

division of infantry, posted it on the mountain itself, in observation of the French light troops. Meanwhile the Duke of Albuquerque, discontented with Cuesta's arrangements, came, with his division, to Sir Arthur Wellesley, who placed him behind the British, thus displaying a formidable array of horsemen, six lines in depth.

Immediately after the failure of Ruffin's attack, King Joseph, having in person examined the whole position of the allies, from left to right, demanded of Jourdan and Victor if he should deliver a general battle. The former replied that the great valley and the mountain being unoccupied, on the 27th, Sir Arthur Wellesley's attention should have been drawn to the right by a feint on the Spaniards;* that, during the night, the whole army should have been silently placed in column, at the entrance of the great valley, ready at daybreak to form a line of battle, to the left, on a new front, and so have attacked the hill from whence Victor had been twice repulsed. Such a movement, he said, would have obliged the allies to change their front also, and during this operation, they might have been assailed with hopes of success. But this project could not now be executed; the English, aware of their mistake, had secured their left flank, by occupying the valley, and the mountain and their front were alike inattackable. "*Hence, the only prudent line was to take up a position on the Alberche, and await the effect of Soult's operations on the English rear.*"

Marshal Victor opposed this counsel; he engaged to carry the hill on the English left, notwithstanding his former failures, provided the fourth corps would attack the right and centre at the same moment; and he finished his argument by declaring that, if such a combination failed, "*it was time to renounce making war.*"

The King was embarrassed. His own opinion coincided with Jourdan's; but he feared that Victor would cause the Emperor to believe a great opportunity had been lost; and, while thus wavering, a despatch arrived from Soult, by which it appeared that his force could only reach Placentia between the 2d and 5th of August. Now, a detachment from the army of Venegas had already appeared near Toledo, that General's advanced guard was approaching Aranjuez; and the King was much troubled by the danger thus threatening Madrid, because all the stores, the reserve artillery, and the general hospitals of the whole army in Spain were deposited there; and, moreover, the tolls received at the gates of that town formed almost the only pecuniary resource of his court; so narrowly did Napoleon reduce the expenditure of the war. These considerations overpowered his judgment; adopt-

* Letter from Marshal Jourdan, MS.

ing the worse and rejecting the better counsel, he resolved to succor the capital, but, before separating the army, determined to try the chance of a battle. Indecision is a cancer in war: Joseph should have adhered to the plan arranged with Soult; the advantages were obvious, the ultimate success sure, and the loss of Madrid was nothing in the scale, because it could only be temporary; but, if the King thought otherwise, he should have decided to fight for it before; that is, he should have drawn the fifth corps to him, prepared his plan, and fallen, with the utmost rapidity, upon Cuesta, the 26th; his advanced guard should have been on the Alberche that evening, and, before 12 o'clock on the 27th, the English army would have been without the aid of a single Spanish soldier. But, after neglecting the most favorable opportunity, when his army was full of ardor, he now, with singular inconsistency, resolved to give battle, when his enemies were completely prepared, strongly posted, and in the pride of success, and when the confidence of his own troops was shaken by the partial action of the morning.

While the French generals were engaged in council, the men on both sides took some rest, and the English wounded were carried to the rear; but the soldiers were suffering from hunger; the regular service of provisions had ceased for several days, and a few ounces of wheat, in the grain, formed the whole subsistence of men who had fought, and who were yet to fight, so hardly. The Spanish camp was full of confusion and distrust. Cuesta inspired terror, but no confidence, and Albuquerque, whether from conviction or instigated by momentary anger, just as the French were coming on to the final attack, sent one of his staff to inform the English commander that Cuesta was betraying him. The aide-de-camp charged with this message delivered it to Colonel Donkin, and that officer carried it to Sir Arthur Wellesley. The latter, seated on the summit of the hill which had been so gallantly contested, was intently watching the movements of the advancing enemy; he listened to this somewhat startling message without so much as turning his head, and then drily answering—"Very well, you may return to your brigade," continued his survey of the French. Donkin retired, filled with admiration of the imperturbable resolution and quick penetration of the man; and, indeed, Sir Arthur's conduct was throughout that day such as became a general upon whose vigilance and interpidity the fate of fifty thousand men depended.

BATTLE OF TALAVERA.

The dispositions of the French were soon completed. Ruffin's division, on the extreme right, was destined to cross the valley, and moving by the foot of the mountain, to turn the British left.

Villatte's orders were to menace the contested height with one brigade, and to guard the valley with another, which, being strengthened by a battalion of grenadiers, connected Ruffin's movement with the main attack.

Lapissé, supported by Latour Maubourg's dragoons, and by the King's reserve, was instructed to pass the ravine in front of the English centre, and to fall, with half his infantry, upon Sherbrooke's division, while the other half, connecting its attack with Villatte's brigade, mounted the hill, and made a third effort to master that important point.

Milhaud's dragoons were left on the main road, opposite Talavera, to keep the Spaniards in check; but the rest of the heavy cavalry was brought into the centre, behind General Sebastiani, who, with the fourth corps, was to assail the right of the British army. A part of the French light cavalry supported Villatte's brigade in the valley, and a part remained in reserve.

A number of guns were distributed among the divisions, but the principal mass remained on the hill, with the reserve of light cavalry; where, also, the Duke of Belluno stationed himself, to direct the movements of the first corps.

From nine o'clock in the morning until mid-day, the field of battle offered no appearance of hostility; the weather was intensely hot, and the troops on both sides descended and mingled, without fear or suspicion, to quench their thirst at the little brook which divided the positions; but, at one o'clock in the afternoon, the French soldiers were seen to gather round their eagles, and the rolling of drums was heard along the whole line. Half an hour later, the King's guards, the reserve, and the fourth corps were descried, near the centre of the King's position, marching to join the first corps; and, at two o'clock, the table-land and the height on the French right, even to the valley, were covered with the dark and lowering masses. At this moment some hundreds of English soldiers, employed to carry the wounded to the rear, returned in one body, and were, by the French, supposed to be Sir Robert Wilson's corps joining the army; nevertheless, the Duke of Belluno, whose arrangements were now completed, gave the signal for battle, and eighty pieces of artillery immediately sent a tempest of bullets before the light troops, who, coming on with the swiftness and violence of a hail-storm, were closely followed by the broad, black columns, in all the majesty of war.

Sir Arthur Wellesley, from the summit of the hill, had a clear view of the whole field of battle; and first he saw the fourth corps rushing forwards, with the usual impetuosity of French soldiers, clearing the intersected ground in their front, and falling upon

Campbell's division with infinite fury; but that General, assisted by Mackenzie's brigade, and by two Spanish battalions, withstood their utmost efforts. The English regiments, putting the French skirmishers aside, met the advancing columns with loud shouts, and, breaking in on their front, and lapping their flanks with fire, and giving no respite, pushed them back with a terrible carnage. Ten guns were taken, but as Campbell prudently resolved not to break his line by a pursuit, the French instantly rallied on their supports, and made head for another attack; then the British artillery and musketry played vehemently upon their masses, a Spanish cavalry regiment charged their flank, and they retired in disorder: thus the victory was secured in that quarter.

But, while this was passing on the right, Villatte's division, preceded by the grenadiers, and supported by two regiments of light cavalry, was seen advancing up the great valley against the left, and, beyond Villatte, Ruffin was discovered marching towards the mountain. Sir Arthur Wellesley immediately ordered Anson's brigade of cavalry, composed of the twenty-third light dragoons and the first German hussars, to charge the head of these columns; these regiments, coming on at a canter, and increasing their speed as they advanced, rode headlong against the enemy, but, in a few moments, came upon the brink of a hollow cleft, which was not perceptible at a distance. The French, throwing themselves into squares, opened their fire; and Colonel Arentschild, commanding the hussars, an officer whom forty years' experience had made a master in his art, promptly reined up at the brink, exclaiming in his broken phrase, "*I will not kill my young mens!*" But in front of the twenty-third, the chasm was more practicable, the English blood hot, and the regiment plunged down without a check; men and horses rolling over each other in dreadful confusion; the survivors, still untamed, mounted the opposite bank by twos and threes, and Colonel Seymour being severely wounded, Major Frederick Ponsonby, a hardy soldier, rallied all who came up, and passing through the midst of Villatte's columns, which poured in a fire from each side, fell with inexpressible violence upon a brigade of French *chasseurs* in the rear. The combat was fierce but short. Victor had perceived the first advance of the English, and detached his Polish lancers, and Westphalian light-horse, to the support of Villatte; and these fresh troops coming up when the twenty-third, already overmatched, could scarcely hold up against the *chasseurs*, entirely broke them. Those who were not killed or taken, made for Bassecour's Spanish division, and so escaped, leaving behind two hundred and seven men and officers, or about half the number that went into action.

During this time, the hill, the key of the position, was again attacked, and Lapisse, crossing the ravine, pressed hard upon the English centre; his own artillery, aided by the great battery on his right, opened large gaps in Sherbrooke's ranks, and the French columns came close up to the British lines in the resolution to win; but they were received with a general discharge of all arms, and so vigorously encountered that they gave back in disorder. Under the excitement of the moment, the brigade of English guards, quitting the line, followed up their success with inconsiderate ardor, when the enemy's supporting columns and their dragoons advanced, the men who had been repulsed turned again, and the heavy French batteries pounded the flank and front of the guards.

Thus maltreated, the latter drew back, and, at the same time, the German legion, being sorely pressed, got into confusion. At this moment, although Hill's and Campbell's divisions on the extremities of the line held fast, the centre of the British was absolutely broken, and the fortune of the day seemed to incline in favor of the French, when, suddenly, Colonel Donellan, with the forty-eighth regiment, was seen advancing through the midst of the disordered masses. At first, it seemed as if this regiment must be carried away by the retiring crowds, but, wheeling back by companies, it let them pass through the intervals, and then resuming its proud and beautiful line, marched against the right of the pursuing columns, and plied them with such a destructive musketry, and closed upon them with such a firm and regular pace, that the forward movement of the French was checked. The guards and the Germans immediately rallied, a brigade of light cavalry came up from the second line at a trot, the artillery battered the enemy's flanks without intermission, the French wavered, lost their advantage, and the battle was restored.

In all actions there is one critical and decisive moment, which will give the victory to the general who knows how to seize it. When the guards first made their rash charge, Sir Arthur Wellesley, foreseeing the issue of it, had ordered the forty-eighth down from the hill, although a rough battle was going on there, and, at the same time, he directed Cotton's light cavalry to advance. These dispositions gained the day. The French relaxed their efforts by degrees, the fire of the English grew hotter, and their loud and confident shouts—sure augury of success—were heard along the whole line.

In the hands of a great general, Joseph's guards and the reserve, which were yet entire, might have restored the combat, but all combination was at an end on the French side; the fourth corps, beaten back on the left with the loss of ten guns, was in confusion; the

troops in the great valley on the right, amazed at the furious charge of the twenty-third, and awed by the sight of four distinct lines of cavalry still in reserve, remained stationary; no impression had been made on the hill; Lapisse was mortally wounded, his division gave way, and the whole army finally retired to the position from whence it had descended to the attack. This retrograde movement was covered by skirmishers and an increasing fire of artillery, and the British, exhausted by toil and want of food, and reduced to less than fourteen thousand sabres and bayonets, could not pursue. The Spanish army was incapable of any evolution, and about six o'clock all hostility ceased, each army holding the position of the morning. But the battle was scarcely over when, the dry grass and shrubs taking fire, a volume of flames passed with inconceivable rapidity across a part of the field, scorching, in its course, both the dead and the wounded.

On the British side, two generals, (Mackenzie and Langworth,) thirty-one officers of inferior rank, and seven hundred and sixty-seven sergeants and soldiers were killed on the spot; three generals, a hundred and ninety-two officers, three thousand seven hundred and eighteen sergeants and privates wounded. Nine officers, six hundred and forty-three sergeants and soldiers were missing; thus making a total loss of six thousand two hundred and sixty-eight, in the two days' fighting, of which five thousand four hundred and twenty-two fell on the 28th.

The French suffered more severely; nine hundred and forty-four, including two generals, were killed!* six thousand two hundred and ninety-four wounded, one hundred and fifty-six prisoners, furnished a total of seven thousand three hundred and eighty-nine men and officers, of which four thousand were of Victor's corps; ten guns were taken by General Campbell's division, and seven were left in the woods by the French.†

The Spaniards returned above twelve hundred men killed and wounded, but the correctness of the report was very much doubted at the time.

The 29th, at daybreak, the French army quitted its position, and before six o'clock was in order of battle on the heights of Salinas, behind the Alberche. That day, also, General Robert Craufurd reached the English camp, with the forty-third, fifty-second, and ninety-fifth regiments, and immediately took charge of the outposts. These troops, after a march of twenty miles, were in *bivouac* near Malpartida de Placentia, when the alarm caused by the Spanish fugitives spread to that part. Craufurd, fearing that the army was

* Marshal Jourdan, MS.

† Sémélé's Journal of Operations of the First Corps, MS.

pressed, allowed the men to rest for a few hours, and then, withdrawing about fifty of the weakest from the ranks, commenced his march, with the resolution not to halt till he reached the field of battle. As the brigade advanced, crowds of the runaways were met with, and although not all Spaniards, all propagating the vilest falsehoods: "*the army was defeated;*" "*Sir Arthur Wellesley was killed;*" "*the French were only a few miles distant;*" nay, some, blinded by their fears, affected even to point out the enemy's advanced posts on the nearest hills. Indignant at this shameful scene, the troops hastened, rather than slackened, the impetuosity of their pace, and leaving only seventeen stragglers behind, in twenty-six hours crossed the field of battle in a close and compact body; having in that time passed over sixty-two English miles, and in the hottest season of the year, each man carrying from fifty to sixty pounds weight upon his shoulders. Had the historian Gibbon known of such a march, he would have spared his sneer about the "delicacy of modern soldiers!"

OBSERVATIONS.

1. The moral courage evinced by Sir Arthur Wellesley, when, with such a coadjutor as Cuesta, he accepted battle, was not less remarkable than the judicious disposition which finally rendered him master of the field. Yet it is doubtful if he could have maintained his position had the French been well managed, and their strength reserved for the proper moment, instead of being wasted on isolated attacks during the night of the 27th, and the morning of the 28th.

A pitched battle is a great affair. A good general must bring all the moral, as well as the physical, force of his army into play at the same time if he means to win, and all may be too little. Marshal Jourdan's project was conceived in this spirit, and worthy of his reputation; and it is possible that he might have placed his army, unperceived, on the flank of the English, and then by a sudden and general attack have carried the key of his position, thus commencing his battle well; but Sir Arthur Wellesley's resources would not then have been exhausted. He had foreseen such an occurrence, and was prepared, by a change of front, to keep the enemy in check with his left wing and cavalry; while the right, marching upon the position abandoned by the French, should cut the latter off from the Alberche. In this movement the allies would have been reinforced by Wilson's corps, which was near Cazalegas, and the contending armies would then have exchanged lines of operation. The French could, however, have gained nothing, unless they won a complete victory, while the allies would.

even though defeated, have insured their junction with Venegas. Madrid and Toledo would thus have fallen to them, and before Soult could unite with Joseph, a new line of operations, through the fertile country of La Mancha, might have been obtained. But these matters are only speculative.

2. The distribution of the French troops for the great attack cannot be praised. The attempt to turn the English left with a single division was puerile. The allied cavalry was plainly to be seen in the valley; how, then, could a single division hope to develop its attack upon the hill, when five thousand horsemen were hanging upon its flank? and, in fact, the whole of Ruffin's, and the half of Villatte's division, were paralyzed by the charge of a single regiment. To have rendered this movement formidable, the principal part of the French cavalry should have preceded the march of the infantry; but the great error was fighting at all before Soult reached Placentia.

3. It has been said, that to complete the victory Sir Arthur Wellesley should have caused the Spaniards to advance; this would, more probably, have led to a defeat. Neither Cuesta nor his troops were capable of an orderly movement. The infantry of the first and the fourth corps were still above twenty thousand strong, and, although a repulsed, by no means a discomfited force; the cavalry, the King's guards, and Dessolle's division, had not been engaged at all, and were alone sufficient to beat the Spaniards; a second panic, such as that of the 27th, would have led to the most deplorable consequences, as those who know with what facility French soldiers recover from a repulse, will readily acknowledge.

The battle of Talavera was one of hard honest fighting, and the exceeding gallantry of the troops honored the nations to which they belonged. The English owed much to the General's dispositions and something to fortune. The French owed nothing to their commander, but when it is considered that only the reserve of their infantry were withheld from the great attack on the 28th, and that, consequently, above thirty thousand men were closely and unsuccessfully engaged for three hours with sixteen thousand British, it must be confessed that the latter proved themselves to be truly formidable soldiers; yet the greatest part were raw men, so lately drafted from the militia regiments that many of them still bore the number of their former regiments on their accoutrements.

CHAPTER VII.

The King goes to Illescas with the fourth corps and reserve—Sir R. Wilson advances to Escalona—Victor retires to Maqueda—Conduct of the Spaniards at Talavera—Cuesta's cruelty—The allied generals hear of Soult's movement upon Baños—Bassecour's division marches towards that point—The passes of Baños forced—Sir A. Wellesley marches against Soult—Proceedings of that Marshal—He crosses the Bejar, and arrives at Placentia with three *corps d'armée*—Cuesta abandons the British hospitals at Talavera to the enemy, and retreats upon Oropesa—Dangerous position of the allies—Sir Arthur crosses the Tagus at Arzobispo—The French arrive near that bridge—Cuesta passes the Tagus—Combat of Arzobispo—Soult's plans overruled by the King—Ney defeats Sir R. Wilson at Baños, and returns to France.

THE French rested the 29th at Salinas; but, in the night, the King marched with the 4th corps and the reserve to St. Ollalla, from whence he sent a division to relieve Toledo. The 31st, he halted. The 1st of August he marched to Illescas, a central position, from whence he could interpose between Venegas and the capital. The Duke of Belluno, with the first corps, remained on the Alberche, having orders to fall upon the rear-guard of the allies, when the latter should be forced to retire, in consequence of Soult's operations. Meantime, Sir Robert Wilson, who during the action was near Cazalegas, returned to Escalona, and Victor, displaying an unaccountable dread of this small body, which he supposed to be the precursor of the allied army, immediately retired, first to Maqueda, and then to Santa Cruz del Retamar; he was even proceeding to Mostoles, when a retrograde movement of the allies recalled him to the Alberche.

The British army was so weak, and had suffered so much, that the 29th and 30th were passed, by Sir Arthur, in establishing his hospitals at Talavera, and in fruitless endeavors to procure provisions, and the necessary assistance to prevent the wounded men from perishing. Both Cuesta and the inhabitants of Talavera possessed the means, but would not render the slightest aid, nor would they even assist to bury the dead; the corn secreted in Talavera was sufficient to support the army for a month, yet the starving troops were kept in ignorance of it, although the inhabitants, who had fled across the Tagus with their portable effects at the beginning of the battle, had now returned. It is not surprising that, in such circumstances, men should endeavor to save their property, especially provisions; but the apathy with which they beheld the wounded men dying for want of aid, and those who were sound sinking from hunger, did in no wise answer Mr. Frere's description

of them, as men who "*looked upon the war in the light of a crusade, and carried it on with all the enthusiasm of such a cause.*"

This conduct left an indelible impression on the minds of the English soldiers. From that period to the end of the war their contempt and dislike of the Spaniards were never effaced, and long afterwards, Badajoz and St. Sebastian suffered for the churlish behavior of the people of Talavera. The principal motive of action with the Spaniards was always personal rancor: hence, those troops who had behaved so ill in action, and the inhabitants, who withheld alike their sympathy and their aid from the English soldiers to whose bravery they owed the existence of their town, were busily engaged after the battle in beating out the brains of the wounded French as they lay upon the field; and they were only checked by the English soldiers, who, in some instances, fired upon the perpetrators of this horrible iniquity. Cuesta also gave proofs of his ferocious character: he, who had shown himself alike devoid of talent and real patriotism, he whose indolence and ignorance of his profession had banished all order and discipline from his army, and whose stupid pride had all but caused its destruction, now assumed the Roman general, and proceeded to decimate the regiments that had fled in the panic on the 27th. Above fifty men he slew in this manner; and if his cruelty, so contrary to reason and the morals of the age, had not been mitigated by the earnest intercession of Sir Arthur Wellesley, more men would have been destroyed in cold blood, by this savage old man, than had fallen in the battle.

Hitherto the allied generals had thought little of the Duke of Dalmatia's movements, and their eyes were still fixed on Madrid; but, the 30th, information was received at Talavera, that twelve thousand rations had been ordered, for the 28th, at Fuente Dueña by that Marshal, and twenty-four thousand at Los Santos, a town situated between Alba de Tormes and the pass of Baños.* Cuesta, conscious of the defenceless state of the latter post, suggested that Sir Robert Wilson should be sent there; but Sir Arthur Wellesley wished Wilson to remain at Escalona, to renew his intercourse with Madrid, and proposed that a Spanish corps should go: indeed, he still slighted the idea of danger from that quarter, and hoped that the result of the battle would suffice to check Soult's march. Cuesta rejected this proposal at the moment, and again on the 31st, when Sir Arthur renewed his application; but, on the 1st of August, it was known that Soult had entered Bejar; and, on the 2d, General Bassecour was detached by Cuesta to defend the Puerto de Baños, from which he was absent four long marches, while the enemy had been, on the 31st, within one march.

* Sir A. Wellesley's Correspondence, Parl. Papers, 1810.





Operations of the
BRITISH FRENCH & SPANISH ARMIES
in July & August 1809.

Drawn by Genl. Napier

The day that Bassecour marched, intelligence arrived that Soult had entered Placentia. Baños had been abandoned to the enemy without a shot; for the battalions from Bejar had dispersed, and those sent by Cuesta had been withdrawn to Almaraz by their General the Marquis de la Reyna, who also proclaimed that he would destroy the boat-bridge at that place. This news roused Cuesta; he proposed that half the allied army should march to the rear, and attack Soult. Sir Arthur Wellesley however refused to divide the English army, yet offered to go or stay with the whole; and, when the other desired him to choose, he answered that he would go, and Cuesta appeared satisfied.

On the night of the 2d August, letters were received from Wilson, announcing the appearance of the French near Nombella, whither he, unconscious of the effect produced by his presence at Escalona, had retreated with his infantry, sending his artillery to St. Roman, near Talavera. As Sir Arthur Wellesley could not suppose that Sir Robert Wilson's corps alone would cause the first corps to retire, he naturally concluded that Victor's design was to cross the Alberche at Escalona, crush Wilson, and operate a communication with Soult by the valley of the Tietar. As such a movement, if persisted in, would necessarily dislodge Cuesta from Talavera, Sir Arthur, before he commenced his march, obtained the Spanish General's promise that he would collect cars, for the purpose of transporting as many of the English wounded as were in a condition to be moved, from Talavera to some more suitable place. This promise, like all the others, was shamefully violated, but the British General had not yet learned the full extent of Cuesta's bad faith, and thinking that a few days would suffice to drive back Soult, marched, on the 3d of August, with seventeen thousand men, to Oropesa, intending to unite with Bassecour's division, and to fight Soult, whose force he estimated at fifteen thousand.

Meanwhile, Soult being, by the return of General Foy, on the 24th of July, assured of the King's concurrence in the combined movements to be executed, ordered Laborde, Merle, and La Houssaye to march from Zamora and Toro upon Salamanca and Ledesma, and to scour the banks of the Tormes.* The sixth corps was also directed upon the same place, and, the 25th, Soult repaired to Salamanca in person, intending to unite the three corps there. Hearing, however, of Victor's retrograde movement from the Alberche to the Guadarama, he desired Marshal Mortier to march, on the 28th, to Placentia, by Fuente Roble and Bejar, and he placed La Houssaye's and Lorge's dragoons under his command;

* S. Journal of Operations, 2d Corps, MS.

the remainder of the second corps and the light cavalry were to follow when the sixth corps should be in motion. This done, Soult wrote to the King, saying, "*My urgent desire is that your Majesty may not fight a general battle before you are certain of the concentration of all my forces near Placentia. The most important results will be obtained if your Majesty will abstain from attacking until the moment when a knowledge of my march causes the enemy to retrace his steps, which he must do, or he is lost.*"

The 29th, the fifth corps was at Fuente Roble; but information being received that Beresford, with an army, had reached Almeida on the 27th, the march was covered by strong detachments on the side of Ciudad Rodrigo. The long-expected convoy of artillery and ammunition for the second corps had, however, arrived in Salamanca the 29th; and Ney wrote, from Toro, that he also would be there the 31st.

The 30th, the fifth corps drove the Marquis de la Reyna from the pass of Baños, and took post at Aldea Nueva del Camina and Herbas; and the second corps, quitting Salamanca, arrived, the same day, at Siete Carrera.

The 31st, the fifth corps entered Placentia; the second corps reached Fuente la Casa, Fuente Roble, San Estevan, and Los Santos.

Placentia was full of convalescents, detachments, and non-combatants, and when the French arrived, about two thousand men, including five hundred of the Lusitanian legion, evacuated the town, taking the road to Moraleja and Zarza Mayor; yet four hundred sick men, following the enemy's accounts, were captured, together with a few stores. During these rapid marches, the French were daily harassed by the Spanish peasantry, the villages were deserted, the cavalry wandered far and near to procure subsistence, and several slight skirmishes and some pillage took place.

The 1st of August, the second corps passed the Col de Baños, and the head of the column entered Placentia, which was, like other places, deserted by the greatest part of the inhabitants. Vague reports that a battle had been fought between the 26th and 29th was the only intelligence that could be procured of the situation of the allies, and on the second, the advanced guard of the army marched to the Venta de Bazagona, while scouting parties were, at the same time, directed towards Coria, to acquire news of Marshal Beresford, who was now said to be moving along the Portuguese frontier.

The 3d of August, the fifth corps and the dragoons, passing the Tietar, reached Toril, the outposts were pushed to Cazatejada and Sierra de Requemedá, but the second corps remained at Placentia,

awaiting the arrival of the sixth corps, the head of which was now at Baños. Hence, on the 3d of August, the King and Sebastiani being at Illescas and Valdemoro, Victor at Maqueda, Cuesta at Talavera, Sir Arthur Wellesley at Oropesa, and Soult on the Tietar, the narrow valley of the Tagus was crowded in its whole length by the contending troops.

The allies held the centre, being only one day's march asunder, but their force, when concentrated, was not more than forty-seven thousand men. The French could not unite under three days, but their combined forces exceeded ninety thousand men, of which fifty-three thousand were under Soult.* This singular situation was rendered more remarkable by the ignorance in which all parties were as to the strength and movements of their adversaries. Victor and the King, frightened by Wilson's partisan corps of four thousand men, were preparing to unite at Mostoles, while Cuesta, equally alarmed at Victor, was retiring from Talavera. Sir Arthur Wellesley was supposed, by Joseph, to be at the head of twenty-five thousand British; and the former, calculating on Soult's weakness, was marching, with twenty-three thousand Spanish and English, to engage fifty-three thousand French; while Soult, unable to ascertain the exact situation of either friends or enemies, little suspected that the prey was rushing into his jaws. At this moment the fate of the Peninsula hung by a thread, which could not bear the weight for twenty-four hours, yet fortune so ordained that no irreparable disaster ensued.

At five o'clock in the evening of the 3d, it was known at the English head-quarters that the French were near Naval Moral, and, consequently, between the allies and the bridge of Almaraz.

At six o'clock, letters from Cuesta advised Sir Arthur that the King was again advancing, and that, from intercepted despatches addressed to Soult, it appeared that the latter must be stronger than was supposed; wherefore Cuesta said, that wishing to aid the English, he would quit Talavera that evening: in other words, abandon the British hospitals!

To this unexpected communication Sir Arthur replied that the King was still some marches off, and that Venegas should be directed to occupy him on the upper Tagus; that Soult's strength was exceedingly overrated, and Victor's movements not decided enough to oblige the Spanish army to quit Talavera; wherefore he required that Cuesta should at least wait until the next morning, to cover the evacuation of the English hospitals. But, before this communication reached Cuesta, he was in full march, and, at daybreak on the 4th, the Spanish army was descried moving, in several columns, down the valley towards Oropesa; Bassecour's division soon

* Appendix 30, § 4, Vol. I.

after joined it from Centinello, and, at the same time, the cavalry patrols found the French near Naval Moral.

Sir Arthur Wellesley having, by this time, seen the intercepted letters himself, became convinced that Soult's force was not overrated at thirty thousand; and the Duke of Dalmatia, who had also intercepted some English letters, learned that, on the first of August, the allies were still at Talavera, and ill-informed of his march. Thus, the one general perceived his danger and the other his advantage at the same moment.

Mortier was immediately ordered, by the Duke of Dalmatia, to take a position with the fifth corps at Cazatejada, to seize the boat-bridge at Almaraz, if it was not destroyed, and to patrol towards Arzobispo; the second corps was, likewise, directed upon the same place, and the head of the 6th entered Placentia. The further progress of the allies was thus barred in front; the Tagus was on their left; impassable mountains on their right; and it was certain that Cuesta's retreat would immediately bring the King and Victor down upon their rear. The peril of this situation was apparent to every soldier in the British ranks, and produced a general inquietude. No man felt the slightest confidence in the Spaniards, and the recollection of the stern conflict at Talavera, aided by a sense of exhaustion from long abstinence, depressed the spirits of men and officers. The army was, indeed, ready to fight, but all persons felt that it must be for safety, not for glory.

In this trying moment, Sir Arthur Wellesley abated nothing of his usual calmness and fortitude. He knew not indeed the full extent of the danger; but, assuming the enemy in his front to be thirty thousand men, and Victor to have twenty-five thousand others in his rear, he judged that to continue the offensive would be rash, because he must fight and beat those two marshals separately within three days, which, with starving and tired troops, inferior in number, was scarcely to be accomplished. To remain where he was, on the defensive, was equally unpromising; because the road from Talavera to Arzobispo led through Calera, in the rear of Oropesa, and thus Victor could intercept the only line of retreat; a battle must then be fought, in an unfavorable position, against the united forces of the enemy, estimated, as we have seen, to be above fifty thousand men. One resource remained: to pass the bridge of Arzobispo immediately, and take up a line of defence behind that river, before the French could seize the Col de Mirabete, and so cut off the road to Truxillo and Merida—a hard alternative; but the long-cherished error relative to Soult's weakness had dried up the springs of success, and left the campaign, like a withered stem, without fruit or foliage.

Cuesta doggedly opposed this project, asserting that Oropesa was a position suitable for a battle, and that he would fight there. Further concession to his humors would have been folly, and Sir Arthur sternly declared that he would move forthwith, leaving the Spanish General to do that which should seem meet to him; and, assuredly, this decided conduct saved the Peninsula, for not fifty, but ninety thousand enemies were at hand.

It was now six o'clock in the morning; the baggage and ammunition were already in motion for the bridge of Arzobispo, but the army, which had been reinforced by a troop of horse-artillery, and some convalescents that escaped from Placentia, remained in position for several hours, to cover the passage of stores and wounded men from Talavera, who had just arrived at Calera in the most pitiable condition. About noon, the road being clear, the columns marched to the bridge, and, at two o'clock, the whole army was in position at the other side; the immediate danger was averted, and the combinations of the enemy were baffled. During the passage, several herds of swine, which, following the custom of the country, had been feeding in the woods, under charge of the swineherds, were fallen in with, and the soldiers, instigated by hunger, broke their ranks, and ran in upon the animals as in a charge, shooting, stabbing, and, like men possessed, cutting off the flesh while the beasts were yet alive; nor can this conduct be much censured under the circumstances of the moment, although it was a severe misfortune to the poor peasants, whose property was thus destroyed.

From Arzobispo, the army moved towards Deleytosa, and General Craufurd's brigade, having six pieces of artillery attached, was directed to gain the bridge of Almaraz by a forced march, lest the enemy, discovering the ford below that place, should cross the river, and seize the Puerto de Mirabete. The roads were exceedingly rugged, and the guns could only be dragged up the Meza d'Ibor by the force of men; nevertheless, Craufurd reached his destination on the evening of the 5th, and the head-quarters were established at Deleytosa on the 7th, the artillery being at Campillo, the rear-guard occupying the Meza d'Ibor. The sick and wounded were then forwarded to Merida, but the paucity of transport was such, that Sir Arthur Wellesley was obliged to unload both ammunition and treasure carts for the conveyance of these unfortunate men. Meanwhile Soult, little thinking that his object was already frustrated, continued his march on the 5th, and Mortier took post at Naval Moral; the advanced guard entered Puebla de Naciada, and the patrols, scouring the roads to Oropesa and the bridge of Arzobispo, fell in with and were chased by the Spanish cavalry from Arzobispo; for Cuesta would not retire on the 4th, and was

in the act of passing the bridge when the French came in view. The movements were now hurried on both sides. Before dark, the Spanish army was across the Tagus, with the exception of a rear-guard, which remained on the right bank that evening, but it was driven across the river, on the morning of the 6th, by the fifth corps, which afterwards took post at Valdeveja and Puebla de Naciada. Ney also reached Naval Moral, and the second corps entered Gordo.

The 7th Mortier examined the Spanish position, and reported that Cuesta, having thrown up intrenchments, and placed twenty guns in battery, to rake the bridge, which was also barricadoed, had left two divisions of infantry and one of cavalry to hold the post, and withdrawn the rest of his army towards Meza d'Ibor. Hereupon Soult detached his light cavalry towards Talavera, to communicate with the King, and brought up the second corps to Arzobispo. Meanwhile the Duke of Belluno, having on the 5th ascertained the retreat of the allies from Talavera, retraced his steps, and entered that town on the 6th; thus the English wounded, left there, fell into his hands, and their treatment was such as might be expected from a gallant and courteous nation; between the British soldiers and the French there was no rancor, and the generous usages of a civilized and honorable warfare were cherished.

The 7th, Victor crossed the Tagus, at the bridge of Talavera, and pushed his advanced guard to Aldea Nueva de Balbaroya, on the left bank, within a few leagues of the Spanish position, which Soult was preparing to attack in front; for he had observed that, at a certain point, the Spanish horses when brought to drink came far into the stream; and the place being sounded in the night of the 7th, a deep but practicable ford was discovered about half a mile above the bridge.

The fifth and second corps and a division of the sixth were concentrated, to force this passage, early on the morning of the 8th; but Soult being just then informed of Victor's movement, and perceiving that Albuquerque had withdrawn the Spanish cavalry, leaving only a rear-guard in the works, judged that the allies were retreating; wherefore, without relinquishing the attack at Arzobispo, he immediately sent the division of the sixth corps back to Naval Moral, and at the same time transmitting a plan of the ford below Almaraz, directed Ney to cross the Tagus there, seize the Puerto de Mirabete, and be in readiness to fall upon the allies, as they came out from the defiles between Deleytosa and Truxillo. Meanwhile the heat of the day had induced Albuquerque to seek shelter for his horsemen in a wood near Azutan, a village about five miles from the bridge; and the Spanish infantry, keeping a bad

guard, were sleeping or loitering about without care or thought, when Mortier, who was charged with the direction of the attack, taking advantage of their want of vigilance, commenced the passage of the river.

COMBAT OF ARZOBISPO.

The French cavalry, about six thousand in number, were secretly assembled near the ford, and, about two o'clock in the day, General Caulaincourt's brigade suddenly entered the stream. The Spaniards, running to their arms, manned the batteries and opened upon the leading squadrons, but Mortier, with a powerful concentric fire of artillery, immediately overwhelmed the Spanish gunners; and Caulaincourt, having reached the other side of the river, turned to his right, and taking the batteries in reverse cut down the artillery-men, and dispersed the infantry who attempted to form. The Duke of Albuquerque, who had mounted at the first alarm, now came down with all his horsemen in one mass, but without order, upon Caulaincourt, and the latter was in imminent danger, when the rest of the French cavalry, passing rapidly, joined in the combat; one brigade of infantry followed at the ford, another burst the barriers on the bridge itself, and by this time the Spanish foot were flying to the mountains. Albuquerque's effort was thus frustrated, a general rout ensued, and five guns and about four hundred prisoners were taken.

Soult's intention being to follow up this success, he directed that the first corps should move, in two columns, upon Guadalupe and Deleytosa, intending to support it with the second and fifth, while the sixth corps crossed at Almaraz, and seized the pass of Mirabete. This would undoubtedly have completed the ruin of the Spanish army, and forced Sir Arthur to make a rapid and disastrous retreat; for so complete was the surprise and so sudden the overthrow that some of the English foragers also fell into the hands of the enemy; and that Cuesta's army was in no condition to have made any resistance, if the pursuit had been continued with vigor, is clear, from the following facts:

1. When he withdrew his main body from the bridge of Arzobispo to Peralada de Garbin, on the 7th, he left fifteen pieces of artillery by the road-side, without a guard. The defeat of Albuquerque placed these guns at the mercy of the enemy, who were, however, ignorant of their situation, until a trumpeter attending an English flag of truce, either treacherously or foolishly mentioned it in the French camp, from whence a detachment of cavalry was sent to fetch them off.

2. The British military agent, placed at the Spanish head-quar-

ters, was kept in ignorance of the action; and it was only by the arrival of the Duke of Albuquerque at Deleytosa, on the evening of the 9th, that Sir Arthur Wellesley knew the bridge was lost. He had before advised Cuesta to withdraw behind the Ibor river, and even now contemplated a partial attack to keep the enemy in check; but when he repaired in person to that General's quarter, on the 10th, he found the country covered with fugitives and stragglers, and Cuesta as helpless and yet as haughty as ever. All his ammunition and guns (forty pieces) were at the right bank of the Ibor, and of course at the foot of the Meza, and within sight and cannon-shot of the enemy, on the right bank of the Tagus; they would have been taken by the first French patrols that approached, but that Sir Arthur Wellesley persuaded the Spanish staff-officers to have them dragged up the hill, in the course of the 10th, without Cuesta's knowledge.

In this state of affairs the impending fate of the Peninsula was again averted by the King, who recalled the first corps to the support of the fourth, then opposed to Venegas. Marshal Ney, also, was unable to discover the ford below the bridge of Almaraz, and, by the 11th, the allies had re-established their line of defence. The head-quarters of the British were at Jaraicejo, and those of the Spaniards at Deleytosa: the former, guarding the ford of Almaraz, formed the left; the latter, occupying the Meza d'Ibor and Campillo, were on the right. The 12th, Cuesta resigned. General Eguia succeeded to the command, and at first gave hopes of a better co-operation, but the evil was in the character of the people. The position of the allies was, however, compact and central; the reserves could easily support the advanced posts; the communication to the rear was open, and, if defended with courage, the Meza d'Ibor was impregnable; and to pass the Tagus at Almaraz, in itself a difficult operation, would, while the Mirabete and Meza d'Ibor were occupied, have been dangerous for the French, as they would be inclosed in the narrow space between those ridges and the river.

The Duke of Dalmatia, thus thwarted, conceived that Sir Arthur Wellesley would endeavor to repass the Tagus by Alcantara, and so rejoin Beresford and the five thousand British troops under Catlin Craufurd and Lightburn, which were, by this time, near the frontier of Portugal. To prevent this, he resolved to march at once upon Coria, with the second, fifth, and sixth corps, threaten both Beresford's and Sir Arthur's communication with Lisbon, and, at the same time, prepare for the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo; but Marshal Ney absolutely refused to concur in this operation. He observed that Sir Arthur Wellesley was not yet in march for Alcantara; that it was exceedingly dangerous to invade Portugal in a hasty manner;

and that the army could not be fed between Coria, Placentia, and the Tagus; finally, that Salamanca being again in possession of the Spaniards, it was more fitting that the sixth corps should retake that town, and occupy the line of the Tormes to cover Castile. This reasoning was approved by Joseph, who dreaded the further fatigue and privations that would attend a continuance of the operations during the excessive heats, and in a wasted country; and he was strengthened in his opinion by the receipt of a despatch from the Emperor, dated Schönbrunn, the 29th of July, in which any further offensive operations were forbid, until the reinforcements which the recent victory of Wagram enabled him to send should arrive in Spain. The second corps was, consequently, directed to take post at Placentia; the fifth corps relieved the first at Talavera; and the English wounded being, by Victor, given over to Marshal Mortier, the latter, with a chivalrous sense of honor, would not permit his own soldiers, although suffering severe privations themselves, to receive rations until the hospitals were first supplied; the sixth corps was directed upon Valladolid, for Joseph was alarmed lest a fresh insurrection, excited and supported by the Duke del Parque, should spread over the whole of Leon and Castile.

Ney marched on the 11th; but, to his surprise, found that Sir Robert Wilson, with about four thousand men, part Spaniards, part Portuguese, was in possession of the pass of Baños. To explain this, it must be observed, that when the British army marched from Talavera on the 3d, Wilson, being at Nombella, was put in communication with Cuesta. He had sent his artillery to the army on the 3d, and on the 4th, finding that the Spaniards had abandoned Talavera, he fell back with his infantry to Vellada, a few miles north of Talavera. He was then twenty-four miles from Arzobispo, and, as Cuesta did not quit Oropesa until the 5th, a junction with Sir Arthur Wellesley might have been effected; but it was impossible to know this at the time, and Wilson, very prudently, crossing the Tietar, made for the mountains, trusting to his activity and local knowledge to escape the enemy. Villatte's division pursued him, on the 5th, to Nombella; a detachment from the garrison of Avila was watching for him in the passes of Arenas and Monbeltran; and General Foy waited for him in the Vera de Placentia. Nevertheless, baffling his opponents, he broke through their circle at Viandar, passed the Gredos at a ridge called the Sierra de Lanes, and, getting into the valley of the Tormes, reached Bejar: from thence, thinking to recover his communications with the army, he marched towards Placentia, by the pass of Baños, and thus, on the morning of the 12th, met with Ney, returning to the Salamanca country.

The dust of the French column being seen from afar, and a

retreat to Ciudad Rodrigo open, it is not easy to comprehend why Sir Robert Wilson should have given battle to the sixth corps. His position, although difficult of approach, and strengthened by the piling of large stones in the narrowest parts, was not one in which he could hope to stop a whole army; and, accordingly, when the French, overcoming the local obstacles, got close upon his left, the fight was at an end; the first charge broke both the legion and the Spanish auxiliaries, and the whole dispersed. Ney continued his march, and having recovered the line of the Tormes, resigned the command of the sixth corps to General Marchand, and returned to France. But, while these things happened in Estremadura, La Mancha was the theatre of more important operations.

CHAPTER VIII.

Venegas advances to Aranjuez—Skirmishes there—Sebastiani crosses the Tagus at Toledo—Venegas concentrates his army—Battle of Almonacid—Sir Arthur Wellesley contemplates passing the Tagus at the Puente de Cardinal, is prevented by the ill-conduct of the Junta—His troops distressed for provisions—He resolves to retire into Portugal—False charge made by Cuesta against the British army refuted—Beresford's proceedings—Mr. Frere superseded by Lord Wellesley—The English army abandons its position at Jaraceijo and marches towards Portugal—Consternation of the Junta—Sir A. Wellesley defends his conduct, and refuses to remain in Spain—Takes a position within the Portuguese frontier—Sickness in the army.

WHEN the Duke of Belluno retired from Salinas to Maqueda, the King, fearing that the allies were moving up the right bank of the Alberche, carried his reserve, in the night of the 3d, to Mostoles; but the fourth corps remained at Illescas, and sent strong patrols to Valdemoro. Wilson, however, retired, as we have seen, from Nombella, on the 4th; and the King, no longer expecting the allies in that quarter, marched in the night to Valdemoro, where he was joined by the fourth corps from Illescas.

The 5th, the Duke of Belluno returned to St. Ollalla; and the King marched against General Venegas, who, in pursuance of the secret orders of the Junta, before mentioned, had loitered about Danyel and Tembleque until the 27th of July. It was the 29th before Venegas reached Ocaña, his advanced posts being at Aranjuez, his rear-guard at Yepes, and one division, under Lacy, in front of Toledo; the same day, one of the *partidas*, attending the army, surprised a small French post on the other side of the Tagus, and Lacy's division skirmished with the garrison of Toledo

The 30th, Venegas heard of the battle of Talavera, and at the same time Lacy reported that the head of the enemy's columns were to be seen on the road beyond Toledo. Hereupon, the Spanish commander reinforced Lacy, and gave him Mora as a point of retreat; but, on the 2d of August, being falsely informed by Cuesta that the allied troops would immediately march upon Madrid, Venegas recalled his divisions from Toledo, pretending to concentrate his army at Aranjuez, in order to march also upon the capital; yet he had no intention of doing so, for the Junta did not desire to see Cuesta, at the head of sixty thousand men, in that city, and, previous to the battle of Talavera, had not only forbidden him to enter Madrid, but appointed another man governor. This prohibition would, no doubt, have been disregarded by Cuesta, but Venegas was obedient to their secret instructions, and under pretence of danger to his flanks, if he marched on the capital, remained at Aranjuez, where, his flank being equally exposed to an enemy coming from Toledo, he yet performed no service to the general cause.

The 3d, he pushed an advanced guard to Puente Largo, and leaving six hundred infantry and some cavalry near Toledo, concentrated his army between Aranjuez and Ocaña. In this position he remained until the 5th, when his advanced guard was driven from the Puente Largo, and across the Tagus; his line of posts on that river was then attacked by the French skirmishers, and, under cover of a heavy cannonade, his position was examined by the enemy's generals: but when the latter found that all the bridges above and below Aranjuez were broken down, they resolved to pass the Tagus at Toledo. With this intent the French army recrossed the Xarama river, and marched in the direction of that city; but Venegas still keeping his posts at Aranjuez, foolishly dispersed his other divisions at Tembleque, Ocaña, and Guardia. He himself was desirous of defending La Mancha; the Central Junta, with more prudence, wished him to retreat into the Sierra Morena; but Mr. Frere proposed that his army should be divided, one part to enter the Morena, and the other to march by Cuenca upon Aragon, and so to menace the communications with France! The admirable absurdity of this proposal would probably have caused it to be adopted, if Sebastiani's movements had not put an end to the discussion. That General, crossing the Tagus at Toledo, and at a ford higher up, drove the Spanish left back upon the Guazalate, on the 9th of August; on the 10th, Venegas concentrated his whole army at Almonacid, and, holding a council of war, resolved to attack the French on the 12th. The time was miscalculated; Sebastiani advanced on the 11th, and commenced

THE BATTLE OF ALMONACID.

The army of Venegas, including two thousand five hundred cavalry, was somewhat more than twenty-five thousand strong, with forty pieces of artillery. It was the most efficient Spanish force that had yet taken the field; it was composed of the best regiments in Spain, well armed and clothed, and the generals of divisions were neither incapacitated by age, nor destitute of experience, most of them having been employed in the previous campaign. The village of Almonacid was in the centre of the Spanish position, and, together with some table-land in front of it, was occupied by two divisions of infantry under General Castejon. The left wing, under General Lacy, rested on a hill which covered the main road to Consuegra. The right wing, commanded by General Vigodet, was drawn up on some rising ground covering the road to Tembleque. A reserve, under General Giron, and the greatest part of the artillery, were posted behind the centre, on a rugged hill, crowned by an old castle. The cavalry were placed at the extremity of each wing.

General Dessolles, with the French reserve, was still some hours' march behind, but Sebastiani, after observing the dispositions made by Venegas, resolved to attack him with the fourth corps only. The Polish division immediately marched against the front, Laval's Germans turned the flank of the hill, on which the Spanish left was posted, and two French brigades were directed upon the centre. After a sharp fight, the Spanish left was put to flight; Venegas, however, outflanked the victorious troops with his cavalry, and charging, threw them into disorder; but at this moment, the head of Dessolles' column arrived, and enabled Sebastiani's reserves to restore the combat. The Spanish cavalry, shattered by musketry, and by the fire of four pieces of artillery, was in turn charged by a French regiment of horse, and broken. Venegas rallied his troops again on the castle-hill, behind the village; but the King came up with the remainder of the reserve, and the attack was renewed. The Poles and Germans continued their march against the left flank of the Spaniards, nine fresh battalions fell upon their centre, and a column of six battalions forced the right; the height and the castle were thus carried at the first effort. Venegas attempted to cover his retreat, by making a stand in the plain behind; but two divisions of dragoons charged his troops before they could re-form, and the disorder became irremediable; the Spaniards, throwing away their arms, dispersed in every direction, and were pursued and slaughtered by the horsemen for several hours.

Following the French account, three thousand of the vanquished were slain, and four thousand taken prisoners; and all the guns, baggage, ammunition, and carriages fell into the hands of the victors, whose loss did not exceed fifteen hundred men. The remnants of the defeated army took shelter in the Sierra Morena. The headquarters of the fourth corps were then established at Aranjuez; those of the first at Toledo, and the King returned in triumph to the capital.

The Anglo-Spanish army, however, still held its positions at Deleytosa and Jaraicejo, and Sir Arthur Wellesley was not, at the first, without hopes to maintain himself there, or even to resume offensive operations; for he knew that Ney had returned to Salamanca, and he erroneously believed that Mortier commanded only a part of the first corps, and that the remainder were at Toledo.* On the other hand, his own strength was about seventeen thousand men; Beresford had reached Moraleja with from twelve to fourteen thousand Portuguese; and between the frontier of Portugal and Lisbon there were at least five thousand British troops, composing the brigades of Catlin Craufurd and Lightburn. If Soult invaded Portugal, the intention of the English General was to have followed him. If the French remained in their present position, he meant to recross the Tagus, and, in conjunction with Beresford's troops, to fall upon their right at Placentia. For his own front he had no fear; and he was taking measures to restore the broken arch of the Cardinal's bridge over the Tagus, with a view to his operation against Placentia, when the misconduct of the Spanish government and its generals again obliged him to look solely to the preservation of his own army.

From the 23d of July, when the bad faith of the Junta, the apathy of the people in Estremadura, and the wayward folly of Cuesta had checked the forward movements of the British, the privations of the latter, which had commenced at Placentia, daily increased. It was in vain that Sir Arthur, remonstrating with Cuesta and the Junta, had warned them of the consequences; it was in vain that he refused to pass the Alberche until the necessary supplies were secured; his reasonings, his representations, and even the fact of his having halted at Talavera, were alike disregarded by men who, judging from their own habits, concluded that his actions would also be at variance with his professions.† If he demanded food for his troops, he was answered by false statements of what had been, and falser promises of what would be done; the glorious services rendered at Talavera, far from exciting the gratitude or calling forth the activity of the Spanish authorities, seemed only to render them

* Parliamentary Papers, 1810. † Appendix 3.

the more perverse. The soldiers in the ranks were weakened by hunger, the sick were dying for the want of necessary succors, the commissaries were without the means of transport; and when Sir Arthur Wellesley applied for only ninety artillery horses to supply the place of those killed in the action, Cuesta, on the very field of battle, and with the steam of the English blood still reeking in his nostrils, refused this request; two days after, he abandoned the wounded men to an enemy that he and his countrymen were hourly describing as the most ferocious and dishonorable of mankind.

The retreat of the allies across the Tagus increased the sufferings of the troops, and the warmth of their General's remonstrances rose in proportion to the ill treatment they experienced; but the replies, nothing abating in falseness as to fact, now became insulting both to the General and his army: "*The British were not only well, but over supplied;*"—"they robbed the peasantry, pillaged the villages, intercepted the Spanish convoys, and openly sold the provisions thus shamefully acquired;"—"the retreat of the army across the Tagus was unnecessary; Soult ought to have been destroyed; and the English General must have secret motives for his conduct, which he dare not avouch;"—and other calumnies of the like nature.

Now, from the 20th of July to the 20th of August, although the Spaniards were generally well fed, the English soldiers had not received ten full rations. Half a pound of wheat in the grain, and, twice a week, a few ounces of flour, with a quarter of a pound of goat's flesh, formed the sole subsistence of men and officers; and this scanty supply was procured with much labor, for the goats were to be caught and killed by the troops. It was, perhaps, upon this additional hardship that the accusation of selling provisions was founded, for, in such cases, it is in all armies the custom that the offal belongs to the men who slaughter the animals; but the famine in the camp was plainly proved by this very fact; for a goat's offal sold, at this time, for even three or four dollars, or about double the usual price of the whole animal, and men and officers strove to outbid each other for the wretched food.

It has been said that the British soldiers are less intelligent in providing for themselves, and less able to sustain privations of food, than the soldiers of any other nation. This is one of many vulgar errors which have been promulgated respecting them. That they should be constantly victorious, and yet inferior to all other nations in military qualification, does not, at first sight, appear a very logical conclusion; but the truth is, that, with the exception of the Spanish and Portuguese, who are, undoubtedly, more sober, the English soldiers possess all the most valuable military qualities in

as high, and many in a much higher degree than any other nation. They are as rapid and as intelligent as the French, as obedient as the Germans, as enduring as the Russians, and more robust than any; and, with respect to food, this is sure, that no man, of any nation, with less than two pounds of solid food, of some kind, daily, can do his work well for any length of time. A general charge of pillaging is easily made and hard to be disproved, yet it is certain that the Spanish troops themselves did not only pillage, but wantonly devastate the country, and that without any excuse, for, with the exception of the three days succeeding the defeat of Arzobispo, their rations were regular and sufficient. With respect to the interruption of their convoys by the British soldiers, the reverse was the fact. *The Spanish cavalry intercepted the provisions and forage destined for the English army, and fired upon the foragers, as if they had been enemies.**

Before the middle of August there were, in the six regiments of English cavalry, a thousand men dismounted, and the horses of seven hundred others were unserviceable; † the baggage animals died in greater numbers; the artillery cattle were scarcely able to drag the guns, and one third of the reserve ammunition was given over to the Spaniards, because the ammunition carts were required for the conveyance of sick men, of which the number daily increased. Marshal Beresford experienced the same difficulties in the neighborhood of Ciudad Rodrigo. ‡ The numerous desertions that took place in the Portuguese army, when it became known that the troops were to enter Spain, prevented him from taking the field as soon as he had expected; but, in the last days of July, being prepared to act, he crossed the Portuguese frontier, and, from that moment, the usual vexatious system of the Spaniards commenced. Romana still continued at Coruña; the Duke del Parque was full of mighty projects, and indignant that Beresford would not blindly adopt his recommendations. Both generals were ignorant of the real strength of the French; but the Spaniard was confident, and insisted upon offensive movements, while Beresford, a general by no means of an enterprising disposition when in the sole command of an army, contented himself with taking up a defensive line behind the Agueda. In this he was justified—first, by his instructions, which obliged him to look to the pass of Perales and the defence of the frontier line; secondly, by the state of his army, which was not half organized, and without horsemen or artillery; thirdly, by the conduct of the Spanish authorities.

The Portuguese troops were not only refused provisions, but those which had been collected by Sir Arthur Wellesley, and put

* Appendix 14.

† Parliamentary Papers, 1810.

‡ Appendix 18.

into the magazines at Ciudad Rodrigo, with a view to operate in that quarter, were seized by the cabildo, as security for a debt pretended to be due for the supply of Sir John Moore's army. The claim itself was of doubtful character, for Cradock had before offered to pay it if the cabildo would produce the voucher for its being due, a preliminary which had not been complied with. There was also an English commissary at Ciudad Rodrigo, empowered to liquidate that, and any other just claim upon the British military chest; but the cabildo, like all Spaniards, mistaking violence for energy, preferred this display of petty power to the interests of the common cause. Meanwhile, Soult having passed the Sierra de Gredos, by the Baños, Beresford, moving in a parallel direction, crossed the Sierra de Gata, at Perales; reached Moraleja about the 12th of August, and having rallied the troops and convalescents cut off from Talavera, marched to Salvatierra, where he arrived the 17th, and took post behind the Elga, covering the road to Abrantes.

Such was the state of affairs when the Supreme Junta offered Sir Arthur Wellesley the rank of Captain-General, and sent him a present of horses; and when he, accepting the rank, refused the pay as he had before refused that of the Portuguese government, they pressed him to renew offensive operations; but, acting as if they thought the honors conferred upon the General would amply compensate for the sufferings of the troops, the Junta made no change in their system. Sir Arthur Wellesley was, however, now convinced that Spain was no longer the place for a British army. He relinquished the notion of further operations in that country, sent his cavalry to the neighborhood of Caceres, broke down another arch of the Cardinal's bridge, to prevent the enemy from troubling him, and, through the British ambassador, informed the Junta that he would immediately retire into Portugal.

This information created the wildest consternation; for, in their swollen self-sufficiency, the members of the government had hitherto disregarded all warnings upon this subject, and now acting as, in the like case, they had acted the year before with Sir John Moore, they endeavored to avert the consequences of their own evil doings by vehement remonstrances and the most absurd statements:—"The French were weak, and the moment most propitious for driving them beyond the Pyrenees;" "the uncalled-for retreat of the English would ruin the cause;" and so forth. But they had to deal with a general as firm as Sir John Moore; and, in the British ambassador, they no longer found an instrument suited to their purposes. Lord Wellesley, a man with too many weaknesses to be called great, but of an expanded capacity, and a genius at

once subtle and imperious, had come out on a special mission, and Mr. Frere, whose last communication with the Junta had been to recommend another military project, was happily displaced; yet, even in his private capacity, he made an effort to have some of the generals superseded; and the Junta, with a refined irony truly Spanish, created him *Marquis of UNION*.

At Cadiz, the honors paid to Lord Wellesley were extravagant and unbecoming, and his journey from thence to Seville was a scene of triumph; but these outward demonstrations of feeling did not impose upon him beyond the moment; his brother's correspondence and his own penetration soon enabled him to make a just estimate of the Junta's protestations. Disdaining their intrigues, and fully appreciating a general's right to direct the operations of his own army, he seconded Sir Arthur's remonstrances with firmness, and wisely taking the latter's statements as a guide and basis for his own views, urged them upon the Spanish government with becoming dignity.

The Junta, on their part, always protesting that the welfare of the British army was the principal object of their care, did not fail to prove very clearly, upon paper, that the troops, ever since their entry into Spain, had been amply supplied; and that no measures might be wanting to satisfy the English General, they invested Don Lorenzo Calvo, a member of their body, with full powers to draw forth and apply all the resources of the country to the nourishment of both armies. This gentleman's promises and assurances relative to the supply, were more full and formal than M. de Garay's, and equally false. He declared that provisions and forage, in vast quantities, were actually being delivered into the magazines at Truxillo, when, in fact, there was not even an effort making to collect any. He promised that the British should be served, although the Spanish troops should thereby suffer, and, at the very time of making this promise, he obliged the alcaldes of a distant town to send into the Spanish camp provisions which had been already purchased by an English commissary. In fine, Lord Wellesley had arrived too late; all the mischief that petulance, folly, bad faith, violence, and ignorance united, could inflict, was already accomplished, and, while he was vainly urging a vile, if not a treacherous government, to provide sustenance for the soldiers, Sir Arthur withdrew the latter from a post where the vultures, in their prescience of death, were already congregating.

The 20th, the main body of the British army quitted Jaraicejo, and marched by Truxillo upon Merida. The light brigade, under Craufurd, being relieved at Almaraz by the Spaniards, took the road of Caceres to Valencia de Alcantara; but the pass of Mira-

bete bore ample testimony to the previous sufferings of the troops. Craufurd's brigade, which, only three weeks before, had traversed sixty miles in a single march, were now with difficulty, and after many halts, able to reach the summit of the Mirabete, although only four miles from their camp; and the side of that mountain was covered with baggage, and the carcasses of many hundred animals that died in the ascent.

When the retreat commenced, the Junta, with the malevolence of anger engendered by fear, calumniated the man to whom, only ten days before, they had addressed the most fulsome compliments, and to whose courage and skill they owed their own existence. "*It was not the want of provisions,*" they said, "*but some other motive that caused the English General to retreat.*" This was openly and insultingly stated by Garay, by Eguia, and by Calvo, in their correspondence with Lord Wellesley and Sir Arthur; and at the same time the Junta industriously spread a report that the true reason was their own firm resistance to the ungenerous demands of the English ministers, who had required the cession of Cadiz and the island of Cuba, as the price of further assistance. But the only firmness they had shown, was in resistance to the just demands of their ally. At Talavera, Sir Arthur Wellesley had been forced to give over to the Spaniards the artillery taken from the enemy; at Meza d'Ibor, he had sacrificed a part of his ammunition to obtain conveyance for the wounded men; and to effect the present movement from Jaraicejo without leaving his sick behind, he was obliged to abandon all his parc of ammunition and stores; then, however, the Spanish generals, who had refused the slightest aid to convey the sick and wounded men, immediately found ample means to carry off all these stores to their own magazines. In this manner, almost bereft of baggage and ammunition, those soldiers, who had withstood the fiercest efforts of the enemy, were driven, as it were, ignominiously from the country they had protected to their own loss.

The 24th, the head-quarters being at Merida, a despatch from Lord Wellesley was received. He painted in strong colors the terror of the Junta, the distraction of the people, the universal confusion; and with a natural anxiety to mitigate their distress, he proposed that the British army should, notwithstanding the past, endeavor to cover Andalusia, by taking, in conjunction with the Spanish army, a defensive post behind the Guadiana, in such manner that the left should rest on the frontier of Portugal; to facilitate this he had, he said, presented a plan to the Junta for the future supply of provisions, and the vicinity of the frontier and of Seville would, he hoped, obviate any difficulty on that point. But

he rested his project entirely upon political grounds, and it is worthy of observation, that he, who for many years had, with despotic power, controlled the movements of immense armies in India, carefully avoided any appearance of meddling with the General's province.

"I am," said he, "fully sensible not only of the *indelicacy*, but of the inutility of attempting to offer to you any opinion of mine in a situation where your own judgment must be your best guide. Viewing, however, so nearly, the painful consequences of your immediate retreat into Portugal, I have deemed it to be my duty to submit to your consideration the possibility of adopting an intermediate plan." Let this proceeding be compared with Mr. Frere's conduct to Sir John Moore on a similar occasion.

On the receipt of this despatch, Sir Arthur Wellesley halted at Merida for some days; he was able in that country to obtain provisions, and he wished, if possible, to allay the excitement occasioned by his retreat; but he refused to co-operate again with the Spaniards. "Want," he said, "had driven him to separate from them, but their shameful flight at Arzobispo would alone have justified him for doing so. To take up a defensive position behind the Guadiana would be useless, because that river was fordable, and the ground behind it weak. The line of the Tagus, occupied at the moment by Eguia, was so strong that if the Spaniards could defend anything, they might defend that. His advice, then, was that they should send the pontoon-bridge to Badajos, and remain on the defensive at Deleytosa and Almaraz. But, it might be asked," he said, "was there no chance of renewing the offensive? To what purpose? The French were as numerous, if not more so, than the allies; and, with respect to the Spaniards at least, superior in discipline and every military quality. To advance again was only to play the same losing game as before. Baños and Perales must be guarded, or the bands in Castile would again pour through upon the rear of the allied army; but who was to guard these passes? The British were too few to detach, and the Spaniards could not be trusted; and if they could, Avila and the Guadarama passes remained, by which the enemy could reinforce the army in front; for there were no Spanish troops in the north of Spain capable of making a diversion.

"But there was a more serious consideration, namely, the constant and shameful misbehavior of the Spanish troops before the enemy. We, in England," said Sir Arthur, "never hear of their defeats and flights, but I have heard Spanish officers telling of nineteen or twenty actions of the description of that at the bridge of Arzobispo, accounts of which, I believe, have never been pub-

lished. In the battle of Talavera," he continued, "in which the Spanish army, with very trifling exception, was not engaged, whole corps threw away their arms and ran off, when they were neither attacked nor threatened with an attack. When these dastardly soldiers run away, they plunder everything they meet. In their flight from Talavera, they plundered the baggage of the British army, which was, at that moment, bravely engaged in their cause."

For these reasons he would not, he said, again co-operate with the Spaniards; yet by taking post on the Portuguese frontier, he would hang upon the enemy's flank, and thus, unless the latter came with very great forces, prevent him from crossing the Guadiana. This reasoning was conclusive; but ere it reached Lord Wellesley, the latter found that so far from his plans relative to the supply having been adopted, he could not even get an answer from the Junta; that miserable body, at one moment shrinking with fear, at the next bursting with folly, now talked of the enemy's being about to retire to the Pyrenees, or even to the interior of France! and assuming the right to dispose of the Portuguese army as well as of their own, importunately pressed for an immediate, combined, offensive operation, by the troops of the three nations, to harass the enemy in his retreat! but, at the same time, they ordered Eguia to withdraw from Deleytosa, behind the Guadiana.

The 31st, Eguia reached La Serena, and Venegas having rallied his fugitives in the Morena, and being reinforced from the dépôts in Andalusia, the two armies amounted to about fifty thousand men, of which eight or ten thousand were horse, for, as I have before observed, the Spanish cavalry seldom suffered much. But the tide of popular discontent was now setting full against the central government. The members of the ancient Junta of Seville worked incessantly for their overthrow. Romana, Castaños, Cuesta, Albuquerque, all, and they were many, who had suffered dishonor at their hands, were against them; and the local Junta of Estremadura insisted that Albuquerque should command in that province. Thus pressed, the Supreme Junta, considering Venegas as a man devoted to their wishes, resolved to increase his forces. For this purpose they gave Albuquerque the command in Estremadura, yet furnished him with only twelve thousand men, and sent the remainder of Eguia's army to Venegas; at the same time, they made a last effort to engage the British General in their proceedings, offering to place Albuquerque under his orders, provided he would undertake an offensive movement. By these means they maintained their tottering power, but their plans, being founded upon vile political intrigues, could in no wise alter Sir Arthur Wellesley's determination, which was the result of enlarged military views.