

CHAP. their escape, joined him, having every where received from the
 XX. peasantry every possible assistance and kindness ; for that retreat
 1809. had not lessened in the Spanish people their sense of gratitude
 April. towards Great Britain, nor their respect for the British cha-
 racter. Some convalescents also from Almeida were added to
 his numbers, and he obtained two reinforcements, each of a
 more extraordinary kind. A Captain of banditti with five-and-
 twenty followers, who had exercised their vocation in the country
 about Segovia, repaired to him, as men who preferred risking
 their lives in a legal and honourable way, and were desirous of
 doing good service in a good cause. The other party told a
 sadder tale. They were South Americans from the Plata, who
 having been made prisoners at Montevideo in the ill-advised
 and worse conducted expedition of the English to that province,
 had been landed in Spain, there to be neglected and left destitute
 by their own government. More than 200 had perished through
 want and misery, and the survivors were almost naked and
 pitiably emaciated with the privations and sufferings which they
 had endured. There were seven officers among them, who were
 all men of polished manners ; and the soldiers were willing and
 well disposed, though deeply sensible of the cruelty and injustice
 with which they had been neglected.

*Attempt to
 surprise
 that fortress*

Suspecting that the enemy would endeavour to reach Extre-
 madura, get in Cuesta's rear, and menace Portugal on that side,
 Sir Robert occupied the Puerto de Baños with a small force under
 Colonel Mayne. This was effected just in time, Lapisse having
 marched the greater part of his force to Alva de Tormes on the
 way thither, but finding it occupied, and not knowing in what
 strength, the French returned. This was a month before the
 battle of Medellín, at which time Sir Robert had gone to confer
 with General Cuesta, no one except the Governor of Ciudad
 Rodrigo being informed of his absence. Immediately after his

return the French, having been reinforced at Salamanca, attempted to surprise Ciudad Rodrigo. A plan had been concerted with some traitors in the town, who, from an outwork that might easily be stormed, had thrown a bridge to the body of the place, so solidly constructed that Sir Robert had remonstrated against it as promoting their own destruction in case of an assault. Timely advice, however, came from the Corregidor of Salamanca; and the enemy, apprehending from the movements of Sir Robert's troops that a counterplot had been formed with the intent of attempting Salamanca, and cutting off their retreat, fell back hastily, and not without loss. Treachery there had been; but as there was no proof who had been the traitors, Sir Robert took measures for removing the suspected persons without discrediting them.

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1809.

April.March 2.

After it was known that Cuesta had fallen back from the Tagus to the Guadiana, and before tidings of his defeat had arrived, Sir Robert, who had been urging him to form a corps on the Tietar, and thereby preserve from the enemy a fertile part of the country which had not yet been overrun, withdrew his troops from the Puerto de Baños to collect them at Ciudad Rodrigo. Lapisse now brought together the whole remaining force under his command, which had been reduced to about 7000 men, advanced against that city, and summoned it. The officer by whom the summons was sent wished to enter the place with it, but a detachment of the Lusitanian Legion with four guns, under Lieutenant-Colonel Grant, had been stationed outside the works, and he was not permitted to proceed. Before the Governor's answer could be given, the French, in disregard of the custom of war, continued advancing toward the gates, upon which a fire was opened upon them, and continued with effect till they halted. The Governor's reply was, that he should not think of surrendering, even under a greater necessity than

*The French
summon it.*

CHAP. then appeared to exist. Some skirmishing took place, to the
 XX. advantage of the garrison, and on the following day the enemy
 1809. retreated, with some loss both in men and in reputation.

April.

*March of
Lapisse to
unite with
Victor.*

This movement of the French had been so little serious, that it was supposed they had expected some co-operation from Soult's army. Soon afterwards, however, a second summons came in the name of the Intruder, holding out threats to the garrison and inhabitants if they suffered themselves longer to be misled by a few British officers, and promising them King Joseph's favour if they would open their gates. A verbal reply was returned, stating that the proper answer to such a summons was from the cannon's mouth, and there the enemy would receive it if they chose to advance. At this time the peasantry, encouraged by the example of this brave garrison, had risen throughout a wide extent of country; and the situation of Lapisse was becoming critical, when by a movement which ought not to have been unexpected, he moved rapidly toward the Puerto de Perales. That pass he could hardly have forced, if it had been occupied; but Colonel Mayne could not reach it in time after the intention of the enemy was ascertained, and all that Sir Robert could do was to dispatch advices into Portugal, and harass their march by pursuing them with all speed, in the hope that when they arrived at Alcantara, where they must cross the Tagus, they would find it occupied by a sufficient force of Portuguese.

April 7.

*The French
enter Alcan-
tara.*

The bridge at that point, which was then one of the durable monuments of Roman magnificence, has given name to a city of some renown, as the chief seat of one of the military orders famous in old times. The town is on the left bank, and the inhabitants, aware of danger, thought to avert it by defending the entrance of the bridge with a kind of *abbatis*, and breaking up the road to a depth of eighteen or twenty feet. These rude works not being

defended by any regular force, nor with any skill or military means, were soon forced, and the town was entered. Lapisse had marked his whole route by the most wanton cruelties, in return for which every straggler who fell into the hands of the peasantry was put to death. He remained only during the night in Alcantara; but that night was employed in plunder, and in the commission of every crime by which humanity can be disgraced and outraged. Lieutenant-Colonel Grant and Don Carlos d'España (officers whose names appear often during the war, and always honourably), arrived near the town with a small body of cavalry in pursuit during the night, and entered it in the morning just after the enemy had left it. They found the houses in flames, and the streets literally obstructed with mutilated bodies, some lying in heaps, and others thrown upon piles of furniture and valuable goods, which the ruffians, having no means of removing, had brought out in front of the houses and set on fire. Dogs had been murdered like their masters, swine butchered for the mere pleasure of butchery, and their bodies heaped together in mockery with those of the human victims. The churches had been polluted as well as plundered, images mutilated, pictures, the value of which was not suspected by these destroyers, cut to pieces, graves opened in the hope of finding money or plate concealed there, even the very coffins violated, and the dead exposed.

Victor's force, after he had been joined by this division, amounted to 23,000 foot and 5800 horse. It was apprehended from some intercepted letters that he would immediately make for Seville, and Cuesta had formed his plan of defence accordingly. Portugal, however, was the object of the French, as a point of more importance at that time; but they had let the hour go by, and the English were now once more in the field.

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1809.

April.

Campaigns
of the Lusi-
tanian Le-
gion, 65—
68.

Junction
with Victor.

CHAPTER XXI.

PROCEEDINGS IN PARLIAMENT RELATING TO THE WAR.

1809.

*January.**Conduct of
the Opposi-
tion in Eng-
land.*

DURING the first success of the Spaniards, the enemies of Government either were silent or joined faintly in the expression of national feeling which was heard from all parts of the united kingdoms. No sooner had the prospect begun to darken than their real wishes were disclosed, and, true to their belief in the omnipotence of Buonaparte, they expatiated upon the folly and insanity of opposing one against whom it was impossible that any resistance could be successful. They dwelt upon the consummate wisdom of his cabinet, the unequalled ability of his generals, the inexhaustible numbers of his armies, and their irresistible force; but they neither took into this account the character of the Spanish people, nor the nature of their country, nor the strength of moral principles and of a righteous cause, being ignorant alike of all. That faith in English courage, by which the fields of Cressy, and Poitiers, and Agincourt were won, and which in our own days we had seen proved, not only upon our own element, our empire of the seas, at the mouths of the Nile and at Cape Trafalgar, but before the walls of Acre, and in Egypt, and at Maida, and in Portugal; . . . that faith which should ever be the first article of an Englishman's creed, for while it is believed, so long is it true; . . . that faith these men had abjured, and substituted in its place a political heresy, baneful as it was false, that upon land nothing could withstand the French. The world was made for Buonaparte, and he had only

to march over it, and take possession. When they were reminded of this Tyrant's guilt, they thought it a sufficient reply to tell us of his greatness, and would have had us fall down and worship the Golden Image at the very time when the Spaniards were walking amid the burning fiery furnace.

They began by predicting the failure of all our efforts, and the total ruin of the Spanish cause; laying down as "a proposition too plain to be disputed, that the spirit of the people, however enthusiastic and universal, was in its nature more uncertain and short-lived, more liable to be extinguished by reverses, or to go out of itself amid the delays of a protracted contest, than the steady, regular, moderate feeling which calls out disciplined troops, and marshals them under known leaders, and supplies them by systematic arrangements." That it was in the power of England to assist the Spanish people with such troops, such leaders, and such arrangements, they had neither heart to feel nor understanding to perceive. They ridiculed the "romantic hopes of the English nation;" hopes, they said, which had been raised by "the tricks of a paltry and interested party." Could any man of sense, they demanded, any one "above the level of a drivelling courtier, or a feeble fanatic, look at this contest, without trembling every inch of him for the result?"

But the baseness of party went beyond this. Not only were ministers blamed for what they had done in assisting Spain, and counselled to withdraw their assistance as speedily as possible, but the Spaniards themselves were calumniated and insulted. They had neither courage, nor honour, nor patriotism; no love for their country, nor any thing in their country worth defending. What mattered it to them whether their King were called Joseph or Ferdinand, a Buonaparte or a Bourbon? God would dispense sunshine and showers upon the peninsula, whoever was his vicegerent there; the corn and the olive would ripen, and

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January.

CHAP. the vine and the fig-tree yield their fruits. What folly then to
 XXI. contend for a feeble and oppressive government, of which the
 1809. loss was gain! The Emperor of the French had rid them of this
January. wretched government; he had abolished the Inquisition, reduced
 the monastic orders, and would suppress them and all other re-
 maining grievances as soon as the obstinacy of the people would
 allow him leisure. And indeed the people were sensible of these
 benefits: . . . a few chiefs, the overgrown aristocracy of the land,
 had for a while misled them; but those chiefs had only a little
 hour to strut and fret; and for the people, whose detestation of
 the French government had been carried to a pitch wholly
 unauthorized by its proceedings toward them, their eyes were
 opened now; they saw that Buonaparte was doing good; while,
 on the other hand, they regarded the English as heretics; and
 nothing could overcome the antipathy which this feeling occa-
 sioned.

The circumstances of Sir John Moore's retreat, and the
 return of his army, were matter of triumph to the journalists of
 this shameless faction. "The dismal news," they said, "was at
 last arrived! the truth of the bulletins was established to its ut-
 most latitude! the pledge of throwing the English into the sea
 was almost to its literal meaning fulfilled! The Spanish Junta
 and their allies, after six months' trifling, blundering, and vapour-
 ing, were now finally defeated! the spirit of patriotism, both in
 Spain and Portugal, was extinct! the majority of the Spaniards
 had all along been indifferent respecting the dynasty by which
 they were to be governed; yea, many were more attached to the
 Buonapartes than the Bourbons. The triumphs of France, the
 defeat and dispersion of the Spanish armies, wherever they were
 attacked, the retreat and discomfiture of the British forces, . . .
 these were the melancholy events which concluded the fatal
 campaign of 1808, the fifth year of the war, . . . this most unjust

and unnecessary war, into which England, in violation of its own treaty with France, had rushed with equal eagerness and frenzy, and which she was now carrying on with the professed object of the preservation of the most corrupt branch of the Romish church!" Such was the language, not of the revolutionary propagandists alone, but of political faction and puritanical bigotry; while the condition in which the troops arrived, and the tale which they related, excited the feelings of the people, and rendered it easy to mislead them. Never had such a scene of confusion and distress been witnessed at Plymouth as on the arrival of this miserable fleet. Above 900 women were landed, all ignorant whether their husbands were dead or living; they were searching through the transports, and officers and men in like manner looking after their wives, children, and friends. Of the wounded there were some whose wounds had never been dressed: many were brought on shore dead: some died in the streets, on their way to the hospitals. They who had escaped from any farther evil, having lost all their baggage, were, even the officers, covered with filth and vermin. Letters were written from the Medical Transport Board to all the surgical lecturers in London, requesting that their pupils would repair to the ports, and assist during the immediate emergency. The form of having passed the Hall was dispensed with, and nothing more required than a certificate from the lecturer whom they had attended. The people of Plymouth behaved on this occasion with the characteristic activity and beneficence of the English nation. A committee of gentlemen was immediately appointed, who sat night and day, providing food, clothing, and assistance. The ladies of the place attended the sick and wounded, and assisted in dressing the wounds: thus supplying the want of a sufficient number of medical men. Many a woman gave her only second garment to her who had none. A charitable fund was raised, and 1400 women and children belonging to the expedition

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*Return of
the army
from Co-
ruña.*

CHAP. received immediate relief. The inhabitants of Portsmouth had a
 XXI. less mournful task. That part of the army which landed there
 1809. had not embarked from the field of battle; and they who were
 January. well enough to partake of festivity were feasted in the Town-
 Hall. The troops brought back with them a pestilential fever,
Dr. Neale's which spread through the military hospitals, and raged for some
Travels, p. months before it could be subdued.
 217.

Jan. 19.

The King's
speech.

Parliament met before the issue of Sir John Moore's cam-
 paign was known, but it was understood that he was hastily re-
 treating toward the coast with the intention of embarking, and
 intelligence was hourly looked for with fearful expectation. The
 King's speech was in a spirit suited to the times. He had given
 orders, he said, that the overtures from Erfurth should be laid
 before both Houses, and he was persuaded they would partici-
 pate in the feelings which he had expressed when it was re-
 quired that he should consent to commence the negotiation by
 abandoning the cause of Spain. So long as the people of that
 country remained true to themselves, so long would he continue
 to them his most strenuous assistance: and in the moment of
 their difficulties and reverses he had renewed to them the en-
 gagements which he had voluntarily contracted at the outset of
 their struggle. He had called his Parliament in perfect con-
 fidence that they would cordially support him in the prosecution
 of a war which there was no hope of terminating safely and
 honourably except through vigorous and persevering exertions.
 The various grades of opposition were distinctly marked in the
 debates which ensued. Lord Sidmouth said, that there prevailed
 among the people a feeling of dissatisfaction which was most
 honourable to them, because it arose from their zealous loyalty
 and generous desires. They were neither contented with the
 extent of the exertions which had been made to support the
 Spaniards, nor with the manner in which those exertions had
 been directed. Something, he trusted, would be done to allay

Lord Sid-
mouth.

this laudable discontent, while he avowed his full belief that it behoved us to prosecute the war with vigour. Such language was consistent with the constant tenor of Lord Sidmouth's conduct; a man who never in a single instance allowed either personal or party feeling to prevail over his natural integrity. Earl St. Vincent agreed in the necessity of carrying on determined hostilities against the common enemy, but he condemned the ministers alike for what had been done, and what had been left undone. They had brought upon us, he said, the greatest disgrace which had befallen Great Britain since the Revolution. It appeared as if they had not even a geographical knowledge of the Peninsula, insomuch that they ought to go to school again, to make themselves masters of it. Why had there been that disgraceful delay before our troops were sent to Spain? Why had not some of our Princes of the blood been appointed to lead our armies? all those illustrious persons had been bred to arms, and for what purpose, if they were not to be employed? Why had not the Portugueze been called into action? He knew them well; they were as brave a people as any upon the continent of Europe, and under British officers would have presented an undaunted front to the enemy. Ministers ought to have known their value, and if they did not, their ignorance was inexcusable. If the House of Lords did its duty, they would go to the foot of the throne, and there tell the Sovereign the bold truth, that if he did not remove those ministers he would lose the country.

Lord Grenville said there was but one opinion in the country concerning the base and treacherous, the atrocious and cruel invasion of the Spaniards; but one opinion as to the cause wherein they were fighting against the Tyrant who unjustly and cruelly attacked them; but there had been no prospect which should have induced reasonable men to send a British army into

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January.*Earl St.
Vincent.**Lord Gren-
ville.*