

take, and that the soldiers would not be exposed to the privation of their food at the moment when the army may be engaged in operations with the enemy." He concluded by repeating that the great object of the general and field-officers must be to get the captains and subalterns of the regiments to understand, and to perform the duties required from them, as the only mode by which the discipline and efficiency of the army could be restored and maintained during the next campaign.

This letter excited no little surprise in the nation, mortifying and disgraceful as the faults were which were thus openly and manfully exposed. But it was not more severe than the occasion called for. No retreat had ever been conducted with greater military skill; and nothing but that skill, and the reputation which the British troops had established for themselves under its direction, could have saved the army from the consequences of the ignorance or neglect of duty in many of the officers, and the insubordination of the men, which was a consequence of such neglect or ignorance. The circumstances of that retreat justified the whole severity of Lord Wellington's remarks, and would more evidently have done so, if the sufferings of the army had been more broadly stated; for though the marches had indeed been short, and the halts long and frequent, no army which was not flying from an enemy, but retreating before it, in strength, ever suffered so much from exposure, and hunger, and exhaustion. Nothing could be more judicious than his orders during the whole retreat, and nothing more irregular than the way in which they were carried into effect; and this, though in part owing to casual and unavoidable obstructions on the way, arose in a far greater degree from negligence and incapacity. Sometimes divisions were moved too soon, more frequently too late, and kept standing on wet ground, in the rain, for two hours, perishing with cold, waiting the order to move. Their clothes

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 XLII. part of the retreat continually wet; sometimes they were bivou-
 1812. acked in a swamp, when better ground was near: they lay down
 upon the wet ground, fell asleep from mere exhaustion, were
 roused to receive their meat, and had then no means of dressing
 it, . . the camp-kettles had been sent on, or by some error were
 some miles in the rear, or the mules which carried them had
 foundered on the way; and no fire could be kindled on wet
 ground, with wet materials, and under a heavy rain. The sub-
 alterns threw the blame upon their superiors, and these again
 upon theirs, all complaining of incompetence in some of the
 general officers, and carelessness or supercilious neglect in some
 of the staff. But the intended effect was produced. That some-
 thing was deficient in the equipments of the army was perceived,
 and in part remedied. Alas! no one observed that there was an
 utter want of that discipline by virtue of which Cromwell con-
 quered, which rendered the Swedes invincible under their great
 Gustavus, and to which the Prince of Parma owed little less than
 to his own military genius, admirable as that was.

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CHAPTER XLIII.

OPERATIONS DURING THE WINTER AND SPRING. BATTLE
OF VITTORIA.

LORD WELLINGTON'S failure at Burgos, and his consequent retreat to the Agueda, gave the Whigs a last opportunity of repeating their predictions, that the war in the Peninsula must prove unsuccessful, and they availed themselves of it with unabated confidence. The more rancorous radicals insulted the nation for the hopes which had been entertained, exulted in the reverses which they magnified, and reviled the ministers and the General, .. the ministers both for having continued the war, and for "starving" it; Lord Wellington both for inactivity and for rashness, for doing too little and too much, for wasting time at Madrid, and for attempting a siege with such inadequate means, that nothing but the most profuse expenditure of blood could afford even a forlorn hope of its succeeding. Even when the events of the Russian campaign made it evident that the formidable tyranny against which we had so long contended must soon be overthrown, the opposition, as well as the revolutionists, turned away their eyes from the prospect.

Parliament met at the latter end of November. In the Prince Regent's speech it was stated, that the southern pro-

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vinces of Spain had been delivered in consequence of the battle of Salamanca; and that, though it had been necessary to withdraw from the siege of Burgos and to evacuate Madrid, the efforts of the enemy for rendering it so had occasioned sacrifices on his part, which must materially contribute to extend the resources and facilitate the exertions of the Spaniards.

Nov. 30. On this occasion, Marquis Wellesley called upon the Peers, to inquire whether the system which had hitherto been pursued was founded upon just and extended principles; whether an able and efficient exertion of our resources had been made; whether such means as the country possessed had been fully employed, and whether the result had been such as the nation had a right to expect from the possession of those means, and the right application of them. He wished it were possible to fix in the minds of their lordships something like a definite and precise object, as the issue of the contest in the Peninsula. In his mind, the only legitimate object was, the expulsion of the French armies from Spain; and the war had been carried on in a way totally inadequate to the production of that result. The plan, which of all others all mankind must reprobate, was that of employing our resources with a view rather to what might be spared in expense, than to what might be effected by exertion: thus exposing the sinews of our strength to hourly danger, and bearing hard upon our finances, yet effecting neither economy nor success, but falling dead as it were between both. A vast expense of blood and treasure had been lavished, without accomplishing any one definite object. The best assistance we could afford to Russia was by carrying on the war in Spain upon a broad and extensive scale; it had not been so carried on, and he charged upon that system, therefore, a defection from the cause of Russia. He did not mean to dispute that the last campaign had been beneficial to Spain; but his objec-

tion was, that those benefits were imperfectly secured, and that they could not expect them to be permanent.

Lord Grenville repeated and persisted in his old opinion, that the deliverance of Spain was beyond the utmost means of this country to effect; and that it was cruel and base to embark the population of that country in so hopeless a cause, merely for the sake of a little temporary advantage. The ministers had not advanced one step in the accomplishment of this object; and this third advance into the interior of Spain had, by its failure, proved the correctness of the data on which his opinion was founded. Their boast of having delivered Andalusia was an empty boast: no one doubted that the deliverance was more than temporary, and that the French could not re-occupy the provinces whenever they pleased. It was the want of means, the failure of supplies and resources, which had led to the unproductive results of all their exertions. The blame did not lie with the Spaniards, but with those who encouraged the hopes which they had no right to entertain: the fault was with the English ministers, who in their ignorance over-rated the condition of Spain, and anticipated more from her than she could by possibility perform. He asked also, why ministers, with a revenue of one hundred and five millions, or more, by estimate, extorted by means the most grinding and oppressive from a suffering people, were yet unable to supply Lord Wellington's military chest? The difficulty arose from their incapacity, not from the deficient resources of the country, much as they had been drained. They might diminish by one half the income of every individual in this country, with as little effect or promise of ultimate success as had attended those plans which led them to circulate a vile and adulterated currency in paper coin throughout the nation. When such had been its effects, why not at this moment stop the contest in Spain?

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Lord Gren-
ville.

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Mr. Ponsonby.

Mr. Freemantle.

Mr. Whitbread.

In the House of Commons, Mr. Ponsonby said, it was useless to carry farther an unprofitable contest; it was useless to waste the blood and the treasures of England for an unattainable object; it had been proved that the power of England was not competent to drive the French out of the Peninsula.

Mr. Freemantle was decidedly of opinion, that by the battle of Salamanca we had gained nothing but glory; that the deliverance of Spain was no nearer its accomplishment than when Lord Wellington was posted at Torres Vedras, and that our prospects at the present moment were not nearly so bright as at the commencement of the last session, .. at which time his declared opinion had been, that we could entertain no rational prospect of making any impression upon the enemy in Spain. Mr. Whitbread's tone upon that subject was somewhat modified; he admitted that the situation in which we now stood in Spain was glorious beyond example, in so far as related to the achievements of our armies, though with respect to the expulsion of the French, we were not so near our object as some people supposed. There was this difference between an offensive and a defensive war; that an offensive war ought always to be a war of spirit. When vigorous efforts therefore were to be made in Spain, there ought to be no limit to that vigour. Let an application therefore be made to the Prince Regent, to know from him whether the greatest possible use had been made by ministers of the means with which they were intrusted for carrying on the war, before coming to a decision on the merits of ministers, or the probability of the war being in future carried on with success. He was far from wishing to refuse them the means necessary for carrying it to a successful issue; but feeling for the people who were groaning under accumulated burdens and threatened with the Chancellor of the Exchequer's financial abilities, he thought the last resources of the country ought not to be

granted without security for their being properly applied. Under all these circumstances, he was desirous of imploring the Prince Regent to take into consideration, whether or not it was at present possible to bring about a pacification. Buonaparte was on his retreat to his resources, his force not annihilated, though certainly in great danger, and this was what the House were to congratulate themselves on, and for which they were to go to the Prince Regent with an address on the prosperous state of the country! If the situation of affairs on the continent was good for any thing, it was this, that the Emperor of France having failed in his object, an opportunity was now offered when it would not be inglorious, and when it would certainly be highly useful to propose to the enemy some arrangement for peace. Buonaparte was at present in a perilous situation, and every exertion ought to be made, by taking advantage of it to procure a peace. But a feeling seemed to pervade the minds of certain persons, that peace should not be concluded with that man, . . . a feeling which he wished to eradicate from this country: for, in the probable course of events, we should be obliged to make peace with him. Let him therefore be sent to openly and manfully! The fate of the mission would be speedily known; and the issue would be a conviction on the mind of every one, whether a permanent and honourable peace could be procured or not.

When a motion for thanks to Lord Wellington and his army for the battle of Salamanca was brought forward, Sir Francis Burdett said, he was far from wishing invidiously to detract from the merits of men who had devoted their exertions to the service of their country, or to withhold from them any recompense that it was in the power of parliament to bestow: but when he heard the battle of Salamanca represented as having been equal in importance to the battle of Blenheim, and to

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*Motion of
thanks to
the armies.*

*Sir Francis
Burdett.*

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XLIII. the whole affairs of Europe, he could not suffer such delu-
1812. sions to go forth uncontradicted, .. delusions which were cal-

December. culated to plunge the country, under the direction of the same
persons, still more deeply in a destructive and ruinous war : for
after their boasted and over-praised victories, we were still as
far from our object as ever. What! were we to suffer the
French troops to recover from the effect of their discomfiture
and exhaustion, and to wait until the tide of good fortune
which had attended us flowed back on its source? Were we
to be satisfied with a retreat? Yet, where now was the Mar-
quis of Wellington? In what direction were we to look for the
glorious results of the campaign? In what manner was the
diminution of the French power in Spain evinced? Nothing
seemed to have resulted from all our advantages but calamity
and distress; and it followed, therefore, that either Lord Wel-
lington was not entitled to the praise which the House was
called upon to bestow, or that the fault of our failure was
attributable to the gross negligence and imbecility of the
ministers. Lord Castlereagh, Sir Francis pursued, in the plen-
itude of his satisfaction, had not confined himself to Spain, but
had travelled out of his course, and taken the House to Russia,
where in the destruction of from 200,000 to 300,000 human
beings, in the burning of Moscow, and in the devastation of an
immense tract of Russian territory, he found new causes of con-
gratulation, new sources of national pride and gratitude! Would
he be equally inclined to consider it a matter of triumph, if Buona-
parte (which in his opinion was more than probable) should ex-
tricate himself from his perils, and after having found good win-
ter quarters, return to the contest with renovated ardour in the
spring? Could he believe it possible that Russia could continue
such a contest, and undergo a repetition of similar dreadful

experiments and sacrifices? Supposing he marched to Petersburg, which seemed to be his ultimate intention, would the same mode of defence as at Moscow be adopted? Would Russia burn Petersburg too? He for one could not greatly admire the magnanimity of burning that, the preservation of which ought to have been fought for; nor could he see the shining character of the Emperor Alexander, who was not, like the Emperor of the French, personally sharing in the dangers of the war. He could not subdue the conviction which arose in his mind on viewing all these things, of the utter impossibility of the Emperor of Russia's feeling any exultation whatever: on the contrary, he thought that unfortunate individual must be oppressed by a view of the irreparable calamities to which himself and his people had been, and were likely still further to be, exposed. Farther than this, when a grant was moved to the Marquis of Wellington, Sir Francis said, he did not wish to divide the House upon it, but he wished to move, that the consideration of the grant should be deferred till some inquiries had been made into the late extraordinary campaign. Lord Wellington's victories had none of the characteristics which distinguished those of Marlborough. It had been observed, and by military men too, that he had brought his army into difficulties, but that his men had fought him out of them again; and that in the capture of the fortresses which he had won, a waste of life was to be complained of. The cause of Spain appeared to him infinitely more hopeless than it was at the commencement of the campaign, . . . the case of the Peninsula more deplorable than ever.

Marquis Wellesley moved for a committee to inquire into the conduct of the war in the Peninsula. "My lords," said he, "what secret cause amidst the splendid scene that has been exhibited in the Peninsula, . . . what malign influence amidst the

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rejoicings and acclamations of triumph, has counteracted the brilliant successes of our arms, and has converted the glad feelings of a just exultation into the bitterness of regret and disappointment? With an army in discipline and spirit superior to any that had ever been assembled, uniting in itself qualities so various, as never to have entered into the composition of any other such assemblage of force; . . . with a general, pronounced by the whole world to be unsurpassed in ancient or modern times; the pride of his country, the refuge and hope of Europe; . . . with a cause in which justice vied with policy, combining all that was ardent in the one motive, with all that was sober in the other; . . . with the eyes of Europe fixed on our movements; . . . with the admiration of the world excited by our achievements: . . . how is it that our hopes have been raised only to be frustrated? How is it that we have been allowed to indulge in expectation of an approaching completion of success, only to behold the utter disappointment of our wishes? Why has a system of advance suddenly and inevitably been converted into a system of retreat? When victory actually sprung from the bosom of retreat, why was the glorious victor compelled to relapse into his retrogression? Why has it happened that we have seen the great conqueror who chased the French armies from the plains of Salamanca, pursued in his turn, by those whom he had conquered, over those plains which had been the scene of his former triumphs? Why, in conclusion, has a system of offence shrunk into a system of defence, and what is the reason that our military operations in the Peninsula have ended where they began?

“ I should be lost to every feeling of honour, and to every sense of duty to the country, if I did not state that the effect of this campaign altogether has been not to approximate you towards your object, but to remove you from it; and that this