and a Major of the 45th. Generals Brisbane and Pack wounded, is all I have heard of. Artillery practice was good. Arentschildt¹¹⁸ was with the Spaniards.

The enemy remained in Toulouse the 11th unmolested. The 12th at daybreak they were all gone. 2nd Division marched through the town at 10 o'clock following their rear guard and marched 3 leagues to Donneville. I stayed 2 hours in the town, saw the proclaiming of Louis XVIII in the Capitol and hoisting of the White Flag with huzzas of "*Vive le Roi*" and "*Vive Wellington*" from an immense crowd. The Peer¹⁰⁰ looked pleased and well. After buying a few things, I followed my brother. Yesterday we marched on 2 leagues to Villefranche, which I think will be our last march after Soult.

¹¹² Cacadores.—Portuguese light infantry.

¹¹³ Captain O. H. Dansey, 88th Regiment (later The Connaught Rangers).

¹¹⁴ Lieutenant-General Sir Thomas Picton, Commanding 3rd Division.

¹¹⁵ Lieutenant Charles Edmund Blumenbach (Beamish 786), King's German Legion Artillery, serving with the 4th Company KGL. Arty.

¹¹⁶ Brevet Lieut-Colonel James Douglas, Portuguese Army, who did not hold a British commission, was wounded, not killed.

¹¹⁷ Actually it was Colonel Forbes, 45th Regiment.

¹¹⁸ Captain (Brevet Major) Victor Arentschildt (Beamish 30), King's German Legion Artillery, was commanding a Portuguese Artillery force.

The delight and civility of the inhabitants of Toulouse on our entry was very pleasing and gratifying. No troops except Hd. Qrts., sick and skylarking officers are in the town. My brother and I talk of going in for a day or two from hence. I am not yet decided whether I go by Bordeaux [or] Paris. Remember me kindly to Monro⁵⁴ and all your party. Yours of the 25th I got on 10th inst.

Yours faithfully,

R.H.

I have heard since commencing the first part of this letter that no orders did go down for the siege⁹⁸ and your prognostics will consequently turn out right.

The 6th Division suffered very severely on the 10th, nearly, as they say, 14 or 1500.¹¹⁹ The defence of the Redoubt by the 42nd and 91st much talked of. The old Highlanders were too obstinate and would have given them the steel had the enemy come in on them. Gardiner¹¹⁰ lost a few men wounded. Ditto Beane¹⁰⁹ and some horses. Maxwell,¹²⁰ 8 wounded men. Turner¹⁰⁸ 10 killed and wounded and so forth.”

Hardinge’s last letter from France was dated 30th April 1814 when on the eve of his departure for England via Paris in company with his brother Henry and Colonel Frazer, who commanded the Royal Horse Artillery in Wellington’s army. Hardinge’s exchange from G Troop R.H.A. (Frazer’s) into A Troop R.H.A. (Ross’s) had at last been arranged.

“Toulouse. April 30th 1814

My D[ea]r Dansey,

I have deferred writing to you the last week or ten days, wishing to let you know my final destination as to going home, which was only settled yesterday. My brother, Colonel Frazer and self in a chaise which we are to buy this afternoon, leave this Monday next the 2nd May for Paris. I hear this moment that Lord W[ellington] goes this afternoon, which intention has only been known within the last hour.

My last letters to you were on the 14th instant and 25th March, on both of which days you wrote to me. On the 23rd of this month my brother and I came in here, since which we have not, except one day, gone out of the town.

The theatre I have only visited once; it is a very fair one, rather under mediocrity. “God save the King” and “Notre Bon Henri”, the new national air, sung to the old march of Condé, are always received with plaudits.

The Museum is middling, some originals from Paris masters are pretty good. The paintings are all the Museum contains worth seeing.

¹¹⁹ The 6th Division actually lost about 400 out of a total British casualty list of about 1,850.

¹²⁰ Capt. S. Maxwell’s Company, 4 Battalion, R.A. (disbanded in 1920), with 2nd Division as a 9 pdr. field battery.

The Arsenal is a nice comfortable looking place with some snug houses for the Directors, etc., which Sherlock,¹²¹ Butcher¹²² and clan have established themselves in.

Son Altesse Royale Duc d'Angoulême came in here on 27th. Our Beau¹²³ (who really is one, flirting with all the finest girls, etc.) went out to meet him, and the Urban and National Guards, mixed with some of our cavalry and infantry also Maxwell's guns¹²⁰ firing a royal salute, received him with proper honours. The population showed lots of loyalty on the occasion.

Soult has been ordered to Paris as on dit to be overhauled. Suchet, who now commands the whole, came in here last night. I did not see him. He is as popular as the other is the reverse.

Your account of the sortie was particularly acceptable. I have since seen a letter from Blachley¹²⁴ to Frazer. We voyageurs have been to General d'Urban¹²⁵ and we dine *en masse* with old Dickson¹⁰⁴ today, who has been as of old very civil to me. I thought I did more with Dickson by always finishing my slight requests with "that I am ready however to take whatever turns up, should there be the least difficulty, and will wait with pleasure your own arrangements, Sir". He told me the other day that Ross had been making fresh application for me, as R had mentioned in his last [letter] to him. For my own part I think I should prefer *now* G Troop. Frazer, who is at present 1st for promotion, who I think Ramsay¹²⁶ is likely to succeed in the Horse Artillery.

I have not been particularly enjoying myself for want of chums. I saw Monro⁵⁴ one day that he came in and made the most of him. Had not my brother proposed so smartly to me the trip by Paris, I should have not sought it in other company but [have] gone by Bayonne and Bordeaux in preference, as my plan was to have seen you at the former place in the hope of your company to the latter. I have heard nothing of your brother lately; luckily for him he was not here the other day. For "Colonel Douglas,¹¹⁶ killed" read "wounded, leg amputated", which was an erratum in my last. I keep clear of the girls, tell Christie⁶¹ and Doc, intending to carry home a pure person to Ingleterra. I almost long to be there now, you little dogs, by Calais, and shall not, or rather intend not, staying above ten days at Paris; just to see the Lions, when, if my brother has other plans, I cut. Frazer, having been there before, will only wait for a day or two.

121 Commissary of Ordnance George Sherlock (Kane 23) of the Field Train Department of the Ordnance.

122 Assistant Commissary of Ordnance John Butcher (Kane 45), of the Field Train Department of the Ordnance, who was Ordnance Paymaster in the Peninsula.

123 Our Beau—The Duke of Wellington.

124 Second Captain C. Blachley (Kane 1171).

125 Lieutenant-General Benjamin d'Urban, Q.M.G., in the Portuguese Army.

126 Second Captain William Norman Ramsay (Kane 1019) was expected to be posted to command G Troop, R.H.A., on the promotion of Captain (Brevet Lieut.-Colonel) A.S. Frazer. In fact, he went to H Troop just before Waterloo and was there killed in action.

I am as yet undecided whether to send my servants down to you. Otherwise they go to Gardiner—*Lt.-Col. Gardiner*. I have not seen him to congratulate.⁹⁰ Parker¹⁰³ set off with Lord George Lennox with the despatches via Paris. *He* always falls on his legs. Newland²¹ told me yesterday that on Swabey's⁹⁵ seeing how things went on in the Troop and the influence P[arker] had over G[ardiner], he joined the already discontented duo, and they were a trio decided on a meeting, when the Peace saved the row. Gardiner is again as I used to prophesy [sic], as good a fellow as of old. My black horse is I am afraid sold for half his value into the Service this morning. Green's⁸¹ and Macdonald's¹²⁷ names are required in the *Gazette*. G, I think, will get it. Mac went to the Bean the other day and got but an evasive answer.

Promotion for services is, I am sorry to say, a lottery in this country. Old Webber¹²⁸ has got Sir William Stewart to second a former recommendation of Sir R. Hill's for H[orse] Artillery.

Between 70 or 80 Ls I expect will cover my expenses home.

1st May (1814)

Bell and I have arranged the exchange this morning, which will make me send my servants to Bourdeaux. Give my best remembrance to Carmichael, Christie and Doc, and believe me as ever,

Yours faithfully,

R.H.”

The following letter written from London is the last of the series.

“1 Cumberland Street, Portman Square.

May 30th 1814

My dear Dansey,

I wrote to you from Toulouse a day or two before I left it, acquainting you of my intended trip to Paris. Colonel Frazer, my brother and self quitted the first named place on the 2nd instant, and reached Paris on the 7th. The vehicle we bought to post in was to begin a *Take in*, and its breaking down twice “*en chemin*” laid us open to imposition of various kinds. Limoges is a tolerable good town. Orleans a very handsome and pleasant one on the Loire—they were the only two (and Montauban) that we passed through. The post horses were tolerably good and the regulations very clear. On entering Paris we found a great difficulty of finding a hotel to lodge us and at last went into a lodging; 3 bed rooms, 3rd pair of stairs, 40 *francs* per day.

¹²⁷ Probably Second Captain A. Macdonald (Kane 1174) of D Troop, R.H.A., which was then commanded by Captain O. Beane.

¹²⁸ Second Captain W. Webber (Kane 1165) of Captain S. Maxwell's Company, 4 Battalion, R.A., which unit was manning a field battery which normally supported the 2nd Division commanded by Sir William Stewart. A copy of his Journal covering an earlier part of the campaign is in the R.A.I. library.

My brother rigged himself out, went and called on Sir Charles Stewart, and got into the tip top society of the military kind chiefly and where he still is. Frazer, having been there before, went about shopping a good deal, yet accompanied me to the theatres and Louvre Gallery. At the end of five days, on his trying to get a public conveyance to Calais, we found the traffic so great with no competition of means of travelling, that I determined suddenly to go on with the Colonel instead of remaining my 10 days. Accordingly we got under weigh again on the 11th in a hired gig and reached London the 14th.

I have had the good fortune to find all my relations as well as my warmest wishes could anticipate. After staying three days in Town, I went down into Kent, which was looking beautiful. I come back to Old England more a John Bull than ever; you may depend upon it there is no country or people and customs equal to us.

The public buildings at Paris are very fine and the small rivers with a clean street to each side is very pretty, as are also the gardens, but thin detestable streets without a foot pavement so that no passenger is at any moment safe from the carriages, which to foreign women must be very disagreeable.

Their theatres are very fair, the dancing at the Opera particularly good, and also their acting at the Theatre Comique, which is best adapted to their actors, who excel in comedy. Our theatres here are still open in expectation of the crowned heads from Paris. Mr. Kean makes a great noise, no boxes are to be had until the middle of next month, Othello, Iago, Richard IIIrd, etc., are his characters. I have not yet seen him and have only been once to Covent Garden to see Miss Stevens. Town is excessively full and will be, so they say, till the end of August. How do you like the new titles? Sir Stapleton's¹²⁹ was not well merited, I am sure. He is a good natured brave fellow, but no General no more than the rest of the cavalry chiefs. Lord Hill and lots of 2nd Division Staff arrived a few days ago. I hope the troops that are going to America will never fire a shot. The odds are that will be the case I think as the Yankees began to run down Maddison the first wind they got of the success of the Allies and are coming round fast.

I have met very few of our officers prowling about Town. Chapman¹³⁰, the Secretary, got a tumble out of his curricule about ten days ago, which broke two of his ribs and shook his carcase terribly. Maling,¹³¹ with whom I breakfasted and who is doing the other's duty, as of old could not tell me much about regimental news, but from the conferences Lord M¹³² had had with Macleod¹³³ and Mudge,¹³⁴ it is supposed that some Battalions will be reduced—3 or 4.¹³⁵

¹²⁹ Sir Stapleton Cotton became Lord Combermere.

¹³⁰ Perhaps Lieut. J. J. Chapman (Kane 1279).

¹³¹ 2/Captain William Eyles Maling (Kane 1163).

¹³² Henry, Earl Mulgrave, Master General of the Ordnance.

¹³³ Major-General John Macleod (Kane 456), Deputy Adjutant General, R.A.

¹³⁴ Lt.-Col. (Brevet Colonel) William Mudge (Kane 584), Lieut.-Governor, R.M.A.

¹³⁵ With the return of Napoleon from Elba, these disbandments did not take place until after Waterloo.

Unfortunately every time I have called on Ross I have missed him, so that I do not hear where the Troop will go to, which I dare say he knows by this time. My father I am afraid will oblige me to ask for some assistance in the cash line as he is not liberal and generous enough to offer as he ought, and can well afford plenty of aid. However as I am going down into the North to see him after my brother comes over from Paris, perhaps by way of novelty he will have the good sense to enquire into the 1st expense of my new line. With good and kind friends in these parts who are always ready to assist one, I am too something or other to think they should have occasion to draw their purse strings when the person whose duty it is hangs back, though he has a better income than any of them. So much for myself. I hope all my acquaintances with the old Company and Brigade are well. I always remember with pleasure the style in which we carried on duties near Oyarzun¹³⁶. Massey, Parker and MacEwen,—say I asked after them, *not a la Gardiner*. Tell Christie I saw Major Rynd¹³⁷ yesterday, quite well; he is still at Battle.

The panorama of Vittoria is tolerably good, it don't however take us in much, we of the left column.

I was much gratified in seeing the Parisians well humbled in their capital (not half so fine a one as this) by having Russian guards at all their gates, theatres and public places. I hate them all for a set of fickle, boasting fellows who will give a great deal of trouble to a good King and Government.

The Spaniards, after their exertions in blood and treasure for Ferdinand, will I dare say tamely submit to a despotic Government under the coward who gave himself up to Napoleon at Bayonne.

Make enquiries, will you, about a box which was landed at Pasages in the middle of March, addressed officially to the Resident Commissary General, from the office at Plymouth. I left word with May¹³⁸ if it was [*illegible*] to him to send it to Bob Harding. With remembrances to Car[michael] and the *Dockey*.

Yours faithfully,

R.H.”

The subsequent careers of Hardinge and Dansey ran on curiously parallel lines. Richard Hardinge was appointed A.D.C. to his brother Henry, who served as British Liaison Officer with Marshal Blucher during the Waterloo campaign and who was severely wounded at Ligny. Both brothers therefore missed the battle of Waterloo. After service in A Troop, Richard Hardinge was Second Captain of the Rocket Troop from 1825 to 1827, 1st Assistant Inspector, Royal Carriage Department, from 1828 to 1845, on R.H.A. Brigade Staff in

¹³⁶ Oyarzun, on the Vittoria-Bayonne road 60 miles S.E. of St. Sebastian.

¹³⁷ Perhaps Capt. John Rynd, retired full pay, in a Garrison Battalion.

¹³⁸ Captain (Brevet Lieut.-Colonel) John May (Kane 883) was Assistant Adjutant General to the Artillery of the Peninsula Army.

1846, Director of the Royal Laboratory from 1847 to 1852 and Superintendent, Royal Military Repository from 1852 to 1857. He died a Major-General in London on 20th July, 1864.

C. C. Dansey was appointed to the 2nd Rocket Troop, R.H.A., in 1814, and was wounded at Waterloo. He continued to serve as Second Captain of the Rocket Troop (now O Bty., R.H.A.) from 1814 to 1824 and commanded it as Captain from 1828 to 1836. From 1839 till 1846 he was Chief Firemaster, Royal Laboratory. He died in London a Colonel on 21st July, 1853.

It is unfortunately not possible to reproduce here any of the rough sketch maps with which Hardinge illustrated many of his letters, but in other respects the quotations taken from this correspondence have been copied as written, with a few minor corrections to spelling and punctuation. The main value of the letters lies in the fact that they reflect the day to day thoughts and comments of the writer and that they contain much regimental gossip. The intense competition among regimental officers to obtain the coveted “jacket”, the value of social influence to attain that end and the tendency of the R.H.A. to adopt a more expensive style of living than that favoured by the field batteries are all emphasised in these very revealing letters. It is interesting to note that two other officers of Gardiner’s Troop—Second Captain Dyneley and Lieutenant Swabey—left Peninsula War journals, so that the discovery of the Hardinge letters provides E Battery, R.H.A., with a singularly complete, if unofficial, record of its exploits during the campaigns in Spain and southern France.

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