

impeded by the ravine. Both sides suffered considerably at this well-contested point. The armies lay upon the field, the cavalry with their bridles round their arms; but there was little rest during the night; both sides were on the alert and alarm, and in different parts of the field the videttes of each army were sometimes fired on by their own countrymen, being mistaken for enemies. Whole battalions of the enemy got into the English line, some crying that they were Spaniards, some that they were German deserters: the trick was soon discovered, and, in the reception which they met with, it is not unlikely that many a poor German, who really intended to desert, lost his life. These night-engagements were carried on with the most determined fury; the men, after they had discharged their muskets, frequently closed, and fought with the butt-end.

The French had ascertained, in the course of the evening, that any attack upon the town, posted as the Spaniards were, was hopeless; that the centre also was very strong, both from the rugged ground and the olive-yards which covered it, and the works which had been thrown up there. The left was the most practicable point of attack, and the difficulty of carrying that they had severely experienced. There, however, they made a third attempt at day-break, with three regiments under General Ruffin advancing in close columns. They proceeded triumphantly, as they supposed, nearly to the summit; when they were again charged and again beaten back, but they fell back in good order. Sir Arthur, for the better security of this post, now sent two brigades of horse into the valley on the left. Alburquerque had at this time been ordered by the Spanish commander to go with his cavalry to a place near the town, where it was impossible for them to act, and there was not even room for them, the ground being thickly wooded. On this occasion he ventured to act from his own judgement; observing that the

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English cavalry were charged by very superior numbers, he hastened to support them, and his opportune arrival enabled them to occupy the position. Cuesta perceived the advantage of this movement, and suffered the Duke to choose his own ground, who accordingly took the post of danger with the English horse. To annoy this body, the French sent their riflemen to the heights on the left of the valley; thus occupying the ground which Sir Arthur had supposed beyond the bounds to which the action would extend. It proved of no advantage to them; for Cuesta, marking the movement, dispatched Camp-marshal Bassecourt against them with the fifth division of Spanish infantry, and dislodged them with great loss.

About eleven, the enemy having been baffled in all their attempts, intermitted the attack, rested their troops, and, it is said, cooked their dinners upon the field. Wine and a little bread were served out to the British troops. A brook which flows into the Tagus separated the French and English in one part of the field, and during this pause men of both armies went there to drink, as if a truce had been established. Their muskets were laid down and their helmets put off while they stooped to the stream, and when they had quenched their thirst, they rested on the brink, looking at each other. The heat and exasperation of battle were suspended; they felt that mutual respect which proofs of mutual courage had inspired, and some of them shook hands across the brook, in token that although they were met to shed each other's blood, brave men knew how to value a brave enemy. At such a moment it was natural for Englishmen to have no other feeling; . . . the atrocities by which Buonaparte's soldiers in the Peninsula had disgraced their profession, their country, and their nature, were for the time forgotten. This interval also was taken for bringing off the wounded who lay intermingled as they had fallen. And here also a re-

deeming sense of humanity was manifested ; all hostility being suspended among those who were thus employed, and each striving who should with most alacrity assist the other in extricating the common sufferers. About noon Victor ordered a general attack along the whole line. His own three divisions were to attack the hill once more. Sebastiani was to form his first division in two lines on the left of Lapisse ; Leval, with a brigade just then arriving from Aranjuez, to be stationed to the left of this division, a little in the rear ; still further left, Milhaud, with his dragoons, was to observe Talavera ; Latour Maubourg's infantry and Merlin's light-horse formed in the rear of Victor to support his corps, and advance into the open ground now occupied by him, as soon as he should have won the hill. The reserve was placed in a third line behind Sebastiani's corps.

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From the moment this general attack commenced, the firing of musketry was heard on all sides like the roll of a drum, with scarcely a moment's interruption during the remainder of the day, the deeper sound of a heavy cannonade rising above it like thunder. The operations of the French were deranged by a blunder of Leval's division, which they attribute to the ruggedness of the ground, and the impossibility of preserving the line among the olive-trees and vines. Instead of forming in *echelon* in the rear, it advanced to the front, and before it had finished deploying it was attacked. Sebastiani sent a brigade to its support, and it fell back to the ground which it was designed to occupy. This occasioned some delay. When the line was formed, Sebastiani waited till Victor had begun the attack. Lapisse first crossed the ravine, supported by Latour Maubourg's cavalry, and by two batteries, each of eight pieces of cannon. Vilatte threatened the hills and covered the valley, and Ruffin, skirting the great chain of mountains to the left, endeavoured to turn

CHAP. the flank of the British army. The attack upon the hill was
 XXIV. exceedingly formidable, but, like all the former, it failed. La-
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July. Victor himself rallied them, and brought them once more to the
 contested point; their retrograde movement had exposed Se-
 bastiani's right, and there also the French suffered considerably.

While Victor led his troops once more to the foot of that hill which had so often been fatal to the assailants, Vilatte with the columns in the valley advanced to his support. General Anson's brigade, consisting of the 1st German light dragoons and the 23d dragoons, with General Fane's heavy cavalry, were ordered to charge them. The French formed in two solid squares; they were protected by a deep ravine, which was not perceived till the horses were close to it; and they kept up a tremendous fire of artillery and musketry. This was the most destructive part of the whole action; numbers of men and horse fell into the ravine, . . . numbers were mown down. But the portion which got over were collected as well as he could by the Honourable Major Ponsonby, and led upon the bayonets of the enemy. They passed between two columns of infantry, against which they could effect nothing, then galloped upon the regiment of chas-seurs which supported them. Here they were charged by some regiments in reserve, surrounded, broken, dispersed, and almost destroyed, losing two-thirds of their number. The rest (Lord William Russell was among them) passed through the intervals of the French columns, and retired within their own lines. Injudicious and unfortunate as the charge was, the desperate courage with which officers and men had advanced upon almost certain destruction astonished the enemy; it put an end to their efforts on that side, and no farther attempt was made upon the hill, which was now covered with dead, dying, wounded, and exhausted troops.

The attack upon the centre was made at the same time. General Campbell was supported by Eguia and Henestrosa, and by a regiment of Spanish horse; the allies repulsed the enemy, and while the Spaniards turned their flank, the English took their cannon. A column, chiefly consisting of Germans, advanced with excellent steadiness through a heavy fire of artillery, like men who, having obtained the highest military character, were resolved to keep it. They were received by Lieutenant-General Sherbrooke's men with a volley of musketry which staggered them; the whole British division then rushed forward with the bayonet, and by that irresistible charge the enemy were driven back with great slaughter. But the brigade of Guards advanced too far in pursuit; they were attacked by the French reserve, they were cut down by a close fire of artillery from a wood; in a few minutes all their mounted officers were killed, with more than 500 men, and at that moment the fate of the day appeared worse than doubtful. But Sir Arthur's foresight secured the victory which had been so long contested. Seeing the advance, and apprehending the consequence, he moved a battalion of the 48th from the heights to their support; and this timely succour, with the assistance of the second line of General Cotton's cavalry, saved the brigade from that total destruction which must else have been inevitable. The broken Guards passed through the intervals of the 48th, re-formed behind it, and then in their turn supported the regiment which had preserved them. Upon their advance, the enemy, whose heart now failed them, retired: the Guards renewed the huzzas with which they had advanced, and the cry was taken up along the whole line. It was the shout of victory on the part of the allies; for though the light troops continued to fire, and from time to time a heavy cannonade was renewed, the enemy made no further attempt.

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A circumstance more horrid than unfrequent in war occurred toward the close of the action; the long dry grass took fire, and many of the wounded were scorched to death. It was night before the battle ended, and the allies were far from certain that it would not be renewed on the morrow. The moon rose dimly, the night was chill and damp because of the heavy dew; the troops lay in position on the ground, without covering, and without food; even water was scarce; but the officers and the generals were faring alike, and neither murmuring was heard for their privations, nor apprehension felt for what the morrow might bring forth. The French had made large fires along the whole front of their line. At daylight the troops were under arms, and in order of battle, . . . but the enemy had disappeared, a rear-guard only being in sight on the left of the Alberche. The Intruder had been a spectator of the whole action. During the night contradictory reports were brought him, some affirming that another attack must ensure the victory, others that Victor's right had been turned, and he could not possibly keep his ground. In this dilemma Joseph sent to ascertain which was the true report, and retired to rest, in expectation of having the favourable one confirmed, the reserve bivouacking round him. At daybreak he was awakened by Sebastiani, who had fallen back with his corps upon the reserve during the night, and who came with tidings that he had been compelled to make this retrograde movement, because Victor was retreating along the foot of the hills to Casalegas. This intelligence left no time for deliberation. The Intruder began to retreat also, but in perfect order; Milhaud's division formed the rear, and Latour Maubourg brought off many of the wounded. Twenty pieces of cannon were taken by the conquerors; the prisoners were not many.

Our loss had been very heavy; 801 killed, 3913 wounded,

653 missing. The Spaniards had 1250 killed and wounded. Generals Mackenzie and Langworth fell. Two bullets passed through Sir Arthur's clothes, and he received a severe contusion on the shoulder from a spent musket-ball. During the second action no attack was made upon the main body of Cuesta's army; the position was too strong, and the French rightly judged, that if, by bringing their whole force to bear upon the English, they could defeat them, Cuesta's discomfiture must necessarily follow. On this day, therefore, they were in the proportion of more than two to one to the troops whom they engaged. The British entered the field 18,300 effective men; they were opposed to not less than 48,000. The presence of the Spaniards was of vital importance, by the security which they afforded to the right of our army; and essential service was afforded by those who came into action on the second day, especially by Albuquerque and Bassecourt, and by two battalions under Brigadier-General Whittingham, in their service, who came forward to support the Guards; but the brunt of the battle was borne by the British, as the loss which they sustained evinces. From their loss that of the defeated enemy might fairly be computed, if the numbers left upon the field had not afforded surer ground. Both Spaniards and English state it at not less than 10,000 men; the number of their dead was so great, that Cuesta ordered out his troops by battalions to burn them.

The Spaniards, where they were well commanded, behaved well; but melancholy proofs were given of the inefficient state of their armies. The whole of their commissariat took flight as soon as the action began, with all the people belonging to them; so that after the battle the allies found themselves in total want of food and resources. Three or four corps threw down their muskets without having once discharged them, and dispersed; some of them plundered the baggage. Cuesta was so indignant

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Cuesta decimates some of his troops.

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at this, that after the action he ordered the division to be decimated, and it was only after much entreaty from the British Commander that he consented to re-decimate those on whom the lot had fallen, and six officers and some thirty men were actually executed. Sir Arthur remarked upon this occasion, with equal humanity and wisdom, that fear of disgrace would affect the Spaniards more than fear of death, and that for this reason, among others, exertions ought to be made for clothing them in uniform. Marching to battle as they did, without any thing to distinguish them for soldiers, in the first panic they threw away their arms and accoutrements, and pretended to be peasants. Men dressed as soldiers could not thus at once put off the marks of their profession, and that being the case, they would feel that their safety depended upon keeping their arms and standing their ground; and when the whole army was uniformly clothed, it would be easy to deprive the soldier who should misbehave of a part of his uniform, or to fix upon him some mark of disgrace, . . . a mode of punishment, he said, the most effectual as well as the most humane. Cuesta had just experienced the good effect of such measures; the regiments whom he deprived of one of their pistols for misconduct at the battle of Medellin, behaved so well from that time, and exerted themselves so strenuously on all occasions to wipe off their disgrace, that, after the battle of Talavera, the pistol was restored to them.

*State of
Talavera.*

The wounded of both armies were brought in promiscuously, and many of them laid in the streets and in the squares till shelter could be allotted for them: even for this inevitable necessity no order having been taken by the Spanish authorities. It is worthy of notice, that a greater proportion recovered of those who were left a night upon the field, than of such as were earlier housed, and this is explained by the effect of the free air in preventing fever. Needful accommodations for these poor

creatures were not to be found in a city which the French had visited. They had destroyed the public buildings, overturned the altars, and opened the tombs. Furniture of every kind they had carried off to their camp, and what they had no other use for, they had consumed as fuel. Frenchmen like, they had a theatre in their camp. The soldiers' huts were so remarkable for neatness and regularity, as to be an object of curiosity to the British officers; but it was remarked as one proof of the wanton destruction caused by the Intruder's armies, that they were all thatched with unthreshed straw. It ought to be mentioned as a contrast to this, that when the British troops halted by day or night amid olive-groves, they were not allowed to cut the trees either for fuel or for shelter.

The day after the action a light brigade, 3000 strong, and a troop of horse-artillery, under Brigadier-general Craufurd, arrived from Lisbon to reinforce the British army, which thus found itself nearly as strong as before the action. But a battle so well contested, and so gloriously won, was rendered of no avail, by the complicated misconduct of the Spanish government and of the Spanish general. The same want of provisions and of the means of transport, which had compelled Sir Arthur to halt at Talavera, prevented him from pursuing his victory. The Intruder, ignorant of this, trembled for Madrid, expecting every hour to hear that Venegas, Sir R. Wilson, and the combined forces were marching upon that city, where the people were looking out for their deliverers. Sir Robert had proceeded with his corps to Navalcarneiro, notwithstanding the immediate neighbourhood of the enemy's army. The detachment reached the Guadarrama: he had established a communication with Madrid, Belliard was preparing to withdraw from the city into the Retiro, which had been fortified as a citadel, and Sir Robert had made arrangements for entering the metropolis on the night of

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*Movements
of Sir R.
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*Movements
of Soult,
Ney, and
Mortier.*

*Cuesta ne-
glects to se-
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passes.*

that very day when he and his corps were recalled, because a general action was expected. Some insurrectionary movements had already appeared, which Belliard had been able to suppress; but it was certain that the moment an army came to the assistance of the citizens, he would no longer be able to keep them down. Joseph's hope, therefore, was from an attack upon the rear of the allies, to be made by the collected forces of Soult, Ney, and Mortier, under command of the former.

Soult, after his retreat from Galicia, occupied Zamora, Salamanca, and Leon, with the remains of his army, which he had found means to re-equip. Ney's corps was quartered at Astorga, Benevente, and Leon; Mortier's at Medina del Campo, and Valladolid. Apprised of the movements of the English, Soult gave orders on the 20th for collecting the whole at Salamanca, and four days afterwards was instructed by Jourdan, in the Intruder's name, to advance as speedily as possible upon the rear of the enemy by way of Plasencia. Sir Arthur, from the commencement of the campaign, was aware of the existence of this force in the north, and the manner in which it would attempt to act. His own army was so small that it was not possible for him to spare detachments for securing the passes of the long mountain-ridge which the French must cross. But Cuesta had sent the Marquess de la Reyna, with two battalions from his own army and two from Bejar, to occupy the Puerto de Baños, and given orders to the Duque del Parque to secure the Puerto de Perales, by detachments from Ciudad Rodrigo. The former point Sir Arthur considered safe; but, doubting the Duque's power to spare a sufficient force for the latter, he directed Beresford, with the Portuguese troops, to defend this pass, as the greatest service which, in their then state of discipline, they were capable of performing.

Two days after the battle, intelligence was brought to Tala-