

CHAP. had 48,000 foot and 5000 horse. On the 9th the enemy drove  
 XLII. in the piquets in front of Alba, and Major-General Long was  
 1812. obliged to withdraw his brigade through that town on the follow-  
 November. ing morning. The enemy then, who were directing their main  
 efforts against the right of the allies, approached their position  
 on the Tormes, and prepared to force a passage. They attacked  
 the troops in Alba with twenty pieces of cannon, and bringing  
 up 15 squadrons and a considerable force of infantry threatened  
 an assault, their light troops advancing close to the walls which  
 had been hastily thrown up. They continued their fire from  
 two o'clock till darkness had closed; but they made no impres-  
 sion on the brave troops who were opposed to them, and therefore  
 they did not repeat the attempt. The intermediate time till the  
 14th they employed in reconnoitring the fords, and the position  
 which Lord Wellington occupied in front of Salamanca; and on  
 the 14th they commenced the passage at three fords, about two  
 leagues above Alba, near Lucinas.

*Lord Wel-  
 lington re-  
 treats from  
 Salamanca.*

Lord Wellington immediately broke up from St. Christoval, ordered the troops to move toward Arapiles, and as soon as he had ascertained the direction of the enemy's march from the fords, moved with a division of infantry and all the cavalry he could collect to attack them; but they had already crossed in too great force. The wind at this time blew strong, and a thick rain rendered all objects indistinct at little distance; Lord Wellington, nevertheless, under cover of a cannonade, reconnoitred their position, and saw that they were too strongly posted at Mozarbes to be attacked. In the evening therefore he withdrew the troops from the neighbourhood of Alba, having destroyed the bridges, and leaving only a Spanish garrison of 300 men in the castle, into which the remains of an old palace had been converted. During the night, and in the course of the ensuing morning, he moved the greater part of the troops

through Salamanca, and placed Sir Edward Paget, with the first division of infantry on the right, at Aldea Tejada, to secure the passage there over the little river Zunguen, in case the movements of the French on his right flank should compel him to make choice either of giving up his communications with Ciudad Rodrigo or with Salamanca. The inhabitants of that city were some preparing for the worst, and others helplessly expecting it, yet with a lingering hope that another battle upon that ground which had proved so destructive to Marmont's army might once more deliver them. Lord Wellington himself had this possibility in mind, and did not order the commissariat and hospital stores to be removed from Salamanca till the movements of the French rendered it certain that, notwithstanding their great superiority in numbers, they would not venture to bring on a general action. They fortified their position at Mozarbes, and sent out bodies of horse and foot toward their left, to act upon the communications of the allies with Ciudad Rodrigo. This was a sure game; they were too strong and too strongly posted for Lord Wellington to think of attacking them; nothing therefore remained for him but to retreat upon his resources; and this was the more necessary because the men were nearly exhausted with the fatigues of so long and arduous a campaign; there was little regard to discipline among them, except when in the immediate presence of an enemy, and the horses were dying of exhaustion and for want of forage.

On the 15th the army was put in motion to retire, in three columns, observing, as well as the country would allow, parallel distances. Sir Rowland commanded the first, Sir Edward Paget the centre, the third consisted of the Spanish army. They crossed the Zunguen, passed the left flank of the enemy's position, and encamped that night in the olive-grounds, on the Vamusa, one of the smaller rivers which find their way into the

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*Retreat to  
the Aguada.*

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*Sufferings  
of the army.*

Tormes. The weather was most unfavourable, and the way sometimes over stony and ploughed grounds, sometimes over swampy or inundated low lands. The troops arrived at their halting places greatly fatigued. They were without shelter of any sort; it was impossible to kindle fires because of the heavy and incessant rain; and they were still farther dispirited by finding that the supplies had been forwarded to Ciudad Rodrigo. Bread for three days in advance had been issued to them as usual, but English soldiers are seldom provident, and when such demands were made upon their strength, the natural means of supporting and recruiting it could never be more needful. There was no provender for the horses, the bark of trees and sprigs of wild briar were the only and miserable substitutes that could be found. The French never displayed less vigour than at this time; the overweening contempt which they had once affected for the British troops had been so thoroughly corrected, that they made no attempt to overwhelm an enemy greatly inferior in number, and retreating under circumstances of great difficulty and distress. They only sent a body of cavalry with light artillery in pursuit; and these contented themselves with picking up stragglers and such baggage as fell behind. The army bivouacked on the 16th in a wood about two leagues from Tamames; the ground in many places was covered with water, but the rain ceased, and some biscuit was issued. The day's march had been most painful, over such heavy ground that at every step the horses sunk to the fetlock, and the men to their ancles; but while the men were filling their havresacks with sweet acorns, which they rejoiced to meet with, in the want of other food, the horses now and then picked up a little grass.

The 17th was another wet and misty day; the army left its bivouac at six; an extensive wood lay before them: the enemy now followed close upon their rear, and the light companies

were ordered to extend themselves through the wood for the purpose of protecting the flanks and the baggage. This service was not easily to be performed against so great a force of cavalry as was now harassing the movements of a disorderly army. Wherever the way was through the woods, officers as well as men carried on a successful warfare against the herds of swine which at that season are turned there to feed upon the acorns; the Spaniards, it is said, began; the wretched state of their commissariat was their excuse, and the allies had the same excuse for following the example; and so eagerly was it followed, that the continued firing of musquetry on all sides, often occasioned an apprehension that the piquets were warmly engaged, and even that the army was surrounded. This occurred so often that it produced incaution at last, and the enemy's fire was mistaken for pig-shooting. Owing to the badness of the roads, and the swollen state of the rivulets, there was an interval of about a mile between two of the infantry divisions. Sir Edward Paget, who commanded the centre column, rode to the rear, alone, for the purpose of discovering the cause of this interval: a body of the enemy's cavalry meantime had entered between these divisions; they had pursued a troop of Portuguese horse from the left flank: the firing had been ascribed to the pig-shooters, and Sir Edward falling in with the French was made prisoner, being without support: they might have done much hurt had they been more enterprising or more aware of their advantage. At this time the troops were descending upon the little village of S. Muñoz, in a valley between two hills; the Huebra which runs into the Douro has its course along this valley, a deep and rapid stream; both hills are covered with oaks, and the declivity on both sides is difficult and steep. The troops when they had forded were formed in open columns on the heights, and halted. A fog came on early in the afternoon,

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*Sir Edward  
Paget made  
prisoner.*

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under cover of which the enemy got possession of a hill upon the right of the British line; they brought up some mountain-guns, and commenced a fire upon the rear-guard, consisting of the light division, under Major-General Alten, while it was fording the river. Some loss was sustained by them. The guns of Major Macdonald's troop of horse-artillery returned their fire successfully, but during the cannonade he was severely wounded. The enemy's cavalry followed as soon as the division had crossed, and began to hem them in; and though the troops formed in squares, they succeeded in charging them in the low ground.

*Lord Wel-  
linton  
reaches Ci-  
udad Ro-  
drigo.*

There was now some appearance that an action might be brought on; the men were sufficiently eager for this, they longed to revenge themselves upon the French for the privations and sufferings of their retreat; they made no doubt of beating them, and they anticipated with hungry eagerness the pleasure of taking their supplies. As Lord Wellington came to pass the column in review, the word, "here he comes," passed along, and carried with it sure confidence to every heart, . . . that confidence which before the works at Burgos could not be felt, being given in the field as fully as it was deserved. But the French also knew that the British commander and his troops might justly rely upon each other, and they would not hazard a battle. The cannonade was continued on both sides till evening closed. The men bivouacked as usual on the wet ground, their cloaks and blankets soaked with rain; but the rain had ceased, it was a moonlight night, and they had the satisfaction of knowing that another day's march would bring them to Ciudad Rodrigo, beyond which the enemy could not follow them, and where their privations would be at an end. Between three and four in the morning they moved from their bivouack; the enemy followed them that day only with their cavalry. Lord Wellington's head-quarters were in Ciudad Rodrigo that night, and on the 19th and 20th

the army entered the Portugueze frontier, crossing the Agueda. The loss during this retreat of about 240 miles amounted to 196 killed, 663 wounded, 421 missing, and 280 horses; many of the men who had been returned as missing afterwards came in; but others, among whom were some valuable officers, died in consequence of the fatigues and hardships which they had endured.

The enemy retired as soon as the allies had reached Ciudad Rodrigo, and they withdrew from the Tormes also as soon as the castle of Alba was surrendered. The Spanish Governor Don José de Miranda held out there with great gallantry, and made more than an hundred prisoners in some well-directed sallies. Some characteristic correspondence passed between him and the French; they required him to surrender and rely upon their generosity, otherwise he must expect to be treated with the utmost rigour; he in reply spoke of his duties as a soldier, and boasted of his brilliant garrison. The French allowed him an hour for returning a second answer, and bade him tremble if it were a refusal; in his reply he bade them do their duty as he should perform his, and told them that if the fortune of war should be in their favour, his numerous prisoners, who had been treated in the best manner, would be the victims. In this strain, but in letters which increased in length, and became more and more courteous, the correspondence was continued from the 14th of November till the 24th, on the night of which Miranda left the fortress in the hands of Lieutenant D. Nicolas Soler, with 20 men, the prisoners and the sick; and informing the French commander, in his last communication, that this officer was instructed to deliver up the place, he with the remainder of the garrison effected their escape, making their way through many dangers, but with little loss, to the Puerto del Pico.

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*The French  
retire to the  
Tormes.*

*Castle of  
Alba de  
Tormes evacuated.*

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*Lord Wellington's  
circular letter to the  
commanding officer.*

As soon as it was ascertained that the enemy had withdrawn from the Tormes, Lord Wellington distributed the troops in winter cantonments, the left being retired to Lamego, and the right thrown forward as far as Baños and Bejar, to hold the passes. He then addressed a circular letter to the commanding officers of battalions, for the purpose of drawing their attention in a very particular manner to the state of discipline of the troops. "The discipline of every army," he said, "after a long and active campaign, becomes in some degree relaxed, and requires the utmost attention on the part of the generals and other officers to bring it back to the state in which it ought to be for service; but I am concerned to have to observe, that the army under my command has fallen off in this respect in the last campaign, in a greater degree than any army with which I have ever served, or of which I have ever read. Yet this army has met with no disaster; it has suffered no privations which but trifling attention on the part of the officers could not have prevented, and for which there existed no reason whatever in the nature of the service; nor has it suffered any hardships excepting those resulting from the inclemencies of the weather at a time when they were most severe. It must be obvious, however, to every officer that from the time the troops commenced their retreat from the neighbourhood of Burgos on one hand, and from Madrid on the other, the officers lost all command over their men. Irregularities and outrages of all descriptions were committed with impunity, and losses have been sustained which ought never to have occurred. Yet, the necessity for retreat existing, none was ever made in which the troops made such short marches; none on which they made such long and repeated halts; and none on which the retreating armies were so little pressed in the rear by the enemy. We must look therefore to some cause besides those

resulting from the operations in which we have been engaged. I have no hesitation in attributing these evils to the habitual inattention of the officers of the regiments to their duty as prescribed by the standing regulations of the service, and by the orders of this army.

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“ I am far from questioning the zeal, still less the gallantry and spirit of the officers ; and I am quite certain that as their minds can be convinced of the necessity of minute and constant attention, to understand, recollect, and carry into execution the orders which have been issued for the performance of their duty, and that the strict performance of their duty is necessary to enable the army to serve the country as it ought to be served, they will in future fix their attention to these points. Unfortunately the inexperience of the officers has induced many to conceive that the period during which an army is on service is one of relaxation from all rule, instead of being, as it is, the period during which, of all others, every rule for the regulation and control of the conduct of the soldiers, for the inspection and care of his arms, ammunition, accoutrements, necessaries and field equipments, and his horse and horse appointments, for the receipt and issue, and care of his provisions, and the regulation of all that belongs to his food and the forage for his horse, must be most strictly attended to by the officer of his company or troop, if it is intended that an army, a British army in particular, shall be brought into the field of battle in a state of efficiency to meet the enemy on the day of trial.

“ These are the points then to which I most earnestly entreat you to turn your attention, and the attention of the officers under your command, Portuguese as well as English, during the period in which it may be in my power to leave the troops in their cantonments. The commanding officers of regiments must enforce the orders of the army regarding the constant inspection



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and superintendence of the officers over the conduct of the men of their companies in their cantonments; and they must endeavour to inspire the non-commissioned officers with a sense of their situation and authority; and the non-commissioned officers must be forced to do their duty, by being constantly under the view and superintendence of the officers. By these means the frequent and discreditable recourse to the authority of the provost, and to punishments by the sentence of courts-martial will be prevented, and the soldiers will not dare to commit the offences and outrages of which there are too many complaints, when they know that their officers, and their non-commissioned officers, have their eyes and attention turned towards them. The commanding officers of regiments must likewise enforce the orders of the army regarding the constant, real inspection of the soldiers' arms, ammunition, accoutrements and necessaries, in order to prevent at all times the shameful waste of ammunition, and the sale of that article, and of the soldiers' necessaries. With this view both should be inspected daily."

He proceeded to say that he had frequently observed during the late campaign with how much more ease and celerity the French soldiers cooked their food than the British. This disadvantage on our part, he said, must be ascribed to the same cause as the other evils which he lamented, "the want of attention in the officers to the orders of the army and to the conduct of their men, and the consequent want of authority over their conduct. Certain men of each company should be appointed to cut and bring in wood, others to fetch water, and others to get the meat, &c. to be cooked: and it would soon be found if this practice were duly enforced, and a particular hour for serving the dinners, and for the men dining, named, as it ought to be, equally as for the parade, that cooking would no longer require the inconvenient length of time which it had lately been found to