

cooling the air around, and diffusing a sense of freshness even in the hottest noon. In some places the loftiest trees were made to bear a part in these devices of wanton power, the pipes being conveyed to their summit; in others the fountains set music in motion when they played. There was one fountain which served as a monument of one of the proudest victories that had ever been achieved by Spain, the central part being formed from a block of marble which had been taken in one of the Turkish ships at Lepanto.

CHAP.  
XXIV.  
1809.  
August.

But this was a place where the strength of vegetation made art appear subordinate, and the magnificence which all these elaborate embellishments produced was subservient to delight and comfort. The elms, which were the largest of their kind, had attained a growth which nothing but artificial irrigation in a genial soil and hot climate could have given them. The poplar and the tamarisk flourished in like manner; the latter grew along the banks of the Tagus with peculiar luxuriance. Every approach to Aranjuez was shaded with trees, from which avenues branched off in all directions, opening into glades, and diversified with bowers. Nor was this royal expenditure directed only to the purposes of splendid enjoyment. The Spanish Kings, with an intention better than the success which attended it, endeavoured to improve the agriculture of the country, by setting their subjects an example upon the royal domains. The best fruits in the Peninsula were cultivated for sale in the royal gardens; the finest oil in Spain was produced there, and wine from vineyards of the choicest grapes was collected in cellars of unequalled extent. They had attempted also to naturalize the camel there, and at one time from two to three hundred of these animals fed in the royal pastures, and were occasionally employed for burthen. But though they bred, and appeared to thrive there, the experiment was given up; the native animals,

CHAP. which are reared with so much less cost and care, being better  
 XXIV. suited to the soil, and surface, and climate of Spain.

1809. The banks of the Tagus at Aranjuez, and the gardens which  
 August. it had so long been the pride and pleasure of the Spanish  
 Kings to embellish, were now to be made the scene of war.  
 About two in the afternoon the French appeared upon the  
 right bank, and began the attack along the whole line. They  
 opened a heavy fire on all points, but more especially upon the  
 ford of Don Antonio's garden, and the reserve from the walks  
 were sent to strengthen that post. Panes at the Puente de  
 Barcas was struck by a ball, which carried away his leg; a  
 glance convinced him that the wound was mortal: "Comrades,"  
 said he, "stand by these guns till death.. I am going to  
 heaven:" and, as they bore him from the field, the only anxiety  
 he expressed was, that another officer should take his place  
 without delay. Don Gaspar Hermosa succeeded him, after  
 planting a mortar at the Puente ford in the midst of the enemy's  
 fire. The Spanish artillery was excellently served this day, and  
 frequently silenced that of the French. One mortar, placed in  
 the thicket opposite the islet, made great havoc among the  
 enemy. Lacy, perceiving his own post secure, and that the  
 main attack was made upon the left, at the Puente Verde, the  
 gardens of the Prince and of Don Antonio, removed his division  
 thither without waiting for orders. The firing continued till the  
 approach of night, when the French, baffled in all their attempts,  
 retired. The loss of the Spaniards was between two and three  
 hundred; they computed that of the French at three hundred  
 killed, and about a thousand wounded. The French force con-  
 sisted of fourteen or fifteen thousand, being the whole of Se-  
 bastiani's corps. They themselves carefully avoided all mention  
 of the action, saying only that they worsted the advanced guard  
 of Venegas, and drove it beyond the Tagus. Giron, who com-

manded, was rewarded with the rank of camp-marshal ; and the Junta testified its sense of the heroism of Panes, who died a few hours after he was wounded, by exempting the title in his family from the duties called *lanzas* and *medias anatas* for ever, appointing his father a gentleman of the bed-chamber, and ordering a letter to be written to him, as a document to be preserved in the archives of his house, expressing, in the most honourable terms, the sense which the country entertained of the services rendered to it both by father and son.

CHAP.  
XXIV.  
1809.  
August.

The French after this repulse recrossed the Xarama, and, as Venegas had foreseen, prepared to attack him from the other side. According to their official statement, they thought it would be a long and difficult work to rebuild the bridges at Aranjuez, and that it would be less dangerous to force the passage of the Tagus at Toledo, where the Spaniards remained masters of the bridge. The Spanish General, therefore, disposed his troops at Aranjuez, Ocaña, La Guardia, and Tembleque, ready to march, as circumstances might require, to some point where he could only be attacked in front, and might be freed from the apprehension that the enemy would cut off his retreat by way of Toledo, and, having disabled him, penetrate to the Sierra Morena, the armies of Cuesta and Sir Arthur being too far off to prevent them. The necessity of retreating was indeed obvious ; and the Junta were of opinion that he had no other course left than that of abandoning La Mancha, and taking post at the pass of Despeñaperros. Mr. Frere thought it would be better, if La Mancha were untenable, to occupy the passes with a part of his army only (for it was not to be supposed that at this time the French could make any serious attempt upon Andalusia), and march with or detach the rest upon the left of the enemy, through a country which they had never been able to occupy, Cuenca, Molina, and as far as Aragon ; a movement upon the

*Deliberations concerning the army of La Mancha.*

CHAP. two former points would threaten the capital, upon the latter it  
 XXIV. would give the Spaniards a decided superiority in that quarter,  
 and interrupt the communication of the French with France.

1809.

August.

In the present state of things, Mr. Frere perceived how desirable it was that the Spaniards should have as many small armies as possible; their system of military subsistence and discipline being so imperfect, defeats became dangerous and even destructive in proportion to the size of the army; in small bodies they were comparatively of little importance: in small bodies the Spaniards had almost uniformly been successful; and such diversions would harass and distract the French, and waste their force.

*Venegas re-  
solves to at-  
tack the  
enemy.*

Mr. Frere spoke upon this plan to one of the leading members of the war department, and would have delivered in his advice in writing, if Marquis Wellesley had not at that time been daily expected to arrive at Seville and supersede him. This circumstance, and the confidence which Venegas expressed in the spirit of his troops (for he seemed disposed to risk a battle rather than abandon La Mancha), induced him to wait for the Marquis's arrival; and then it was too late. For on the same day that Mr. Frere recommended this proposed diversion, Venegas received advices from the fifth division, under General Zerain, by Toledo, that the French had received a reinforcement of 8000 men, and were about to attack him. Upon this the general ordered the fourth division from Tembleque to advance to his support. While they were on their way, Sebastiani, having collected his whole corps at Toledo, attacked Zerain, who retreated in good order to Sonseca, and from thence turned to Almonacid to join the troops which had been sent to his assistance. At Almonacid Venegas assembled his whole army on the 10th, and believing that the number of the enemy did not exceed 14,000, the same reasons which had made him stand his ground at Aranjuez, after the retreat of the combined armies,

*Aug. 8.*

*Aug. 9.*

induced him once more to give the French battle. He could not bear to abandon the people of La Mancha, who had welcomed him with enthusiasm on his advance: he knew how injurious it was, not merely to the general character of an army, but to the individual feelings of the soldiery, to be perpetually giving way before the enemy, losing ground, and losing reputation and hope also; and his success at Aranjuez made him confident in the courage and conduct of his troops. Before he delivered his own opinion, he summoned the different chiefs of division to council, and they perfectly accorded with his pre-determination. This was on the 10th; he resolved to let the troops rest the next day, that they might recover from their march, and it was agreed to attack the enemy at daybreak on the 12th. Meantime it was supposed more accurate information of their number might be obtained.

CHAP.  
XXIV.  
1809.  
*August.*

Delay has ever been the bane of the Spanish councils, and Venegas should have remembered, that in offensive war every thing depends upon celerity. Victor had now opened a communication with Soult, and the Intruder being thus delivered from all fear of the allied armies, joined Sebastiani, with the reserve, on the 9th. While Venegas was deliberating, his position was reconnoitred; and on the morning of the day which he had allowed for rest he was attacked by an army of little less than double the force at which he had computed it. The Spaniards, however, were not taken by surprise. The right wing, under Vigodet, extended to some rising ground beyond the village of Almonacid: the centre, consisting of two divisions, under Camp-marshal Castejon, were in the plain before the village. Lacy commanded the left, which was supported by a height, detached from the range of hills that run north and south, beginning at Toledo. Giron was stationed, with three battalions, as a reserve, behind the centre; the rest of his di-

*He is at-  
tacked by  
them.*

CHAP.  
XXIV.

1809.

August.

*Battle of  
Almonacid.*

vision were posted, part on the heights to the left, part at an advanced battery, and the remainder upon the Castle hill, behind the village. The cavalry, under Camp-marshal the Marquis of Gelo, D. Tomas Zerain, and the Viscount de Zolina, were placed in two bodies, one on each wing.

The Intruder was in the field; but Sebastiani was the real commander. That general perceived that the event of the day depended upon the possession of the hill on the Spaniards' left, and he ordered Laval to attack it with his two divisions. Laval formed in close columns, by divisions and brigades, and attacked the hill both in front and on the right at once. The French suffered considerably in this attack. Count Sobolesky and another chief of battalion were killed, several of equal rank wounded; but they had the advantage of numbers as well as discipline. The Colonel who commanded on the hill was wounded, and before Giron could reach the spot with the reserve, the battalions which were posted there gave way. These battalions, instead of rallying when they found themselves supported, confused the troops who came to support them. The height, upon which the fate of the day depended, was lost; and the enemy, having won it, attacked the Spaniards in flank. Lacy upon this wheeled to face the enemy, and for a while withstood them: 200 cavalry, led by Don Nicholas Chacon, charged one of their columns, which, forming itself into a square, withstood the attack; and Chacon, having his horse shot under him, and some of his best officers and soldiers killed, was compelled to withdraw. In the centre the enemy were equally successful, and at length the Spaniards fell back along the whole of their line. Nevertheless the ground was well contested, and Venegas took up a second position behind Almonacid, supported by the Castle hill. Here he was presently attacked at all points; his cavalry made another charge, which failed for lack of num-

bers, not of spirit, and the general then perceived that there was no hope of recovering the day. He therefore commenced his retreat, and ordered Vigodet, whose division was at this time the least exposed, to bring up and cover the rear. Vigodet performed this service with great coolness, recovered and spiked one of the cannon which had been taken, and began at length to fall back himself in good order. At this time some ammunition carts, which were blown up on his right, that they might not fall into the enemy's hands, frightened the horses of the little cavalry which covered his own retreat, and the French, taking advantage of their confusion, charged him vigorously. The second in command of the division, D. Francisco de Reyna, checked the pursuers, while Vigodet rallied the scattered horse, and collected about 1000 men, under whose protection he left the field. They retreated by different routes to Herencia, meaning to fall back to Manzanares, Membrilla, and Solana. As far as Herencia the movement was effected in good order, only a few soldiers, straggling from their ranks to drink at the few wells in that arid country; but when the van reached Manzanares, a cry arose that the French had got before them on the road of Valdepeñas, to cut off their retreat. This false report, either originating in treason or in cowardice, spread through the troops: from that moment subordination was at an end, and they forfeited the credit which had been gained in the action, by dispersing.

Sebastiani stated the loss of the Spaniards at 4000 killed, 4000 prisoners, an immense number wounded, 100 ammunition waggons, and thirty-five pieces of cannon. The whole of the artillery and baggage was certainly lost; but the number of prisoners was grossly exaggerated, because the Spaniards did not disperse till they had accomplished their retreat; and the French, with that inconsistency which so often betrayed the

CHAP.  
XXIV.  
1809.  
*August.*

CHAP. falsehood of their official accounts, admitted that none of their  
XXIV. corps could be overtaken. He gave no account of his own loss ;  
1809. Venegas estimated it at 8000, . . an exaggeration as great as  
August. that of the French general ; but that the French suffered se-  
verely was evident, because they were long crippled for any  
farther operations. Venegas retired to La Carolina, his men  
assembled at the passes of the Sierra, and in a few days he was  
again at the head of a respectable army. The enemy had now  
effected every thing which they proposed ; they had driven  
Cuesta and the British beyond the Tagus on one side, and on  
the other had recovered possession of La Mancha ; and the  
Intruder, rejoicing in the issue of a campaign, which opened  
under such inauspicious aspects, returned triumphantly to Ma-  
drid. The disgrace of Talavera sate easy upon the French ; . .  
with their usual contempt of truth, they affirmed that they had  
won the victory ; and the situation of the contending armies a  
few weeks after the battle gave credit to the impudent assertion.



## CHAPTER XXV.

PLANS OF THE FRENCH. SIR A. WELLESLEY RAISED TO THE PEERAGE. MARQUIS WELLESLEY ARRIVES IN SPAIN. ALTERATIONS IN THE BRITISH MINISTRY. STATE OF THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT. THE BRITISH ARMY RETREATS TO THE FRONTIERS OF PORTUGAL. BATTLES OF TAMAMES, OCANA, AND ALBA DE TORMES.

NEVER during the war had the prospect appeared so hopeful as when Sir Arthur entered Spain. For the first time Buonaparte had been repulsed at all points in a great battle; and for the first time also a spirit of national resistance had broken forth in Germany, . . . the only spirit by which his tyranny could be overthrown. The Spaniards seemed to acquire strength from their defeats, learning confidence in their resources, if not experience from misfortunes; while the British army, by the passage of the Douro and the discomfiture of Soult, had once more made the enemy feel what they might apprehend from such troops and such a commander.

The Peninsula was but a secondary object in the all-grasping schemes of Buonaparte's ambition. At first he had expected to secure it without a struggle; nor was he yet so undeceived concerning the real nature of the resistance to be experienced there, as to believe that any serious effort would be required for completing its conquest. In Germany it was, he thought, that

1809.  
August.

*Soult proposes immediately to invade Portugal.*

CHAP. the fate of Europe must be decided; and this opinion was pro-  
 XXV. claimed in England by those who, on every occasion, sought to  
 1809. persuade the public that resistance to such a statesman and such  
 August. a general, wherever it was attempted, could only end in defeat,  
 and humiliation, and ruin. Under this impression he had ordered the intrusive government, which was in fact entirely under his orders, to content itself with protracting the war till the campaign in Germany should be brought to a close. That campaign was now ended. The battle of Wagram had re-established his shaken power; an armistice had immediately been sued for, and in the negotiations which followed, the house of Austria surrendered more than the French king Francis I. had lost at Pavia. The news of this great success did not, however, induce the Intruder to deviate from his instructions. M. Soult, the most enterprising as well as the ablest of the French officers who were employed in Spain, proposed at this time a plan for re-entering Portugal. The line which should have secured the communication of the British army with Lisbon, he occupied, now that that army had found it necessary to retreat across the Tagus. He proposed, therefore, to move from Plasencia against Beresford's inefficient force, while Ney, advancing from Salamanca, should act upon its left flank. That army, if not absolutely destroyed, would be prevented from forming a junction by way of Alcantara with Sir Arthur; and the French, by rapidly pursuing this advantage, might occupy Abrantes, and once more take possession of Lisbon, in which case Soult, still deceiving himself with regard to the disposition of the Portuguese, thought they would submit to an enemy whom they found it hopeless to resist. The plan was boldly conceived, though M. Soult had not sufficiently taken into his calculation the character of the troops with which he would again be brought in contact: but it was rejected by Joseph, who was at that time guided chiefly by

9081  
 Campaign  
 of 1809, pp.  
 49-52.  
 Ib. App.  
 C-K.