

**"UBIQUE": OR, ENGLISH
COUNTRY QUARTERS,
AND EASTERN BIVOUAC**

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"Ubique": Or, English Country Quarters, and Eastern Bivouac by John William Clayton

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JOHN WILLIAM CLAYTON

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“UBIQUE:”

OR,

English Country Quarters, and Eastern Hibouac.

BY

JOHN WILLIAM CLAYTON,
LATE CAPTAIN 182ND LIGHT DRAGOONS;
AUTHOR OF “LETTERS FROM THE HILL.”

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CHARLES J. SKEET, KING WILLIAM STREET,
CHABING CROSS.
1857.

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PREFACE.

HAVING met with success in my small production of "Letters from the Nile," such as surpassed my most sanguine expectations, I venture once again to entrust a few more pages to the leniency of those who tolerated my first attempt at authorship, trusting that they will find in my second effort the means of beguiling an idle hour, and so command the lasting gratitude of the author.

JOHN WILLIAM CLAYTON.

London, Nov., 1837.

“UBIQUE.”

ENGLISH COUNTRY QUARTERS, AND EASTERN BIVOUAC.

CHAPTER I.

THE START.

At length we started on the road to glory, our small reinforcement detachment for the gallant —th Light Dragoons in the Crimea, and with Heaven shining upon our departure, with the gentle sunshine and laughing skies of the first joyous outburst of summer, we could not but feel our spirits wild and exhilarated at being so brilliantly escorted upon the outset of our expedition. So, to make a beginning of this narrative after the most approved fashion. It was a lovely morning, calm in the birth of summer; everything seemed brightly happy, fresh and moist with the tears of a passing

shower, that had wept itself away, and the pure blossoms and wild flowers smiled in all the gladness and poetry of nature, sending forth, as if in gratitude, their offerings of sweetest odours to the Heavens which had given them life. And the glorious meads, rich pastures, and broad lands, with the undulating slopes of waving woods, tinged with the early rays of the morning sun, spread widely before us upon leaving our old quarters, the town of D——. There were the happy cottage homes, breathing of peace and contentment; there the fine old feudal hall, standing in melancholy grandeur, surrounded by majestic and giant oaks, whose venerable branches shaded the startled deer, looking wistfully and timidly at the unusual intruders. Oh, the stately woods, the flowing rivers and fairy pleasure-grounds of merry England, should alone make us proud that we are her children, and exclaim with the poet, "Oh! where is the coward that would not dare to fight for such a land?"

But to proceed. Although the enthusiastic parting of the good-natured populace of D——

fell somewhat gratefully upon the ears of our little warrior band, we fear we were not all so grieved at our departure as we perhaps ought to have been; for though D—— was very healthy, it was decidedly dull—dull as a hack cab in the middle of Salisbury Plain on a wet Sunday afternoon. We had been for four months vegetating and stagnating like a pond at the side of a road, growing gradually torpid and morbid, inasmuch as our very intellects would soon have become impaired by our four months' calm interment in such a "living tomb." Some one has said somewhere, "Crescit enim cum amplitudine rerum vis ingenii,"* and has certainly told the truth, at all events for once in his life, for exercise is as necessary for the mind as it is for the body; and unfortunately, during two months of deep snow, the military Nimrods found none for either. One, more inglorious than the rest, thought of a recipe for *ennui* in an expedient once practised by an author wanting ideas for his tragedy, who, after having gormandized

* "For the power of the intellect is increased by the amplitude of the things that feed it."

upon beefsteaks and lobster-salad, laid himself on the flat of his back, singing,

"Come, gentle sleep, ethereal mildness, come,"

and so relapsed into a state of torpor after the manner of a boa constrictor, although that more fortunate animal never has nightmares, while the author awoke with ideas horrible enough for a long series of tragedies and melodramas. But as soon as the snow melted, there was certainly then one never-failing mental resource of studying the character of this primeval abode and its fossil inhabitants; who, from their manners and customs, seemed like the relics of some extinct generation. The church bells were generally rung by means of ropes being tied to the clappers, while the female muffin worriers of the district usually started for tea-fights in sedan chairs; but how, with that peculiarly uneasy and elevating motion attending these conveyances, they can prevent their brains being knocked out by coming in contact with the roof, is a great matter of conjecture. It is a pretty well ascertained fact in "natural history" that men's feelings and nature, with-

out the gentle influence of his helpmate, "woman," are ruffled and tossed by fierce, rude, and unholy storms; but under the peaceful heaven of her pure affection, and in the holy calm of her sympathizing and enduring nature, the dark and angry clouds are dispelled, and the wild, impetuous, untamed spirit glides into serenity and repose. So here was a fearful emergency for "untamed spirits"—for there was only one young lady, uncommonly like a boiled sole, within three miles of the place, the great excitement being to watch her head appear out of her bedroom window every morning, adorned with a profusion of white curl-papers, looking excessively as if it had been dipped into a maggoty cheese. The remaining intellectual pursuits of this "ultima Thule" of civilization were agreeably diversified by rat-matches, badger-baiting, Ethiopian serenaders, and duck-shooting. During a nocturnal excursion of the latter, a sporting cornet once ventured too near a church-yard, and consequently had great difficulty in escaping being taken off to gaol by the beadle of the parish, for a body-snatcher. For our part,