

CHAP. X. corps of his army in bivouac, on a range of heights extending from Villa Franca on the Tagus, in an arc, almost concentric with that occupied by the allies. Part of Ney's corps was stationed at Otta and Villa Nova, and the remainder occupied the villages along the banks of the river. At this period, several partial affairs alone brought the armies into collision. On

1810.
October.

Oct. 14. the morning of the fourteenth, a sharp skirmish took place with the piquets near Zibreira, on the main road to Lisbon; and on the same day an attack was made on a redoubt at the foot of the mountain behind Sobral, which formed part of the British position. The garrison consisted of the seventy-first regiment, under the Honourable Lieutenant-Colonel Cadogan. The enemy advanced to the assault, and were bravely repulsed; but not satisfied with this success, the seventy-first advanced, in turn, and driving the French from a redoubt they had erected near that of the British, triumphantly maintained it.

This gallant exploit was performed in sight of both armies. Massena desisted from further efforts, and no event of any consequence occurred for several weeks. Of this period of inaction we shall take advantage, to offer a brief and

general description of the celebrated position occupied by the allies. CHAP. X.

1810.

Lisbon stands at the extremity of a peninsula, the neck of which is crossed by several rugged and mountainous chains, stretching from the Tagus in a semicircular direction towards the sea,—a distance of about thirty miles. Along these, considerably below the point where the river ceases to be fordable, two lines of defence had been selected,—one considerably in advance of the other,—both of the greatest natural strength. To add to their security the whole resources of military science had been lavished. Mountains were scarped perpendicularly; insignificant streams were dammed into inundations; forts of the most formidable description were erected on the heights; all roads by which the enemy could advance were broken up and obstructed, and at every part enfiladed with cannon; new ones were formed to facilitate the communications of the defensive army; the weaker points of the position were strengthened by the construction of works and retrenchments; batteries were planted on posts inaccessible; and every measure had been adopted by which the position could be rendered favourable for

CHAP. X. offensive operations, whenever such should be assumed.

1810.

The right of the first line rested on the village of Alhandra on the Tagus, and was flanked by a flotilla of gun-boats, which occasioned great annoyance to the enemy. The road leading to the town, which forms the principal approach to Lisbon, was completely broken up, and rendered impassable, by every obstruction which ingenuity could devise. This most important part of the position was occupied by the division of General Hill, with that of General Crawford on its left. General Spencer's division was in the centre; and General Picton's and General Cole's continued the line of defence from Torres Vedras to the sea.

Considerably in rear of the former, was a second line of defence, of features nearly similar, and possessing advantages of equal magnitude and importance. At different places a series of works had been erected, covering the communication between them; and thus, even had the first position been carried by the enemy, he would still have found his approach to the capital obstructed by a barrier of immense strength.

On the southern bank of the Tagus, the heights

commanding the city and anchorage of Lisbon, were fortified; and a corps, consisting chiefly of marines from the fleet, allotted to defend them. Strong retrenchments were likewise thrown up around Fort St. Julian at the entrance of the Tagus, in order to secure the embarkation of the army, should the enemy succeed in forcing the lines of Torres Vedras.

CHAP. X.

1810.

The whole extent of the position was strong in the most emphatic sense of that term. To call it impregnable would be idle, because no accessible position is so; but it certainly presented no avenue of approach, by which the enemy could elude encountering the full strength of the defensive army, or avoid being met by obstacles, which an immense numerical superiority could alone afford the prospect of combating with success.

Independently, however, of the circumstances to which we have alluded, another prominent advantage of the position yet remains to be noticed. To the westward of Sobral, a huge ridge called the Monte Junto takes its rise, and stretches in a long unbroken chain to the northward, for a distance of about fifteen miles. There were no roads by which this mountain could be

CHAP. X. traversed; and it unquestionably added greatly to the strength of the position occupied by the allies. In case of attack, the forces on the different sides of the Monte Junto could lend no support to each other, since, in order to communicate, it was necessary to make the *detour* of its northern extremity—a march of nearly two days. The communications of Lord Wellington, on the contrary, between every branch of his position, were secure and easy; and, in the course of a few hours, the great mass of his forces could be brought to the defence of any point the safety of which might be endangered.

Let us now cast a passing retrospect over the operations of the campaign. From the first, it was evidently the intention of Massena to break in, by the rapidity of his movements, on the defences of his opponent; to afford him no rest or breathing-time, but to force him at once to battle, or drive him headlong to his ships. So long as Regnier's corps remained in Estremadura, it was considered possible by Lord Wellington that Massena might push forward the main body of his army by Castello Branco and Abrantes. But, by that route, it would



have been necessary to force the strong position of Sarzedas, and the defences of the Zezere. Had he followed the road along the northern bank of the Mondego, he would have been met in the passes of the Estrella mountains, and at the Serra de Marcella. But the main object of Massena being to reach Lisbon, and by one decisive battle to terminate the campaign, he took the only route by which it was possible to advance, in rapid and uninterrupted march on the capital. True, he fought at Busaco; but his doing so, was a blunder of the first magnitude, and convinced of this error, he instantly resumed the prosecution of his project, by turning the left of the position, and continuing his advance. During his march he left no garrisons behind him; he occupied no posts even to secure his communication with Spain; but sacrificing every thing to the maintenance of his numerical superiority, in the anticipated battle, he pushed resolutely forward in pursuit of the allied army.

As he advanced, his difficulties increased. His communications with Spain were speedily cut off; the country through which he passed was deserted; the villages were tenantless; and



CHAP. X. for provisioning his army, he relied only on
1810. the supplies which Coimbra might afford.

The road by which Lord Wellington retired from Celorico to the Ponte de Marcella was greatly superior to that followed by the French. To prevent hurry and confusion in his movements, he had thrown his army across a difficult country, several stages in advance, and thus ensured the advantage of being able to intercept the enemy's advance. To afford still greater leisure for his movements, the bridges over the Dao and the Criz were destroyed by the light division; and the army, crossing the Mondego, halted in the position of Busaco. There his left flank was liable to be turned, and Lord Wellington knew it; but he knew also, should this manœuvre be adopted, that time would still be afforded for a leisurely retreat; and he wished to give confidence to his Portuguese troops, by braving the enemy's army, in a favourable position. Great moral advantages resulted from this victory. The retreat from Busaco to Torres Vedras was felt by all to be the march of a victorious army falling back on its resources. There was nothing fugitive in the

heart or spirit of the troops. The movement, though retrogressive, was attended by all the exhilaration of an advance. To the enemy it was an advance, but accompanied by all the depression of a previous defeat,—of increasing difficulties, and accumulating privations.

CHAP. X.
1810.
October.

With Lord Wellington's arrival at Torres Vedras, the hour of triumph came. It was a triumph of which the greatest General, of whom history bears record, might have been proud. It was the triumph of consummate skill, prudence, and foresight, and the more glorious, because to the victors it was bloodless. In all the other victories which Wellington has given to our annals, the courage, steadiness, and discipline of British troops, claim—and rightly claim—a large share of the awarded honour. Here it was all his own. The wreath of Waterloo may be divided; but the brows of Wellington alone can be encircled by that of Torres Vedras.

Massena had scarcely gone into position when he received intelligence that Coimbra, containing all his wounded, had been captured by a corps of Portuguese militia under Colonel Trant. Trant had marched to Mealhada with the view of joining the corps under General Miller, but not

CHAP. X.

1810.

October.

meeting him, and hoping to take the enemy by surprise, he resolved to advance alone against Coimbra. Near Fornos, he fell in with a French detachment, which he succeeded in cutting off and overpowering. The cavalry were then sent forward to occupy the road to Lisbon, while the infantry advanced against the town. The resistance of the garrison was trifling; and the place surrendered at discretion, on a promise that the French soldiers should be protected from the violence and insults of the peasantry. The number of prisoners amounted nearly to five thousand. Three thousand five hundred musquets were taken and distributed to the Ordenenza of the country. The greater part of the prisoners were conveyed by Trant to Oporto, and the corps of General Miller and Colonel Wilson remained at Coimbra. These continued to scour the country; and, in a few days, nearly four hundred of the enemy—chiefly stragglers from the foraging parties—were made prisoners. To this number, each succeeding day brought new additions, and the difficulty of Massena in provisioning his army daily increased. The several Portuguese corps at Ourem, Peniche, Obidos, Abrantes, and on the

frontiers of Beira, formed a complete and connected cord on every side, and intercepted the whole of his communications.

CHAP. X.

1810.

November.

In truth, the French army possessed nothing of the country but the ground on which it stood. Had the orders of the government for the destruction of all stores which could not be removed, been duly executed, it would have been impossible for the enemy to have remained above a week in his position. But in many cases, the grain, instead of being destroyed, had been concealed in pits, which were discovered either by the treachery of servants or the sagacity of French soldiers; and frequently the work of destruction had been delayed till the approach of the enemy rendered it impossible. It was from such sources that the supplies of the invading army were principally drawn.

Massena remained above a month in his position in front of Torres Vedras. The piquets of the armies were close to each other, but by tacit agreement no acts of hostility took place. About the beginning of November, the sick of his army increased so rapidly from exposure to the weather, and deficiency of provisions, that Massena detached the division of Delaborde to

CHAP. X. occupy Santarem, with the view of forming an
hospital, as well as to assist the foraging parties
1810. in that quarter. He likewise threatened A-
November. brantes, and occupied Villa Velha, with the in-
tention of crossing the Tagus. In order to pre-
vent this, General Fane, with a brigade of ca-
valry, was detached to the southward of the
river, with directions to advance along the mar-
gin of the river, and destroy all boats, built or
in process of building, within the reach of his
guns.

Nov. 14. At length, on the night of the fourteenth No-
vember, the French army broke up from its en-
campment, and retired to a line of cantonments
extending from Santarem to Thomar. The line
which had now been assumed by the enemy was
strong. The left flank was secure, being bound-
ed by the Tagus; and the cavalry was chiefly
posted on the right, which was without natural
support. An advanced corps was strongly en-
trenched on the heights of Santarem, behind the
Rio Mayor; and a post was established at Pun-
hete, in the rear, with a bridge across the
Zezere. The head-quarters of Massena were
established at Torres Novas.

On the retreat of the enemy Lord Wellington

immediately put his troops in motion to follow him. But as the intentions of Massena were uncertain, the division of General Picton, as a measure of precaution, remained in its position at Torres Vedras, and the remainder of the army was brought opposite to Santarem. A report from General Fane, that the baggage was retiring towards Thomar, at first induced Lord Wellington to believe that Massena was retreating to the frontier. Under this impression some movements of attack were made by the light division and the brigade of General Pack; but the enemy remaining firm, and displaying a considerable force, the columns were withdrawn, and no further demonstration was attempted.

The allied army then went into cantonments at Alcoentre, Rio Mayor, Azembuja, Alenquer, and Villa Franca, and head-quarters were established at Cartaxo. The corps of General Hill was thrown across the Tagus, and occupied the villages of Barcos, Chamusca, and Caregiro. Should the enemy, in consequence of reinforcements, think proper to advance, Lord Wellington was thus prepared to fall back on the lines, and equally so to seize, by a prompt movement,

CHAP. X.

1810.

November.

CHAP. X on any advantage which circumstances might
1810. place within his grasp.

November.

The state of Lisbon during the period marked by the events we have just narrated, merits record. When the army commenced its retrogressive movement from the frontier, the inhabitants of the capital were filled with apprehension and dismay. The richer classes thought only of securing their wealth; commerce was at a stand, and a gloomy foreboding of approaching misfortune, overcame that lightness and buoyancy of spirit, for which the inhabitants of more southern and genial climates are generally remarkable. The entrenchments which had been formed round Fort St. Julian gave rise to the belief that the object of the retreat was embarkation; but no sooner had Lord Wellington assumed his position at Torres Vedras, than confidence was immediately restored, and the business and the pleasures of life went on in their ordinary routine. The measures dictated by humanity for supplying the wants of the multitude which had been driven in on the capital from the surrounding country, were speedily adopted. Hospitals and public buildings were allotted for their accommodation, and a general

feeling of security pervaded the city, at a moment when the enemy were within a march of its walls. This was a singular state of things, and differing greatly from what Massena had expected. He calculated on the occurrence of tumult and insurrection, and that the people, goaded by famine, would welcome the approach of the French army, less as conquerors, than as liberators of the capital from a state of unendurable privation.

CHAP. X.

1810.
November.

These hopes were belied by the event. In Lisbon provisions were dear, but there existed neither danger nor apprehension of famine. The provinces of Alentejo and Algarve, the great granaries of the kingdom, were free from the enemy, and yielded considerable supplies; ships from America and England were daily arriving, and maize was easily imported from the coast of Barbary.

During the remainder of the year, both armies remained quiet in their cantonments, and few occurrences of any importance took place. The country to the east of Santarem is fertile and abundant; and, being removed from the line of advance followed by the French army, the orders issued by the Regency had been

CHAP. X. generally evaded. The inhabitants, deeming
1810. themselves secure, took no measures for the
December. destruction or removal of the stores, on which
their own subsistence and that of their families
depended, nor was it till enveloped by the
French cavalry, that they were undeceived.
The consequence was, that but a small pro-
portion of the corn had been carried off, and
the enemy for some time enjoyed abundant
supplies.

Soon after his arrival in front of Torres Vedras, Massena had despatched General Foy to Paris, to explain his situation to the Emperor,* and urge the necessity of large reinforcements.

* Massena, in his report to the Emperor, transmitted by General Foy, represented the battle of Busaco as a false attack made to facilitate his object of turning the position, and converted only by the ardour of his troops into a serious engagement. The capture of Coimbra by the Portuguese, he stated to have been the result of a *mistake*, and that his intention was to have garrisoned the town, &c. "Ce rapport," says Colonel Guingret, in his Narrative of the Campaign, "montre que les "generaux memes deguisent parfois la verite aux Princes, "dont ils ont toute la confiance." As we presume this generalization of a particular delinquency is intended only to apply to his own countrymen, we have no inclination either to narrow its latitude, or dispute its justice. But what would be said in England, of an officer in command of an army, who should attempt to deceive his Sovereign, by the assertion of a deliberate falsehood!

As the arrival of these, however, could not be speedily expected, General Gardanne, commanding on the Agueda, was directed to forward a supply of ammunition for the immediate necessities of the army. That officer, with a corps of three thousand men, accordingly attempted to perform the required service, and advancing by Castello Branco, had nearly reached the French posts on the Zezere, when, alarmed by a report that Massena was retreating, he precipitately retraced his steps, abandoning the convoy, and harassed in his retreat by the Portuguese militia.

CHAP. X.

1810.

December.

General Drouet, who had recently moved forward to the Coa, then determined, with a corps of ten thousand men, to open a communication with Massena. He advanced for that purpose, by the road on the left of the Mondego, and encountered little opposition on his march. Towards the end of December the junction was effected without difficulty, and the troops of General Drouet were placed in cantonments round Leiria to strengthen the right flank of the army.

Dec. 26.

In order to disperse the militia, a corps of eight thousand men, under General Claparede,

CHAP. X. was posted in the neighbourhood of Guarda.
 1810. The irregulars, under General Silveira, impru-
 December. dently suffered themselves to be drawn into an
 engagement which terminated in their defeat. They were pursued across the Douro with considerable loss, when Claparede, whose chief object was to keep open the communication between Almeida and Santarem, judged it prudent to retrace his steps. The consequences of this check, however, were only temporary. The militia, commanded by officers of skill and activity, were gradually acquiring confidence, and occasioned on all sides the greatest annoyance to the enemy.

END OF VOLUME II.

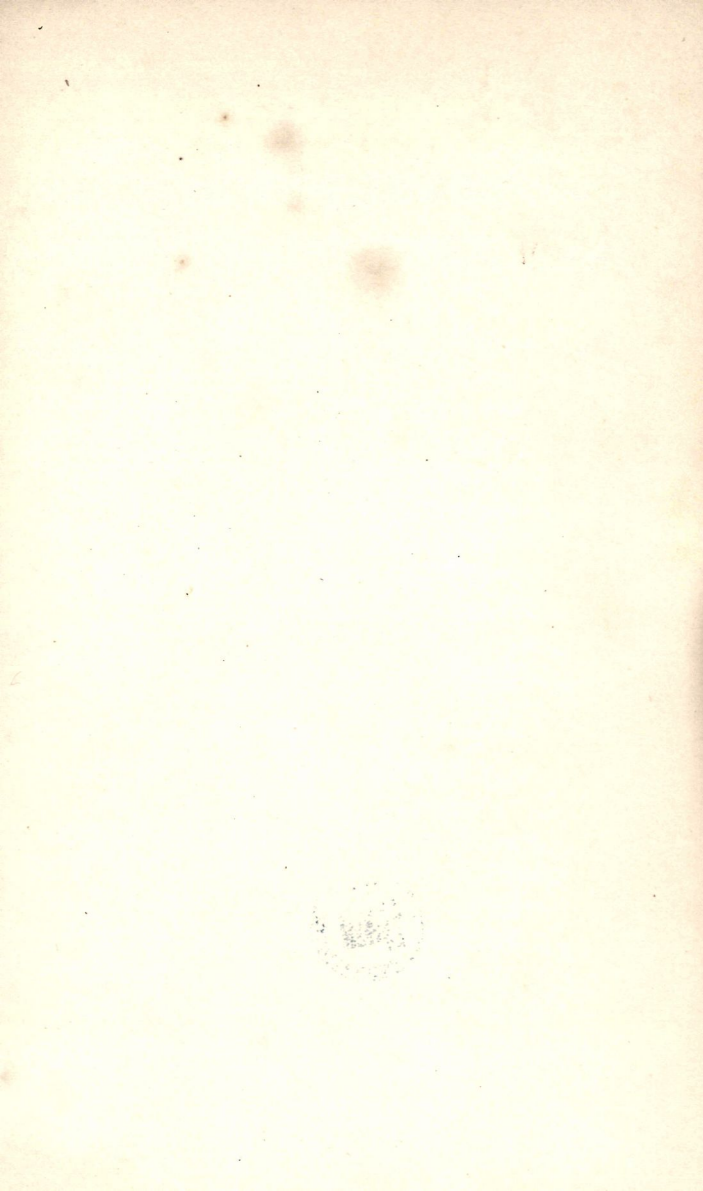
NOTE.

IN page 15 of the present Volume it is stated, that the officers of Sir John Moore's personal staff did not attempt to conceal their dissatisfaction at the resolution of retreat adopted by their leader. This assertion, though made on what certainly did appear satisfactory authority, we now find to be erroneous. By a communication with which we have been favoured by Colonel George Napier, we learn that the officers on the personal staff of Sir John Moore, so far from expressing dissatisfaction with any measure he thought proper to adopt, entertained on every occasion the most perfect reliance on the wisdom of his judgment. On the authority of this distinguished officer, therefore, we have great pleasure in correcting an error, unpleasant to the feelings of those immediately concerned, and which, by passing uncontradicted in contemporary narratives, must in some degree have contributed to corrupt the future sources of history.

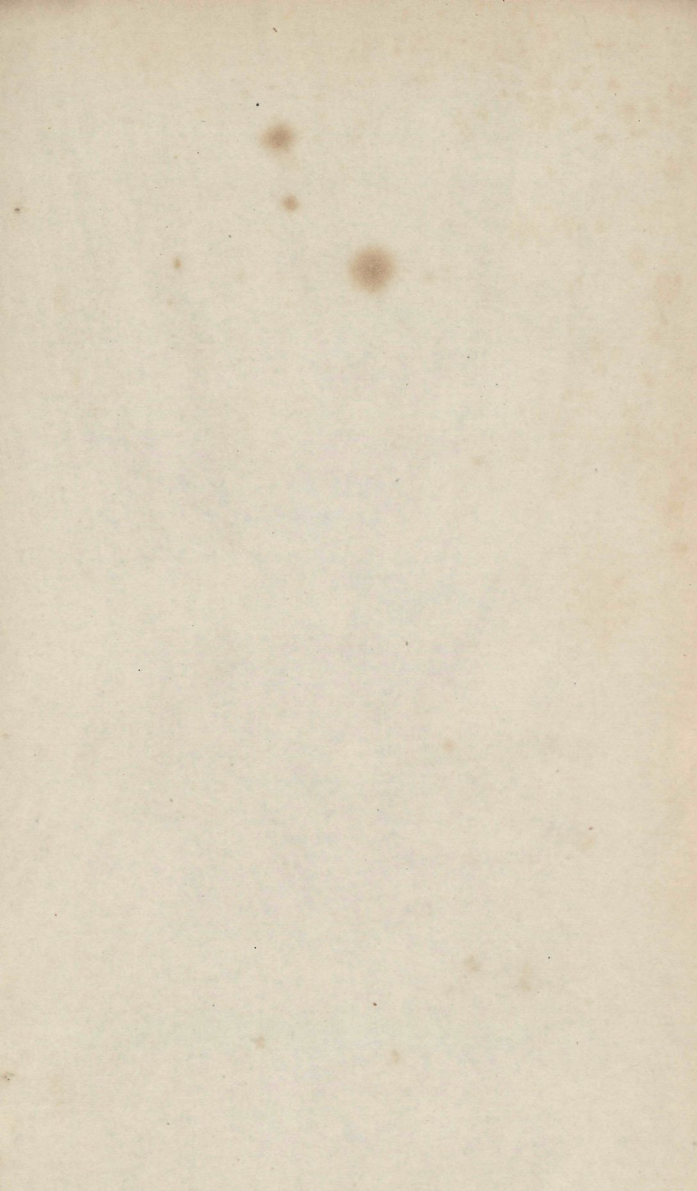
NOTE

In page 15 of the present Volume it is stated that the officers of Sir John Moore's personal staff did not attempt to conceal their dissatisfaction at the resolution of retreat adopted by their leader. This assertion, though made on what certainly did appear satisfactory authority, we now find to be erroneous. By a communication with which we have been favoured by Colonel George Napier, we learn that the officers on the personal staff of Sir John Moore so far from expressing dissatisfaction with any measure he thought proper to adopt, entertained on every occasion the most perfect reliance on the wisdom of his judgment. On the authority of this distinguished officer, therefore, we have great pleasure in correcting an error, important to the feelings of those immediately concerned, and which, by passing uncontradicted in contemporary narratives, has contributed to corrupt the sources of history.











Biblioteca Regional
de Madrid Joaquín Leguina



1357782

