THE THIRTY-EIGHTH REGIMENT OF FOOT, NOW THE FIRST BATTALION OF THE SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE REGIMENT.

BY MAJOR WILLIAM J. FREER, V.D., D.L., F.S.A.

I HAVE the pleasure of bringing to the notice of the Society a small but interesting collection of Peninsular and other medals of men belonging to the above regiment, namely:

THE PENINSULAR CAMPAIGN.

William Pye.—Five bars, Busaco, Badajos, Salamanca, Vittoria, St. Sebastian.
Philip Shadwell.—Three bars, Badajos, Vittoria, St. Sebastian.
Sergeant E. Stubbings.—Three bars, Salamanca, Vittoria, St. Sebastian.
William Rudge.—Three bars, Vimiera, Corunna, St. Sebastian.
William Boulter.—Three bars, Vimiera, Corunna, Salamanca.
Sergeant J. Femey.—Two bars, Busaco, Fuentes d’Onor.

THE INDIAN MUTINY.

A. Fitzgibbon.—One bar, Lucknow.

REGIMENTAL AND FOREIGN.

A regimental silver medal.—This is from the Hastings Irwin collection and the only example known.
French.—Valeur et Discipline, 1852.
Turkish.—Order of the Medjidie, 1852, fourth and fifth classes.
The Thirty-eighth Regiment of Foot was raised in 1702, and called Colonel Luke Lillingston's Regiment of Foot. Its uniform was scarlet with facings yellow. No history of the regiment has been written, and for the few notes I have put together, I have read the interesting memoir of General Sir Thomas Willshire, Bart., G.C.B., by Commander C. R. Low, I.N., which appeared in the *United Service Magazine* in 1879. The regiment was first called the Thirty-eighth Foot in 1751 and the First Staffordshire in 1872, its sobriquet being "The pump and tortoise." The regimental collection of its medals was at the date these notes were written with the regiment in South Africa. General Willshire's father and two brothers were in the regiment.

In 1789 the Thirty-eighth left Nova Scotia for Plymouth, and was in Ireland in 1790, where it remained for a few years.

On the 22nd of March, 1794, it shared in the capture of Martinique, in 1796 in the capture of St. Lucie on the 14th of April, and again in the second capture of the same place on the 14th of May, and in the capture of Trinidad in 1797. It returned to England in 1800, and was quartered at Lichfield. In 1804 a second battalion was added, and in 1805 it proceeded to the Cape of Good Hope, where the colony surrendered on the 15th of January, 1806.

In August, 1806, it sailed thence for La Plata. On June the 28th Buenos Ayres surrendered to General Beresford and Sir Home Popham, and in January, 1807, the combined forces stormed the town of Monte Video.

On the 5th of July, 1807, in the attack on Buenos Ayres, the regiment at 6.30 a.m. moved towards its left, and the 87th advanced straight to its front, approaching the strong Port of the Retiro and the Plaza de Toros, and after a most vigorous and spirited attack, in which the Thirty-eighth suffered much from grape-shot and musketry, its gallant commander, Brigadier-General Sir Samuel Achmuty, possessed himself of the Port, taking 32 pieces of cannon, an immense quantity of ammunition, and 600 prisoners. Captain Willshire and his three sons were in this engagement, and the youngest, John, an ensign, was severely wounded. For this the latter received £25 from the Patriotic Fund.
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The regiment then returned to England, thence crossed to Ireland, and after a short time embarked for the Peninsula from Cork on the 16th of June, 1808. Upon landing, it was brigaded with the Fifth and Ninth under Major-General Rowland Hill, and served with the Ninth throughout the war. The Thirty-eighth was at Roleia on the 17th of August, and at Vimiera on the 19th, and took part in the battle on the 21st of August, sharing in the famous retreat to Corunna under Sir John Moore.

On the 27th of July, 1809, it was concerned in the ill-fated expedition to Walcheren, where Captain John Willshire died, on the 25th of September, of fever.

In June, 1812, the regiment, 1,100 strong, under the command of Colonel the Honourable, afterwards Major-General Sir, Charles John Greville, K.C.B., brother of the Third Earl of Warwick, again embarked from Cork for the Peninsula.

On that occasion Ensign George Freer, who was then aged 18, writes: "The regiment was most complete, and both as to officers and men an admirable example of a British force... I was myself in no way distinguished among them for stature, although I stood 6 feet high, and I conceive Captain Willshire about the same, the company to which I was attached, the Grenadiers, having no man under that height."

The Second Battalion was already in Portugal, and brigaded with the Ninth and the Third Battalions of the First Royals, having taken part in the battle of Busaco on the 27th of September, 1810, under Major-General Leith, and in the siege of Badajos. On its place in the First Brigade of the Fifth Division being taken by the First Battalion, it returned to England in 1813, and was quartered at Winchester.

I will now take up the story from the manuscript diary of Ensign Freer, for which, as previously acknowledged, I am indebted to Commander C. R. Low's Memoir of Sir Thomas Willshire.
DIARY OF ENSIGN GEORGE FREER\(^1\) OF THE THIRTY-EIGHTH FOOT.

On leaving Villa Franca we marched at daybreak through the small villages on the main road to Santarem. The villages on the road were mostly devastated, showing too plainly the horrors of war, and the merciless ravages of the French on their retreat to Villa Franca. Here I recollect the impression made on me by beholding a large body of wounded coming to the rear; some with an ear and part of the face shot off, some blinded, some armless, others without legs, all in a miserable plight—not a pleasing sight to men going up to supply their places.

The night dews were here so heavy, that they appeared like falling rain, and I being ill-provided with proper baggage, often found my limbs and body so stiff as scarcely to be able to rise at the sound of the bugle which, to enable us to march as far as possible in the cool of the morning, was usually sounded about 1 or 2 o'clock a.m.

Between this point and Ciudad Rodrigo, some of my men fell dead with sun stroke, so fearful was the heat. We had expected to halt here for a few days, but received orders to proceed after twelve hours' rest. Leaving Rodrigo you have a burning sandy road through an extensive plain, where the sun has not left a sign of vegetation, except wheat, which here it appears as though it were the spontaneous fruit of Nature. For the whole day you see neither man nor his dwelling. We had now bid adieu to sleeping under the "friendly roof" and marched under the burning sun by day, bivouacking at night, our clothes saturated with the heavy dews. Approaching Salamanca you see at the distance of full three leagues its numerous towers and spires, rising, as it were, out of an almost boundless plain, without any part of the city being visible; indeed, so great is the deception that you would imagine you are close to it when, after marching

\(^1\) See Appendix.
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through dust and heat for many hours, you will be told that you are still a league distant from Salamanca. The entrance to the “Learned City” is over a rather handsome bridge of six arches, across the River Tormes, which has in this part a very romantic and beautiful appearance, meandering gently through green fields, vineyards and gardens.

The French had fortified, two convents which commanded the bridge and ford of the Tormes. These had been taken a short time before, after a most gallant resistance on the part of the enemy, who had only a handful of men in them. They were now battered down, together with all the houses in their vicinity which could afford any shelter, giving this approach to the city a most ruinous appearance.

Passing the suburbs you enter the city through an ancient arched gateway of Gothic architecture into streets so narrow and bad, that you wonder at so great a promise leading to so poor a performance. The Grand Plaza, however, is a beautiful square, the houses so built as to form piazzas underneath, in which are the principal shops, the hidalgos occupying the houses above. In the rainy season this arrangement is particularly good, for you may in your walk enjoy the air and exercise, without the drawback of being wet to the skin. In rear of this is an open square ornamented in the centre by beautiful fountains. Salamanca had in all fifty-six colleges, halls, and convents, but the French had destroyed twenty-two of their number, although there were still remaining some superb buildings, among them the so-called Irish College, built by Philip II., and by him largely endowed for the education of Roman Catholic priests of that nation.

The cathedral is among the finest buildings in Europe. It has several times been threatened with destruction by the French, but each time 500,000 francs has been extracted for its ransom. The organ has rather a novel, though perhaps a childish feature—whichever stop is touched a figure moves out, apparently playing on the instrument.
When we arrived at Salamanca, after a burning forced march of four leagues and a half in the heat of the day, our men were put into the convent of San Domingo, which the nuns had quitted, the officers occupying the houses near. We remained under arms until dark, when we received orders to join the main body of the army, through a soaking rain for another league and a half that night. Heaven, as though forbidding the blood that was to be shed the next day, showed its anger by the most awful thunder and vivid lightning I ever witnessed. It was about midnight when we arrived at our position, and not a covering had I or my mess-mate, Captain Willshire, from the pitiless storm. The ground we were on had been ploughed, and in one of its furrows we laid ourselves down, a stone composing my pillow. Notwithstanding that the water ran out of the collar of my coat, and out wherever it could find a passage, yet from the fatigues of the day and the buoyancy of a good constitution, I slept as though lying on down...

On the 27th Salamanca surrendered. Captain Willshire was twice wounded, but refused to quit the field. Ensign Freer was also wounded. He was by Willshire's side on the 22nd of July and gives the following account of the engagement:

About 2 o'clock the rising sun foretold the intense heat of the coming day, but also showed us hotter work still—the overcoming of 80,000 men moving in the plains below and ascending the opposite heights. We too were not inactive, but at day-break took up a position along the heights to our right. After manoeuvring opposite each other the whole morning, in which generalship on both sides was displayed, about 2 o'clock Marmont made a faux pas of which our lynx-eyed commander took advantage, with that celebrated expression, "Now I have him." Marmont detached 20,000 men from the left wing of his army, with the intention of cutting off our communication with the main road to Ciudad
Rodrigo. The cavalry of this detachment had gained the Tormes and was beginning to ford it, when the whole detached body was attacked by the Third and Seventh Divisions of the British, while our division, the Fifth, and the Sixth, advanced along the heights at double quick, or rather a hard run, for about 2 miles.

Their [the enemy's] centre was now posted on an eminence in our front, a position much superior to our's, and which seemed inaccessible. Under this height we lay flat on our faces for a quarter of an hour to get our breath after so rapid a movement in the heat of the day, the poor fellows carrying packs, coats, and blankets, besides thirty rounds of ammunition on their backs. We were now so close to the main body of the French that the shot and shell, which they poured upon us in abundance from the heights above, could do us little damage. We were shortly ordered to stand up, and General Leith, who then commanded us, made a flying speech to each regiment as he passed. To us he said, "As for you, Thirty-eighth, I have only to say, behave as you always have done." We then firmly advanced at quick time without firing a shot, having previously loaded under the fire of several howitzers, field-pieces and mortars, together with the fire of all their musketry. I do believe that never were the coolness, the intrepidity, and the bravery, together with the discipline of the British soldier so evidently portrayed as on this occasion.

NOTE.—Since writing the above, I have seen the British soldier engaged on fifteen occasions, but am still of the same opinion.

We marched on with "recovered arms" and fixed bayonets, as on a common field day, till we arrived within about 100 yards from them, and about three parts up the eminence, when "Halt. Fire a volley and Charge," were the orders given. This was done in the finest conceivable manner. The enemy fell in immense numbers and our brave fellows, running up
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the rock as though it had been on level ground, cheering the whole way, immediately pressed upon them with the bayonet. They stood for a moment as though prepared to defend themselves but the shock was too great, our bayonets crossed theirs, but our rush was too impetuous to be resisted. We put them into confusion, they began to fly, and we as quickly to pursue. Personal strength and valour had now an opportunity of displaying themselves, for in this mêlée they were the only things to which you had to trust. To describe to anyone unaccustomed to scenes of this nature, the one that now presented itself, would be impossible. Here was the athletic, powerful Willshire, pursuing nimble Frenchmen; there a solitary too bold French dragoon, rushing back upon the infantry which pursued him, and horse and rider tumbling headlong from one of our shots.

Here I thought my time had come—two Frenchmen, recovering their courage, came rushing towards me in their bear-skin head-dress, and with bayonets glittering. As the one about 30 yards in front of his companion drew near, I retreated a few yards, my eye intently fixed, not on him, but on the point of his bayonet, at which with my sabre I made a fearful cut and my friend tumbling in upon me, very soon felt the blow transferred to himself. For the other, a Grenadier at my heels soon transfixed him with his bayonet, and with hearty English brogue exclaimed, "Haven't we finished 'em both nicely, Sir?"—Heaps of dead and dying on all sides covered the ground, the enemy's screams mingled with our triumphant shouts; the cries of the wounded, the prayers of the prisoners for mercy, the roar of cannon, the volleys of musketry, all combined, forming a most horrid medley. Several times the enemy strove to re-form but in vain. Their right about this time was turned, and flight became general, when nothing remained for us to do but to cut down and destroy every obstacle. It fell to my lot to take three or four field-pieces which had annoyed us much. This scene of
slaughter and bloodshed continued till eleven at night, when, unable to distinguish friends from foes, we were compelled to desist.

Earlier in the action, while advancing, the village of Arapiles met our centre, and to move either to the right or left would have wrought confusion, when Colonel Greville, calling me by name, said "Take them over the wall"—I had just reached the top with the Grenadiers at my heels, when a nearly spent grape shot struck my left arm and precipitated me backwards. For a second I thought it broken, but on rising, I found, though fearfully lacerated, I was able to proceed. I rushed round the walls, overtook my company, and did my duty throughout the whole day afterwards, binding my arm with my handkerchief to prevent it hanging down. At night, Captain Willshire and myself sat round the watch-fire, recounting the deeds of the day. Some of my company procured raw meal and some bacon, with which a kind of dumpling was improvised, and the fire was made of gun and carriage timber and broken muskets, there being no wood in the vicinity. Some were making dough cakes, putting all the pillage from the Frenchmen's packs into our own camp kettles. They invited us most respectfully to partake of their meal, and with Willshire seated on one pack, and I on another, we enjoyed it as much as the most professed epicure would a venison feast. At length, weary with the exertions of the day, I withdrew some yards, and laying my head on a stone, fell asleep, notwithstanding the pain of my arm, and the dampness of the ground. In the middle of the night I awoke, and the moon shining brightly, I discovered my bedfellows; on one side a dead Frenchman, whose features appeared more ghastly from the shining of the moon; and on the other a wounded Portuguese in a dying state, weltering in his blood and literally biting the dust. I sat up to contemplate the fearful scene around me, the solemn stillness of the midnight hour, the sleeping soldiery, who lay
apparently as motionless as the corpses which covered the ground. These scenes afforded ample scope for thought for one who had so narrowly escaped being among the latter.

At break of day we again commenced our pursuit of the routed enemy, but were unable again to come up with them, as they marched the whole night and passed the River Tormes at Alba de Tormes two hours after daybreak. In our line of march the whole road and on each side of it was covered with dead bodies. The Light Division and German cavalry having harassed the enemy in every direction, the latter in a most successful charge compelled 2,000 of them to lay down their arms. The enemy in passing Alba de Tormes had set fire to two large convents, which were flaming away as we passed through the town. The bridge was now covered with the dead bodies of men and horses, the French having defended this point obstinately during the night.

The regiment entered Madrid on the 13th of August and took part in the unsuccessful siege of the Castle of Burgos, which was raised on the 21st of October.

On the 25th there was a sortie by the garrison, in which Captain Willshire and the Light Companies of the Brigade defended the village and bridge of Muriel. The Thirty-eighth found winter quarters in several villages near Lamego on the Douro. Ensign George Freer continues his Diary of the events after the battle of Salamanca as follows:

At Valladolid Captain Willshire and myself were quartered in the house of a priest with a family, which of course he ought not to have had, a shrewd, sensible man; and having had connections in England, he had contracted more of our living and manners. His house was furnished more in our fashion than any I had seen, his chairs stuffed and his floors carpeted; nevertheless, he had adhered to the national custom of having his stable under his sitting room, probably in order to secure
SOME ORDERS AND MEDALS OF GENERAL SIR THOMAS WILLSHIRE, G.C.B.
and defend the horses and mules in dangerous times, when it was needful to fly suddenly.

On the following morning we marched to Cabezon, about three leagues from Valladolid, [where] the sides of the hills flanking the River Douro are covered with vines; and on arrival at Torquemada we learned that the [British] army had raised the siege of Burgos, and was coming down in full retreat. At one o’clock in the morning we marched in order to come up with it in case it was engaged. The enemy was advancing rapidly on our rear, and our being the covering Division, it became necessary to halt in order to check them. Lord Wellington coming up to us at this time blurted out, “They are coming too forward and must be driven back.” The General of my Brigade answered, “My Lord, I will take care of that.” The French had crossed a river and were advancing up the hill on which we were posted. A dry canal ran parallel to the river at the foot, further than which orders were given not to drive the French, of six-fold number; but the impetuosity of the men charging down hill could not be suppressed, and we drove them through the river up to the mouths of their guns, within 50 yards of which we had a Captain, Forster, killed, being actually cut in two parts by a cannon ball. In retiring through the river we suffered considerably, but gaining the dry canal we kept the enemy from advancing for more than two hours. Whilst in this situation, occupying the dry canal, one of our officers, Major Evens, having a paper in his pocket which contained his own promotion, took it out to view his good fortune, frequently raising his eyes to the bank to watch the course of the enemy till a ball severed his head from his body, and I saw the paper which contained the account of his promotion and a reward for his merits and sufferings, dyed with his blood.

We now regained the hill and joined the main body of the army. The weather now became fearfully rainy, the roads being filled
with water, the ground a sea of mud, on which, having no baggage, every night we lay. We retraced our steps to Cabezon, where we remained two days defending its pass, with harassing night piquets. From these heights the movements of the whole French army, 80,000 men, might be seen. At night we had one pound of beef, which those in good health, meeting round the watchfires, toasted upon ramrods, and, having no other beverage, took draughts of muddy water, and laid ourselves down to sleep; my pillow being the old and friendly stone. The weather continued intolerably bad, pouring with incessant rain. On the third day, two hours before daybreak, we again commenced our retreat, marching this day 34 miles, crossing the deepest part of the country, and fording rivers the whole day. Nature was nearly exhausted, I having had but a small portion of biscuit the day before. On the next day's march, while passing through a thick wood, we were surprised to find the French on both our flanks. This compelled a double-quick through the thickest of the forest. On arriving at the camping ground that night I found that my baggage had been taken by the enemy, with the baggage of four others. This circumstance was the more distressing to me, as I had only a pair of worn-out boots, and had now no means of replacing them, so that I literally marched many days with my feet bleeding on the stones. Poor Willshire suffered as much as myself, for his baggage mule was also taken, and the various hardships had brought on an ague and fever. During the day he had gone to bring up another detachment, which, however, had found its way by another route, and suddenly found himself in imminent danger of being made prisoner. He had no alternative but to swim a deep river in order to join our lines, no very pleasant cure for ague and fever, with no change of clothes at night. Such are the delights of a soldier's life.

The day following we were pressed on every side by the over-
whelming numbers of the enemy. In crossing the fords one or more regiments showed their front and defended the pass, whilst the others crossed; this being done alternately. As soon as a regiment came out of the water it formed, and the one passing through retreated. The enemy at length got several pieces of cannon to annoy us at these fords. Under all this we had marched a distance of four or five and twenty miles, through woods, mire, mud and water, till at length we halted in a wood within cannon shot of the enemy, a narrow river being between us. The recollection of this memorable night will never be erased from my memory. Wearied with the exertions of the day and fasting, having tasted nothing for twenty-four hours, I attempted to sleep standing against a tree, as the ground was thick mud. We had no provisions given out, and at last, nature requiring assistance, I lay down and for a short time was lost in sleep, having procured a canteen on which to lay my head. We had orders to be under arms at one o'clock the next morning, which we were, but owing to the badness of the road and the difficulties to be surmounted in front, it was daylight before we had marched two miles.

This was more tedious than ordinary marching, for we were compelled to keep on our feet, although every five minutes we could only move a few yards.

The next day's march was like the preceding. It rained the whole day and the road was covered with wrecks of all descriptions, artillery, baggage wagons, arms, men, horses and mules. At night we halted on the side of a hill, a pound of meat, half a pound of bread, and two ounces of rice made us for a time forget that we had no friendly covering to save us from the chill night dews and falling rain. Willshire had a large cloak, of which he insisted on my taking part, but it may be guessed this was no luxurious covering for two, each of us being 6 feet high. On the second day after this we offered the enemy battle with our whole force, but as they
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did not think proper to accept, we continued our course, till we again reached the heights of St. Christoval, and saw the spires of Salamanca. Here we expected to make a stand, and oppose the hosts and masses which had long been distressing us. We formed batteries along the heights, and prepared to defend ourselves. I was again appointed acting engineer, and was employed in throwing up works to cover a village and a high road leading to our lines. At all hours, day and night, Lord Wellington was on the alert to ascertain personally how matters were progressing. He was the first person I saw at break of day; long before anyone else was moving he rapidly viewed the construction and angles of the batteries, and expressed to me his satisfaction at the expedition with which they had been constructed. I had at first thought in the twilight it was an ordinary Major-General or officer of Brigade and was almost confused when I observed his prominent features and recognised the voice of the Commander-in-Chief.  

These batteries, however, were not made use of, for in the afternoon in which they were completed we again set in motion and lay outside the city walls. At dusk we had a pound of bread and our ration of beef given out, but were not allowed time to cook it, as we were immediately ordered to continue our retreat, which we did all the night till about two in the morning. I had scarcely ever smoked, nor had my friend and messmate, Captain Willshire, but on this occasion I had purchased in Salamanca a pipe and some tobacco, for which Captain Willshire afterwards thanked me, declaring he thought it saved our lives by keeping off the pressure of hunger and thirst during this fearful night and till the next day, when we were halted. My friend had purchased in Salamanca two sheepskins and a blanket, on the former of which we both lay, and were covered with the same blanket, counting it a luxury which we had not enjoyed for a long time. To our sorrow, in the morning we were obliged to leave them behind.
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us, having no means to carry them. Captain Willshire's servant had procured some cabbages, and we were expecting our rations of beef and anticipating a decent meal; but no rations coming, we sat on the ground and finished every leaf of the cabbages, looking at each other when we had done. I have since often laughed outright at the memory of this scene. Willshire was a grave man, and his gravity over the cabbages has often presented itself to me.

It is well known that the overwhelming French Army had succeeded in turning our flank in consequence of the refusal of Ballesteros, the Spanish General, to co-operate with the Duke of Wellington—some said from jealousy. He did, however, allow the enemy, whose force was then inferior, to pass the Ebro unmolested, and to harass our rear down to the very confines of Portugal. It is useless to follow the daily monotonous detail of a retreat so replete with misery, and so disastrous in its consequences. The villages through which we passed were mostly deserted by their inhabitants, who had fled from fear of the French Army, of whom they had a most rooted horror. We again passed Ciudad Rodrigo, leaving it on our left hand. The enemy now began to relax in their pursuit, and did not advance beyond that town, but we still continued our march. My feet were become very sore and cut by the length of time I had marched without shoes, or rather without shoe-soles, for I still preserved the appearance of boots, aye, and made my servant clean them at any sufficient halt. Willshire was now quite as badly off as myself, and he would sometimes jokingly say, "Our Bond Street friends would cut us, but we should have excited pity in any other genus." I had not changed my linen since my baggage was lost, nor taken off my clothes for nearly a month.

When we marched into a miserable village called Campillo, on the extreme border of Portugal and Spain, we found it totally destroyed by the French on their former retreat. The
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unfortunate inhabitants were clinging to the bare walls of their native village, some of them covered by the skins of animals, others with a wretched temporary thatch. The village being small, and as I have said, so dilapidated, did not afford sufficient room even for the whole of our Regiment, so that at first each wing remained in camp, or in the houses on alternate days. When within doors we were so much crowded that it was almost impossible to lie down. Luckily for me, in the house I had chosen for the Grenadiers, I discovered in one corner a kneading-trough, about 6 feet in length, which I claimed, and it turned out very useful and formed no uncomfortable bed to keep me from too close contact with my soldiers round me. It would have shaken the risible muscles of a philosopher to have seen me issuing my orders from this rostrum of Diogenes.

The poverty of the surrounding country was such, and our supplies at so great a distance, that we were almost starving, added to which we could not enter upon the most fertile part of the country, within sight of the hills, as the French occupied every foothold. Fortunately we found, growing plentifully in the neighbourhood, acorns, the taste of which was something like a chestnut. These, either boiled or roasted over the fire, formed the chief part of our food at this time. Our stay here was, however, only ten days. Since this time I have often laughed at the thought of a scene which daily presented itself. Major Miles, afterwards Sir Edward, Captain Willshire, afterwards Sir Thomas, and myself, sitting round a wood fire, anxiously watching the roasting of these acorns on a shovel. Our duty, however, was not relaxed, although we were stationary. We were under arms every morning a quarter of an hour before daylight, and remained so half an hour, or at times longer. We had both inlying and outlying pickets and double guards, so we had enough to do.
GENERAL SIR THOMAS WILLSHIRE’S GRAND CROSS OF THE DOORANEE EMPIRE.
Here the diary of this gallant officer comes to an end, owing to the journal he kept after this date, including the two succeeding campaigns, having fallen into the hands of the French, a circumstance which, I feel sure my readers will agree, is much to be deplored. Nevertheless I am able to add some short memoranda written by him when recovering from wounds received at Bayonne, and these I will insert under the dates of the battles to which they refer.

On the 22nd of May, 1813, Wellington advanced from Portugal for the last time. The Thirty-eighth formed part of the force which, under Lieut.-General Sir Thomas Graham, afterwards Lord Lyndoch, traversed the mountainous districts of Tras-os-Montes, and passed the Esla, thus turning the enemy's line of defence on the Douro.

On June the 19th Wellington reached Bayas, where the French were drawn up in three lines behind the Zadorra. The Thirty-eighth suffered great privations in the long march.

On the 21st the Battle of Vittoria was fought, in which the Regiment greatly distinguished itself.

**George Freer's Note.**

June 21, 1813.—Victoria [sic] Part of the Action, led the Grenadiers—the latter part. The Artillery and Engineers becoming scarce, and I having been accustomed to act as Engineer, was called to that post, for a while directing and loading the guns—then again called to my Company and advanced in a charge three several times, wondrously escaping even a scratch.

On June 28th the French General Foy, after severe fighting, threw a garrison of 2,600 men into St. Sebastian, which was further strengthened by the garrison from Guetaria.

After July the 1st the Thirty-eighth traversed the country to Penosseneda, and Wellington then laid siege to St. Sebastian, where

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1 I am indebted to Colonel Gerald Freer, late R.A.M.C., for these notes from George Freer's original diary relating to St. Sebastian, which is in his possession.

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Captain John Willshire was mortally wounded whilst leading the stormers of the Thirty-eighth on August the 31st. He was buried in the cloisters of the Arsenal, which had been a church.

**George Freer’s Note.**

Aug. and Sep., 1813. St. Sebastian. Here, six weeks almost day and night under fire. On one occasion when as Acting Engineer was taking my men to work at the trenches, one of my nearest men, his head shot off and carried into an adjoining wall about six yards distant, and being dangerous to remove, it remained during the whole siege, grinning, as it were, at us every time we mounted guard or pickett.

First siege, after being under fire daily either on guard, or pickett, or Acting Engineer, for six weeks, made first attack. Was appointed with seventy men to a round bastion. It was partly blown up and we had to surmount with ladders. The breach was blown up, and many hundreds both of friends and foes with it. My battery blew up most properly, but the ladders had been omitted, and we stood powerless to ascend twenty feet. The scared enemy returned, and commenced to fire—the bugle sounded my recall. In the face of the re-encouraged enemy, I slowly retreated to the trenches, and, Deo Gracia, reached them, losing more than half my men in the movement. Was thanked in orders.

August 31, 1813. Taking of St. Sebastian.

**Action.**—Remained on the breach full half an hour exposed to every species of missile. Ordered to lie low, Artillery firing over our heads. Observing a window from the houses on the breach which had been lately stopped up with green or yellow mortar, drove it in—first entered the town and displayed my pocket handkerchief [elsewhere called “the English Flag”]. Held a house for a time—rushed up the street; in so doing, severely wounded in the knee and fell, but the work was done.
A later note adds—

I *First* entered the town from an aperture from the upper breach. Planted a kind of flag, *i.e.*, a pocket handkerchief, Allison has untruly and unjustly given this act to another, though every officer in the Division admitted it.

On October the 7th the Regiment crossed the Bidassoa, Major Willshire commanding the Light Companies of the Brigade and was the first man to cross.

The Thirty-eighth was at the Battle of Nivelle on the 10th of November and took part in several actions on the Nive on the 9th, 10th, and 11th of December. It was also at Tarbes, Orthes, and Toulouse.

During the investment of Bayonne, Captain Forster of the Thirty-eighth saved a great disaster, by holding a fortified house.

**GEORGE FREER'S NOTE.**

Dec. 1813. Before Bayonne; had scarcely recovered from my former wound, again wounded, ball passing through my left thigh, slightly splintering the bone in its passage.

Thanked in Public Orders.

Suffered much from this wound, lay on my back for nine months, when I was able to be brought to England.

"Oh! War, War, when wilt thou be commanded to cease?"—G. F.

The Regiment was quartered at Cork in 1814, and afterwards at Kinsale, in which year the Second Battalion was disbanded. The Thirty-eighth landed on the Continent in June, 1815, but too late to take part at Waterloo.

It subsequently marched to Paris and was in the Fourth Brigade under Sir Charles Greville, and on the 24th of August in the Twelfth British Brigade, Second Division, under the same Brigadier.

In December, 1815, it returned to England and was quartered at Hastings, later proceeding to Portsmouth, and in November to Gloucester.
The Thirty-eighth Regiment of Foot

The Regiment was remarkable for its good conduct whilst in home quarters, and on the 26th of January, 1818, it was presented with a complimentary resolution by the city of Gloucester.

In June, 1818, under Colonels Deane and Miles, it embarked at Plymouth for the Cape of Good Hope, where it remained until the early part of 1822.

On April the 22nd, 1819, an attack was made on Grahamstown by a native chief, and Colonel Willshire, being in command, fought and defeated the enemy. For this he received a letter of appreciation from the Commander of the Forces at Government House, Capetown, on the 14th of May. Colonel Willshire built a fort some 45 miles from Grahamstown, which received his name.

Early in 1822 the Regiment embarked for Calcutta, and later was brigaded in Burmah under Colonel Robert Sale, doing good service in the actions before Prome on the 1st and 2nd of December, 1824. It was also at the capture of Mellown on the 19th of January, 1826, when the Commanding Officer, Major Frith, was wounded, and at the battle of Pagahon-mew on the 9th of February, when the Regiment was led to the assault of a stockade by Sir Willoughby Cotton, who had witnessed its prowess in the Peninsula. Of some 900 men, the Thirty-eighth lost 525 during this war, but chiefly from sickness.

The Regiment returned to England on the 18th of May, 1836, having during its service since 1818 lost a total of 43 officers and more than 1,200 men. In May, 1837, it proceeded to Ireland, and whilst quartered at Enniskillen on the 13th of February, 1839, being the anniversary of the formation of the Regiment and the 137th year since it was embodied, new Colours were presented to it.

In September, 1840, the Thirty-eighth embarked for Zante in the Mediterranean, and in March, 1843, proceeded to Gibraltar. In November, 1845, and January, 1846, it was removed to Jamaica, and in April and May, 1848, to Halifax.

The Thirty-eighth returned home and landed at Portsmouth on the 26th of August, 1851, and on the 24th and 25th of April, 1854, embarked for the Crimea.
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It was engaged at Alma on the 20th of September, at Inkerman on the 5th of November, and at the capture of the Cemetery, under General Eyre, on the 18th of June, 1855—the only success achieved on that day by our troops. The strength of the Regiment on embarkation from England was 32 officers and 910 men, and it secured in reinforcements 33 officers and 756 men. Of these, 3 officers and 486 men were killed or died of their wounds, and 23 officers and 260 men were invalided home. On the 1st of April, 1856, shortly before leaving the Crimea, the strength of the Thirty-eighth was 36 officers and 901 men.

The Regiment embarked for England on the 26th of June, and in August proceeded to Ireland, whence on the 31st of July and the 1st of August, 1857, it again embarked for India. Although not yet in India when the Mutiny broke out, the Thirty-eighth was in the Third Infantry Brigade under Brigadier P. M. M. Grey, with the Thirty-fourth and the Fifty-third Foot, in the Second Division under General Sir E. Lingard, K.C.B., at Lucknow, from the 2nd to the 21st of March, 1858, when the Brigade lost 2 killed and 32 wounded.

This Regiment formed part of the River Column on the Nile under Colonel Eyre in Major-General Earle's Column, and on the 28th of December, 1884, embarked 545 of all ranks in fifty boats at Sarras.

The Column returned from Hamdab on the 24th of January, 1885. On February the 10th Kirbekan was reached, where General Earle was killed on that date, and soon afterwards the enemy was attacked by the Thirty-eighth and the Black Watch, when Colonel Eyre was killed. Colonel Beale then took over the command of the Regiment, which had lost 3 officers and 9 men killed, and 44 men wounded, out of 1,200.

On March the 4th one boat was wrecked and a sergeant and two men were drowned in endeavouring to pass the Fourth Cataract. On the 5th of March the Column moved on to Abri-Dom, where it was redistributed. The bulk of the troops went on to Korti and the command was handed over on March the 8th.

Of the regiments forming this expedition, the officer commanding,
Major-General Brackenbury, reported to Lord Wolseley: Their
discipline was beyond reproach, and I do not hesitate to say that no
finer, more gallant, or more trustworthy body of men served the Queen
than those I have had the honour to command in the River Column.

In the South African War the Thirty-eighth was in the Seventeenth
Brigade, under Major-General G. E. Boyes, and in the Eighth Division
of Lieutenant-General Sir H. M. L. Rundle's Column.

A Mounted Infantry Detachment was with Rundle in the North
Eastern Free State at Mooimeisjerust, under Major Williams in
temporary command, but did not take part in any important battles.

At the present time\(^1\) the 1st Battalion is at Pietermaritzburg.

**THE COLOURS.**

From the Army List the South Staffordshire Regiment, which
includes the Thirty-eighth, First Battalion, is entitled to bear on the
Colours the following:—

The Sphinx, superscribed Egypt.

**Guadaloupe 1759, Martinique 1762, Monte Video, Roleia,
Vimiera, Corunna, Busaco, Badajoz, Salamanca, Vittoria,
St. Sebastian, Nive, Peninsula, Ava, Moodkee*, Feroze-
shuhur, Sobraon*, Regu*, Alma, Inkerman, Sebastopol,
Lucknow, Central India*, South Africa* 1878–79, Egypt
1882, Nile 1884–85, Kirbe-Kan, South Africa 1900–02.**

The honours starred belong to the Eightieth Foot only, the
Second Battalion.

**NOTES ON A FEW OF THE MEDALS AND DECORATIONS AWARDED TO
THE THIRTY-EIGHTH AND THOSE WHO EARNED THEM.**

For the following notes I am mainly indebted to Carter's *Medals
of the British Army*:\—

**The French Military War Medal**, awarded for the Crimean
War to a proportion of the English troops, may be described

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\(^1\) This paper was written early in 1914.—EDITOR.
as follows:—The Imperial eagle in gold surmounts the medal, the obverse bearing the head of the Emperor, with the words LOUIS NAPOLEON in gilt letters on a blue enamelled circle within a wreath of laurel in silver. The reverse has the words VALEUR ET DISCIPLINE on a gold ground within a circle of blue enamel and wreath of silver laurel. The ribbon is orange, with a broad green stripe on the edges.

The following men of the Thirty-eighth all served throughout the Crimean War, and were awarded this medal:—

Sergeant-Major Patrick McFadden.—Did his duty well in the trenches, and was particularly distinguished for his conduct on the 18th of June, 1855, in the attack on the Cemetery.

Private John Walsh.—Particularly engaged in repelling a sortie on the 20th of December, 1854, when the conduct of his Company was commended in Divisional Orders.

Private Robert Longheed.—Did his duty well in the trenches, and volunteered for the advance guard on the 18th of June, 1855.

Corporal Thomas Brennan.—Engaged in the repulse of the sortie of the 20th of December, 1854, and was distinguished particularly on the 18th of June, 1855.

Sergeant Andrew Clarke.—Distinguished on the 18th of June, 1855, wounded, and always a good soldier in the field.

Private Michael Murphy.—Distinguished himself in the repulse of the sortie of the 20th of December, 1854.

Private Benjamin Newhall.—Was a volunteer sharp-shooter in the beginning of the siege, and present and wounded in the attack on the Cemetery on the 18th of June, 1855.

Private William Moore.—Distinguished himself on the 18th of June, 1855, and received three wounds on that day, from one of which he lost his arm from the socket.

Private James Blackmoore.—Particularly distinguished himself on the night of the 20th of December, 1854, in the repulse of a sortie, and proved himself a good soldier.
THE KING OF SARDINIA'S MEDAL FOR MILITARY VALOUR.

Four hundred of these medals were presented to the British Troops, both officers and men. It has a watered blue ribbon. On the reverse are the arms, the white cross of Savoy, and crown of Sardinia, with a branch of laurel and of palm, and the inscription AL VALORE MILITARE. The reverse bears two laurel branches with the words SPEDIZIONE D'ORIENTE, and the date 1855-1856.

The following officers and men of the 38th received this medal:—

Staff Brevet-Major Archibald Campbell Snodgrass.—Was present at Alma and Inkerman, the Expedition to KERTCH, and Siege of Sebastopol, and was severely wounded at the assault on the Redan on the 18th of June, 1855, as Aide-de-camp to Major-General Sir John Campbell, K.C.B. He rejoined the regiment on his recovery, and served with it to the end of the war.

Lieutenant-Colonel James Pattoun Sparks, C.B., and Brevet-Lieutenant-Colonel William James Loftus.—Eastern Campaign of 1854-5; the Alma, and the whole of the Siege of Sebastopol; also engaged in the attack on the Cemetery on the 18th of June, 1855.

Lieutenant Constantine William Septimus Gaynor.—Rendered good and zealous service in the trenches before Sebastopol, until he was wounded severely by a rifle ball on the 21st of February, 1855.

Lieutenant Arthur Johnson Allix Ewen.—Was in the advance on the 18th of June, 1855, and in the attack and capture of the Cemetery by the Second Brigade, Third Division.

Privates P. McGuire and T. Reynolds.—Both were in the advance on the 18th of June, 1855, in the attack and capture of the Cemetery. McGuire was one of those who searched close under the Russian batteries, and though severely wounded in the left hand, remained at his post during the whole day, firing
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on the Russian embrasures; and Private Reynolds always behaved well in the trenches during the siege.

The Legion of Honour was awarded to certain officers.

The Turkish War Medal, which was of silver, was awarded to all officers. The ribbon, which is narrow, is watered pink, with light green edges. On one side are the four flags of France, Turkey, England, and Sardinia, and beneath is a map of the Crimea spread over a gun wheel, which rests upon the Russian flag; cannons and mortars, etc., are arranged about. The word CRIMEA and the date, 1855, are below. On the other side is the Sultan's cypher, beneath which is inscribed Crimea in Turkish, and lower still is the year of the Hegira, 1271, corresponding with the year 1855. There is a variation in the flags in those medals intended for the Sardinian forces, the flag of that country being placed next to that of Turkey, and the wording varied to LA CRIMEA. The medal issued to the French has the flag of that nation next to that of Turkey, corresponding with the Sardinian and British, and is inscribed LA CRIMÉE. They were, however, hopelessly mixed on issue.

The Crimean Medal of silver, designed by Wyon, has on its obverse the portrait of Queen Victoria from the die of the Peninsular medal, the reverse bearing Fame about to place a wreath upon the brows of a hero in classic military costume, with the word CRIMEA near the rim. The clasps are of silver and are severally inscribed ALMA, BALACLAVA, INKERMAN, and SEBASTOPOL.

The 38th are entitled to all these bars except the second, and the ribbon is of a pale blue with a yellow edge.

Regimental.—Dr. Payne, in his British and Foreign Orders, War Medals, and Decorations, records, page 203, a silver-gilt
medal, one and a half inches in diameter, with a raised double border, and loop for suspension. Obverse, the royal monogram of George III., a crown above, and XXXVIII REGT. below. Reverse, 38 REGT. TO A DESERVING SOLDIER AS A TOKEN OF FAITHFUL AND MERITORIOUS SERVICE.

APPENDIX.

SILHOUETTE OF GEORGE FREER WHEN HE SAILED FOR THE PENINSULA AT THE AGE OF EIGHTEEN.

George Freer was the eighth child of William Leacroft Freer, of Stourbridge, Worcestershire, surgeon, who was born in 1755 and died in May, 1812, shortly before his son sailed for the Peninsula, and Anna Maria Freer, daughter of Edward Hickman,1 of The Castle, Old Swinford, near Stourbridge, and of Wyken, near Coventry, a magistrate for Worcestershire, who were married at Old Swinford in 1774. Mrs. Freer survived until January the 11th, 1843.

George Freer was born in June, 1794, and joined the Thirty-eighth Regiment in 1812, being attached to its Grenadier Company.

1 See Fletcher's Pedigrees and Royal Descents, pp. 142-3.
The actions in which, as he tells us in his memoranda, he was "personally and actively engaged" were—

1. "Alba de Tormes, at the age of eighteen." See his diary, already quoted.
2. Forts of Salamanca. See his diary.
3. "Action of Salamanca. In leading my company through a village, Garnera Mayor, wounded in the arm, but wrapped it up and still advanced." See also his account in the diary.
4. Orduna.
5. Vittoria. See his memorandum already quoted. It will be noticed that the chronological order is not always correct in the memoranda.
6, 7, and 8. "On the advance to Burgos, three small encounters."
9. "On the retreat from Burgos, had to protect the rear guard."
10. "The ensuing summer, a slight action, on advance the French flying before us; I think the place was called Pintrel."
11. Siege of St. Sebastian. See his memoranda, already quoted in full.
12. Storming of St. Sebastian. Wounded in the knee, but first to enter the fort, and for this he was awarded £100. See his memoranda.
15. Bidassoa.
17. Orthes.

Of the above actions only six were the subject of bars to the Peninsular medal, and therefore George Freer's medal bears SALAMANCA, VITTORIA, ST. SEBASTIAN, NIVELLE, and NIVE, but BIDASSOA is engraved upon its fastener. The sixth battle in the list,
for which bars were awarded, was Orthes, and it is curious that it should be absent from the medal.

At the close of the war Freer retired from the service, probably being induced to do so by the effects of his serious wound at Bayonne. This veteran of many battles then entered Cambridge University and took his degree; later he was ordained and appointed Vicar of Yaxley, Huntingdonshire, in 1828. He was twice married, firstly to Charlotte, daughter of Richard Postle, of Norfolk, and secondly to Hannah Bennett, widow of J. Whitehouse, of Clent, near Stourbridge.

Major R. H. H. Jary, late Twelfth Lancers, and Freer’s nephew by marriage, tells the story that when, in 1847, he was presented to the Duke of Wellington on applying for a commission, the Duke remarked: “I hope you will be as good a soldier as Mr. Freer.”

George Freer died at Sparkbrook, Birmingham, on the 28th of September, 1870, leaving by his first marriage a daughter, Elizabeth, who was married to the Rev. George Witherby in 1861. To her Freer’s medal descended, and upon her death in 1898 she devised it to Colonel Gerald Dudley Freer, R.A.M.C., “wishing him to keep it for his son, my godchild, George Francis Dudley Freer,¹ till he is old enough to take charge of it, that it may be kept in the Freer family, which was my father’s wish.”²

¹ Now a Midshipman in the Royal Navy, and, as these pages go to press, awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for conduct at Gallipoli.