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XXXVII.

1811.

March.

charge ; they were immediately broken, and in their flight carried away with them the other squadrons, which, from the change of position, had in some measure become a second line. From Campo Mayor to Badajoz is an open plain without tree or bush ; over this ground the French retreated rapidly, skirmishing the whole way. The 13th pursued with ungovernable eagerness, and the two squadrons of Portugueze which were sent to their support caught the same spirit, and dispersed in the heat of pursuit. In this affair, there were many opportunities for the display of individual courage and dexterity. Colonel Chamorin, of the 26th French Dragoons, was encountered by a corporal of the 13th, whose comrade he had just before shot through the head : each was a master of his horse and weapon, but at length the corporal, striking off the helmet of his enemy with one blow, cleft his head down to the ears with another.

The heavy cavalry, meantime, had been halted two miles off, and there only remained with General Long three squadrons of Portugueze with which to harass and impede the French infantry, till it could be brought up : these Portugueze did not stand the fire of the column and the appearance of the hussars ; and though they were soon rallied, the retreating column gained ground considerably before the heavy cavalry could overtake them. The 13th and the two Portugueze squadrons were then perceived returning from the pursuit which they had followed with such heedless precipitation, as to have given the enemy the superiority of numbers, and to have lost twenty-four killed, seventy wounded, and seventy-seven prisoners : some of them had pushed on to the very gate of Badajoz, and were taken on the bridge. Marshal Beresford would not risk the loss of more cavalry, and the enemy's column therefore retired unmolested, retaking fifteen out of sixteen guns which our 13th had taken. The loss of the French was very

considerable ; in one of their regiments only six officers out of sixteen remained for duty. The next morning a French captain of dragoons came with a trumpet, demanding permission to search the field for his colonel. Several of our officers went out with him. The peasants had stripped the dead during the night ; and more than six hundred naked bodies were lying on the ground, mostly slain with sabre wounds. It was long before they could find Chamorin, lying on his face in his clotted blood ; as soon as the body was turned up, the French captain gave a sort of scream, sprung off his horse, threw off his brazen helmet, and kneeling by the body, took the lifeless hand, and kissed it repeatedly with a passionate grief which affected all the beholders.

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After this affair, Beresford cantoned his troops at Campo Mayor, Elvas, Borba, and Villa-Viçosa ; they were equally in need of rest and of refitment, great part of the British infantry having made forced marches from Condeixa, and being in want of shoes. General Ballasteros, who was seldom at any time in force without suffering defeat, and never defeated without presently obtaining some success ; after experiencing some of these customary alternations, and incurring some severe losses in the Condado de Niebla, had fallen back upon Gibrleon, hoping to effect a junction with Zayas, who had been sent from Cadiz with 6000 men, of whom 400 were cavalry. Something was always to be expected from Ballasteros's remarkable activity, but there was equal reason for dreading the effect of his incaution ; by Beresford's request, therefore, Castanos wrote to desire that he and Zayas would not commit themselves, but reserve their force entire for co-operating with him. Beresford's objects at this time were, to throw a bridge across the Guadiana at Jurumenha, . . . to recover Olivença, drive Mortier out of Extremadura, and form as soon as possible the siege of Badajoz. Foreseeing the

*Measures  
concerted  
with the  
Spaniards.*

CHAP. want of a bridge, Lord Wellington had frequently, before the  
 XXXVII. fall of that place, urged the Spanish general officers to remove  
 1811. the bridge-boats, and other materials which were in store there,  
 April. to Elvas: they began to follow this advice, but so late and so  
 slowly, that only five of the twenty boats had been removed,  
 when Mendizabal's defeat rendered any further removal impos-  
 sible: these, when laid down, left 160 yards of the river un-  
 covered. Nor was this the only difficulty. It had been supposed  
 that ample supplies had been collected at Estremoz and Villa  
 Viçosa; but owing to the poverty of the Government, and to  
 that mismanagement which, from the highest to the lowest of its  
 departments, prevailed and was maintained, as if by prescriptive  
 right, throughout, not enough were found to ensure the subsist-  
 ence of the troops from day to day. Moreover there were no  
 shoes in store for an army which had marched itself barefoot.  
 And had there been no deficiency of stores, and no previous  
 difficulties to overcome, Beresford's force, consisting of 20,000  
 effective men, British and Portugueze, was inadequate to the  
 operations which he was to undertake with it, though it was the  
 utmost that Lord Wellington could spare from the more imme-  
 diately important scene of action on the frontier of Beira.

*Bridge con-  
 structed at  
 Jurumenha.*

Nothing, however, that could be done by diligence and ex-  
 ertion was omitted. The Guadiana was in such a state that it  
 seemed feasible to construct a bridge by fixing trestles across  
 the shallow part of the river, and connecting them with the five  
 Spanish boats in the deeper stream; or those boats might be  
 used as a floating bridge for the artillery and heavy stores, and  
 the interval filled with some half dozen tin pontoons, which had  
 been sent from Lisbon to Elvas, and which, though weak and bad  
 of their kind, might bear the weight of infantry, there being a  
 practicable ford for the horse. This latter plan was preferred;  
 materials were collected not without great difficulty, and delays

which that difficulty occasioned; trees were to be felled for the purpose, and the trestles were made only seven feet in height, because no timber for making larger was found near the spot. On the 2d of April the engineers reported that the passage was ready for the following day, and three squadrons passed that evening, and stretched their piquets along the advanced hills; thus making a show which imposed upon the enemy. The troops marched from their cantonments, and arrived at daybreak in a wood within a mile of the bridge. No apprehensions of the river had been entertained, for there had been no rain in those parts; but heavy rains had fallen far off, in the high regions where the Guadiana has its sources. When day broke it was seen that the water had risen three feet seven inches in the course of the night; planks, trestles, and pontoons were swept away by the current, and the ford also had become impassable. Beresford still determined to cross, not losing the opportunity which the enemy by their want of vigilance allowed him. Enough of the trestles were collected from the river to form, with two of the pontoons, two landing places, and two floating bridges were made of the Spanish boats. This was completed by the afternoon of the 5th. The army immediately began to cross; and continued crossing, without an hour's intermission, from three that afternoon till after midnight of the 8th. Only one man and horse were lost in the operation. Some country boats meantime carried across the three days' reserve of biscuit; and the same proportion of slaughter-cattle swam over. The troops bivouacked in succession as they passed, forming a position in a small semicircle, from Villa Real on the right to the Guadiana on the left. Severely as the French had suffered in the affair before Campo Mayor, they acted at this time with as much disregard of their enemies, as if they had no abler general than Mendizabal to contend with, and no better troops than those

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*April.**Passage of  
the Gua-  
diana.*

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which they had so easily routed. They had 12,000 men within three hours' march, who might have effectually disputed the passage, or cut off the advanced guard. But so ill were they informed of Beresford's movements, and so negligent in ascertaining them, that they made no endeavour to interrupt him till the morning of the 8th, when they advanced in some force, and surprised before daybreak a piquet of the 13th dragoons; but they were driven back by the 37th, which closed the right of the position; and finding the allies too strong for them, desisted from any further attempt.

*Olivença  
retaken.*

On the morning of the 9th, as soon as the fog cleared, the army marched in three columns upon Olivença; it was thought not unlikely that the enemy would wait for them there, or on the opposite bank of the Valverde river, where the ground was favourable: they had, however, fallen back to Albuhera, leaving a garrison in Olivença. The place was summoned, and refused to surrender; guns and stores, therefore, were ordered from Elvas; the fourth division remained to besiege it; and the rest of the army moved by Valverde, and bivouacked in the wood of Albuhera, the enemy's rear guard retiring before their advance, which entered S. Martha on the 12th. Here the army halted till the 15th, to get up provisions which were still brought from the rear; and on that day Olivença surrendered at discretion, before the breach was practicable. The garrison consisted of about 480 men, in a place where Mendizabal had thrown away 3000. The French had committed a fault of the same kind, though not to an equal extent; the force they left there being totally inadequate to the defence of so large a fortress. The recapture of this place would have produced an angry contention between the Spanish and Portuguese Governments, if Portugal had not been rendered, by English influence, patient in this instance under a galling sense of injustice. The

territory on the left of the Guadiana, in which Olivença stands, was part of the dowry given with his daughter to Affonso III. by the Castillian king, Alfonso the Wise; a grant which, though deemed at the time to have been an arbitrary, and therefore an illegal cession of national rights, was subsequently confirmed to Portugal with due form by the treaty between kings Dinez and Ferdinand IV. But as the Guadiana might seem to form a natural boundary between the two kingdoms on this part of the frontier, Spain has ever looked with an evil eye upon this cession. Five centuries had not reconciled a people peculiarly tenacious of what they deem national rights, to this dismemberment, as they considered it, though in itself of little importance to Spain, and though what had been ceded to Portugal was in reality the right of winning it from the Moors, and keeping it when won. In times of international war, therefore, the possession of Olivença had been contested not less as a point of honour than for its own value, when it was a place of great strength; and so strong was the border spirit which prevailed there that, when the Spaniards captured it in 1658, the whole of the inhabitants chose rather to leave the town, and lose whatever they could not carry with them, than become subjects to the King of Spain, though the property of those who should remove was offered to any who would remain. It was restored at the end of that war, and Portugal continued to hold it till its cession was extorted in 1801, in the treaty of Badajoz. But the war which was terminated by that treaty had been entirely unprovoked by Portugal: Spain was then acting as the deceived and degraded instrument of French policy; and the Portuguese felt, as they well might do, that the surrender, though made to Spain, had been compelled by France; and that so long as Spain retained Olivença by virtue of that treaty, they were an injured people. The Prince of Brazil, in the proclamation which he issued on his arrival in

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*Claim of  
the Portu-  
guese to  
that place.*

CHAP. Brazil, declaring war against France, and against Spain as  
XXXVII. then the ally and instrument of French oppression, had pro-  
1811. tested against the injustice which was done him in that treaty,  
*April.* and declared his intention of recovering when he could whatever  
he had then been compelled to abandon: and the Spaniards  
were themselves so conscious of this injustice, that the local  
authorities, with the sanction of the Junta of Extremadura, had,  
at the commencement of the war against Buonaparte and the  
Intruder, proposed to restore Olivença and its district to Portugal  
for a certain sum of money. The Central Government had not  
authorised this proposal; and Olivença was not to be thought of in  
times when the independence of both nations was at stake. But  
fortune had now put it in the power of the Portugueze to right  
themselves: Olivença had been taken by the French, and re-  
taken from them by an allied force of Portugueze and British;  
and one of the Portugueze Regents proposed to his colleague the  
British ambassador that the Portugueze standard should be dis-  
played there, without previous explanation, or subsequent jus-  
tification of the measure. There prevailed at that time a strong  
feeling of irritation in the Portugueze Government against the  
Spaniards, occasioned by the conduct of the Spanish officers on  
the frontier, and the unrestrained irregularities of the Spanish  
troops wherever they passed: they had even sacked a townlet  
near Badajoz, an act for which the Portugueze meditated re-  
prisals, and had actually proposed so insane a measure to the  
British minister, when the Spanish regency allayed their resent-  
ment by disavowing the act, and issuing orders for the punish-  
ment of the parties concerned. Having thus been in some de-  
gree mollified, they were persuaded not to injure the common  
cause by asserting their own claim, just and reasonable as that  
claim was; but to wait the effect of a treaty then pendent  
with Spain, in which the restoration of Olivença was stipulated

and not disputed. It is discreditable to Spain that the restitution which Portugal was then contented to wait for has not yet been made.

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Olivença having been taken, the allied army marched upon Zafra and Los Santos; this movement being designed to secure themselves from interruption in the intended siege, and to protect Ballasteros, who, after failing to effect a junction with Zayas, was pressed by a French division under General Maransin, and compelled to retire successively on the 13th and 14th from Fregenal and Xeres de los Cavalleros. The French, upon discovering Beresford's advance, on the following day retired hastily toward Llerena, which Latour Maubourg, who had succeeded to Mortier in the command, occupied with about 6000 horse and foot: the division which now joined him consisted of 4000 infantry and 500 cavalry. At Los Santos the allied cavalry fell in with the 2d and 10th of the enemy's hussars, about 600 in number, who were apparently sent on reconnoissance: they charged our 13th dragoons weakly, and were repulsed; then retreated from the force which was moving against them; and presently quickening that retreat, fled to Villa Garcia, and were followed for nearly ten miles at a gallop. In this they lost a chef d'escadron, killed, and about 160 men and horses prisoners: the British eleven horses of the 4th dragoons, who died of fatigue after the chace. The enemy remained one day longer at Llerena, and on the following, when a movement against them had been ordered for the next morning, retired to Guadalcanal, thus for the time abandoning Extremadura. Beresford then cantoned his infantry at Valverde, Azenchal, Villa Alva, and Almendralejo, the cavalry remaining at Zafra, Los Santos, Usagre, and Bienvenida: here the resources of the country were sufficient for their plentiful supply. A Spanish corps of about 1500 men, under the Conde de Penne Villamur,

*The French  
retire from  
Extrema-  
dura.*



CHAP. belonging to Castaños's army, occupied Llerena. Ballasteros, XXXVII. with about an equal force, was at Monasterio; and Blake, who  
 1811. had sailed from Cadiz for the Guadiana on the 15th, with 6000  
 April. foot and 400 horse, had reached Ayamonte, with 5000 of his men  
 and 200 of his cavalry; the others had been compelled by weather  
 to put back. Soult was at this time uniting his disposable force  
 near Seville; nearly the whole corps from the Condado de  
 Niebla had joined him there, and he had also drawn a detach-  
 ment from Sebastiani's corps, and some regiments from Puerto  
 S. Maria. This was the situation of the respective armies  
 April 20. when Lord Wellington arrived at Elvas, and was met there by  
 Marshal Beresford.

*Siege of  
 Badajoz  
 undertaken.*

*April 22.*

Thus far in this memorable campaign the war had been con-  
 ducted by the British commander as a game of skill: it was now  
 to become a game of hazard. The base surrender of Badajoz  
 distracted his attention as much as it had disappointed his rea-  
 sonable hopes: that the place should be recovered was of the  
 greatest importance to his future operations; to the enemy, it  
 was of equal importance to maintain it: Soult could bring into  
 the field a force sufficient for its relief; it was well garrisoned;  
 whatever injury had been done to the works was thoroughly  
 repaired; it had sufficient artillery, and was well supplied. Lord  
 Wellington and Beresford reconnoitred it; three battalions  
 came out to skirmish with the reconnoitring party, and were  
 driven back, but with the loss on our side of three officers and  
 about forty men killed and wounded. The siege, to be suc-  
 cessful, must be vigorously pursued, so that there might not be  
 time enough allowed for relieving the place; no plan, therefore,  
 could be adopted which would require more than sixteen days'  
 open trenches: but at least twenty-two, and this too, if the means  
 were fully equal to the undertaking, would be required, if either  
 of the south fronts were attacked, which yet it was plainly seen