

their progress. They extended from Alhandra on the Tagus to the mouth of the little river Sizandro : the direct line across the country between these points is about six-and-twenty miles ; the line of defence was about forty. All roads which could have afforded any advantage to the enemy were destroyed, and others opened by which the allies might effect their communications with most facility. In some places streams were dammed and inundations formed ; in others the sides of the ravines and hills were scarped perpendicularly ; intrenchments were thrown up wherever they could be serviceable ; every approach was commanded by cannon, placed in posts which had been rendered inaccessible ; and at all the most important points redoubts were erected capable of resisting even if the enemy should establish themselves in their rear, and well provided with stores and ammunition for defence.

These works, the most celebrated of their kind, were constructed under the direction of Lieutenant-Colonel Fletcher, of the engineers, assisted by Captain Chapman. Lieutenant-General Hill commanded on the right, having his head-quarters at Alhandra ; . . . the great approach to Lisbon is on this side, but the ground is strong ; no means had been neglected for strengthening it, and gun-boats from the Tagus could assist in the defence. That river covered the right, the left was closed by the heights above Sobral, and communicated there with the corps of the centre. Major-General Picton commanded on the left ; his head-quarters were at Torres Vedras, a town which, being better known than any other included within the works, became for ever memorable in military history, by giving name to these formidable lines. The weakest part of the whole position was between Torres Vedras and the sea ; but the artificial defences were proportionately strong, . . . and where it would otherwise have been most accessible, it was rendered most secure by inundations

CHAP.
XXXII.
1810.
October.

CHAP. extending some six miles along the Sizandro to the sea. The
 XXXII. centre extended from the heights of Sobral de Monte Agraço
 1810. to Torres Vedras: in the former little town Marshal Beresford
October. had his head-quarters; Lord Wellington's were about two leagues
 from the latter, at the Quinta de Pero Negro, near Enxara dos
 Cavalleiros. The heights above Sobral formed the principal
 point of defence on this part of the line; and the villages of
 Ordasqueyra and Runa, which are upon the road between Sobral
 and Torres Vedras, were also strongly fortified, because they
 commanded the only pass to the latter town within Monte Junto.
 That mountain, which runs due north from Runa for some four-
 teen miles, contributed mainly to the strength of the position.
 It prevented all military communication between Sobral and
 Torres Vedras, except by the line which the allies occupied in
 strength. Lord Wellington might be attacked either from the
 east by Sobral, or by Torres Vedras from the west; but he could
 bring his troops from the one point to the other in a few hours,
 along a safe and easy communication; whereas for the enemy to
 have communicated between the same points would have re-
 quired at least two days, for they must have rounded the Serra
 at its northern point.

In the rear of this line, and nearly parallel to it, at a distance
 of from six to eight miles, was a second fortified position, ex-
 tending from behind Alverca to Bucellas, thence along the Serras
 to Montachique, by the park wall of Mafra to Gradil, and so
 along the heights to the mouth of a little stream called S. Lo-
 renzo. Strong works covered the communication between these
 lines. And lest, contrary to all probabilities and human foresight,
 a position so fortified and occupied should be found untenable
 against the invaders, works were constructed at the mouth of the
 Tagus, at St. Julians, which would have secured the embarka-
 tion of the troops. The heights at Almada, on the south of the

Tagus, which command Lisbon and its anchorage, were also fortified, in case Mortier should carry into effect a co-operation on the side of Alentejo, which it was not doubted was part of the French plan. Ten thousand men, consisting in part of marines, were destined to serve in this quarter. The redoubts in the position were manned by Portugueze militia, who with a certain number of regular troops, were quite equal to the duties which might be there required. The troops of the line, British and Portugueze, were thus disposable to act in moveable columns, and oppose the enemy wherever they might attempt to penetrate. The allies were joined here by Romana with 6000 Spaniards, from Extremadura; here they might be efficiently employed, but in that quarter they could be of little service. Badajoz, which Romana had secured at the critical time, had now by his exertions been well provided and garrisoned, . . . and this junction had been arranged as soon as it became certain that the decisive stand must be made in the lines of Torres Vedras.

The French had suffered severely from the weather during the latter days of their march, so that both horses and men were greatly exhausted when they arrived at the point where their advance was stopped. It was no easy task to reconnoitre these lines, many of the most important points being concealed behind the hills; but Massena, after a careful inspection, saw enough to convince him, that if he attacked them, a repulse might be expected, more fatal in its results than that which he had received at Busaco. And his hopes were not raised by the intelligence which now reached him of the consequences which that defeat had drawn after it. It was then perceived how great an error had been committed in not pursuing Colonel Trant beyond the Vouga, and dispersing the Portugueze militia under his command.

That officer, who well understood the weakness both of his

CHAP.
XXXII.

1810.

October.

Works at
Almeida.

Romana
joins the
allies at
Lisbon.

CHAP.
XXXII.

1810.

October.

*Colonel
Trant sur-
prises the
French in
Coimbra.*

forces and of his position, . . for the Vouga was at that time ford-able, . . had retreated by a night march to Oliveira, not without apprehension that the enemy would send a detachment against Porto, where they would have found no other troops to defend it than the small and ill disciplined body which he could have carried thither. When he had ascertained that this was not their purpose, but that the whole army was advancing in pursuit of Lord Wellington, and had left their wounded in Coimbra, he lost no time, but immediately concerted means for surprising them in that city. The Army of the North, as it was called, under Lieutenant-General Bacellar, consisted of three divisions of militia, . . that of Tras os Montes, under Silveira, that of the Minho, under Brigadier-General Miller, and that of Porto, under Trant. It had also two regiments of Portuguese cavalry and three brigades of field artillery, . . this constituted its whole force. When Trant was sent round by Porto to Sardam, the other divisions were disposed so as to close upon the enemy's rear; and the advanced guard, under Colonel John Wilson, followed them through Vizeu, and along the lower falls of the Caramula, intercepting their communications and taking their stragglers. This body was near enough to see from a distance the action at Busaco; and when Massena, withdrawing from thence, concentrated his army at Mortagoa, Colonel Wilson fell in with a detachment of his rear-guard, and in an affair of nearly equal numbers captured thirty mounted dragoons, and several infantry. As he proceeded he found the villages laid waste, and filled with the enemy's dead and dying; and many of their wounded, falling into his hands, were committed to the surgeon's care, and saved from the death to which the invading army in its haste had abandoned them. With this officer, and with Brigadier-General Miller, Trant intended to combine his movements; and having written to them, advanced from Oliveira

to Mealhada, expecting to join them there, . . . but the country through which they came had been completely wasted, so that the want of supplies, and the exhausted state of the horses, rendered it impossible for them to advance so rapidly as he had hoped. Delay would give the enemy leisure to prepare for defence, whereas it was probable that at this time they had no apprehension of an attack, and were ignorant that any troops were so near them: Mealhada is scarcely twelve miles from Coimbra, and by a rapid movement Trant thought he might be able with his own division to effect what, if time were lost and the French on their guard, the united bodies might find it difficult to accomplish. He determined, therefore, to proceed. At a little distance from Os Fornos he fell in with an enemy's detachment, pushed on his cavalry so as to cut them off from Coimbra, and made them all prisoners, except a few who fell before the others surrendered. Then he ordered his horse to advance at a gallop along the principal road, cross the bridge over the Mondego, and take post on the Lisbon road, thus cutting off the communication between Massena's army and the garrison. While the cavalry were crossing, an irregular fire was kept up upon them from St. Clara's, a nunnery on the south of the river which the enemy occupied: as soon as the passage was effected, the French here proposed to capitulate; but Trant would hear of no capitulation, . . . they must surrender at discretion, he said, and he would exert all his means to protect them from the people. The infantry meantime entered the city; and after a contest which continued about an hour, the French were made prisoners. Six or seven hundred convalescents thought themselves strong enough to defend the convent in which they were quartered, imprudently therefore they refused to surrender: the building was presently stormed, and most of them fell victims to Portugueze vengeance.

CHAP.
XXXII.

1810.

October.

CHAP.
XXXII.

1810.

October.

*He escorts
his prisoners
to Porto.*

Colonel Trant found more difficulty in protecting the French than in taking them prisoners. The militia and armed peasantry under his command were exasperated almost to madness by the conduct of an enemy whose route from Pinhel might be traced by the smoke of burning villages. Coimbra itself presented a spectacle sufficient to excite the bitterest feelings of indignation. The French had ransacked every house, and church, and public building; they had for pure wantonness set fire to some of the houses, and they had heaped up promiscuously in the streets all the provisions which the army could not carry with it. Enough had been found in shops, and private houses, and in the convents of that populous and flourishing city, to have supplied the army for no inconsiderable time, if it had been collected in magazines: but Massena relied upon having the resources of Lisbon at his disposal; and the commissary-general, whom he had left as governor in Coimbra, however well he understood the importance of preserving the stores which had here fallen into his hands, was unable to restrain a soldiery, who from the commencement of the war had been permitted to indulge in licenses of every kind. About 800 of Trant's men were natives of Coimbra or its district; not a few of the inhabitants, upon the recovery of the city, appeared from their hiding-places: the enemy had been surprised and taken in the very act of havoc; and nothing but the greatest exertions on the part of Trant, and the respect with which he was regarded, could have saved the prisoners from the vengeance of those who, in addition to their strong national feeling, were under the sense of private and present injuries, and those of the deepest kind. For though the greater part of the population had taken flight, in so populous a city there had been many for whom flight was impossible, . . . age and sickness had detained some: others were bound by duty to the sick and aged; and others again, under the fear of casting themselves upon the

world as wanderers, and the hope that by remaining with their property they might preserve a part at least, had waited for the evil under their own roofs, or hesitated whither to fly, till it had been too late; and these unhappy persons had found no protection from the established laws of war, or the common usages of humanity. Under these circumstances there was no other means of preserving the prisoners but by marching them to Porto. Brigadier Miller and Colonel Wilson, who had formed a junction on the day that Trant's dispatches reached them, having pushed on with all speed to support him in his attempt, arrived at Coimbra a few hours after him. Leaving them therefore in the city with part of his brigade, with the other he convoyed 4000 of the French, going himself to protect them, as well knowing, that unless he were present, they would never reach Porto alive, . . . for his men had been raised in that country, which was the scene of Soult's cruelties, and some of them were from that village of Arrifana, where horrors had been perpetrated of which the military murders committed under General Thomieres' orders were the least part.

CHAP.
XXXII.
1810.
October.

See p. 201.

Above 150 officers and 5000 men were made prisoners by this well-timed enterprise; 3500 muskets were taken, nearly the whole of which were charged; and hence the number of effective men may be estimated. A great number of kine and sheep were found, which the enemy had collected; had they crossed the Vouga they might have carried off from 2000 to 3000 head of cattle in one or two days' sweep of the country between that river and the Douro. In the commissariat, as well as in the hospital department, Massena suffered a loss here which was severely felt; the capture of his wounded under such circumstances was not more mortifying to him than the disappointment was painful of those hopes which he had founded upon the possession of Coimbra. Instead of having a garrison in that im-

*Difficulties
of Mas-
sena's si-
tuation.*

CHAP. XXXII. portant quarter, occupied in collecting for him the resources of a fertile country, and facilitating his intercourse with Spain,

1810. his communications were now impeded; he was cut off from Beira and the northern provinces; the Portugueze, encouraged by success, were acting in his rear, and in front there was a formidable force in a position, which he soon perceived it would be hopeless to attack. He had no other means of subsistence for his army than what might be procured by force, and any reinforcement must be strong enough to fight its way from the very frontier of France, for a small party could nowhere pass in safety. But the sea was open to the allies; . . . every day witnessed the arrival of supplies and stores in the Tagus, and it was reasonably to be expected that Lord Wellington would soon receive reinforcements enough for enabling him to act upon the offensive. Massena felt now the difficulties of the situation in which his own confidence and that of Buonaparte had placed him. But he manifested no sense of weakness; and having well reconnoitred the right of the lines, he placed his three corps separately in bivouac in front of it, and determined, but with due caution, to make at least a trial of that fortune which had never failed him till he was opposed to British enemies.

His demonstrations in front of the lines.

There was a redoubt in an important point of the position, at the foot of the heights above Sobral; opposite to this, at a little distance, the French established one, and Massena having strictly observed the ground, gave orders for attacking the British redoubt, and took his station on a hill to see the issue of this his first operation. The Honourable Colonel Cadogan of the 73d commanded there, and not only were the enemy repulsed, but their own redoubt was attacked, carried, and maintained. Convinced by the trial how little was to be hoped from any bolder measures, Massena ventured no farther. To cover his own plans, he still however maintained his position, and made such demon-

Early Campaigns, 191.

strations, that the allies were daily under arms before daylight, with their general-in-chief ready to direct their operations, expecting and hoping that a general attack might be made, and in full assurance that it could only end in the defeat and destruction of the enemy. But the French commander was not now so confident in his own troops, nor so ignorant of those to whom he was opposed, as to incur the danger of a defeat which must have been irreparable. The demonstration was made for the purpose of covering certain movements in his rear, and after a week of anxious and eager hope, the allies were convinced that no attempt would be made to force their inexpugnable position.

Having consulted with Marshal Ney, Regnier, Junot, and Montbrun, Massena determined upon sending to Buonaparte to request reinforcements, and taking a position in the interior of Portugal till they should arrive. As a preparatory measure, Montbrun was sent with the advanced guard, and with Loison's division to occupy Abrantes. Meantime he established his head-quarters at Alenquer, those of Regnier's corps were at Villa Franca, of Junot's opposite to Sobral, and of Ney's in front of Torres Vedras. Montbrun was detained two days at Santarem by an inundation of the Tagus, which covered the Campos de Golegam; as soon as the waters had retired, he advanced to Barquinha; that place, like Santarem, was deserted, but the inhabitants, relying too much upon protection from Abrantes, and from the river, had collected large magazines there, which they had now no time for removing. When he reached the Zezere, thinking to cross at Punhete, he found that the bridge of boats had been destroyed, and that a detachment from the garrison of Abrantes was entrenched in the town, which stands on the left bank. The Zezere is at all times a rapid and formidable stream; at that season it was nowhere fordable; the banks are high and difficult, and after consulting with the other generals, Montbrun

CHAP.
XXXII.
1810.
October.

*Colonel
Jones's Ac-
count, i. 308*

*Montbrun
sent against
Abrantes.*

CHAP. determined to set the town on fire, that, under cover of the con-
 XXXII. flagration, he might throw a bridge across, and effect his passage:
 1810. this resolution was taken at night; in the morning it was found
 October. that the allies had withdrawn; the river was then bridged with-
 out opposition, and the enemy advanced upon Abrantes. But
 that city was well provided against any sudden attack; and the
 French, perceiving that nothing was to be done there, retired to
 Punhete, and Barquinha, and Golegam. Montbrun's next orders
 were to take possession of Torres Novas and Thomar. Colonel
 Wilson had been instructed to proceed with his corps of militia
 towards these towns, for the purpose of confining the enemy's
 detachments on that side; but he, and Trant, and Miller, were
 charged always to keep in view the necessity of preserving their
 communication with the Lower Douro. Wilson, after the re-
 capture of Coimbra, had followed the enemy through Leiria,
 and afterwards occupied the road from Ponte de Murcella to
 Thomar. But this town had been taken possession of by Mont-
 brun, and there and at Torres Novas stores were found which
 relieved for a while the distress of the invaders, who depended
 for their subsistence entirely upon what they could find.

*The French
 army sub-
 sists by
 plunder.*

It was because Massena was too strong in numbers to be beaten without a greater expense of lives than Lord Wellington could then afford; that the British commander trusted to famine, and to that worrying system of national warfare which no army can withstand. Famine would soon and surely have compelled the invaders to retreat if the orders of the Regency had been duly observed, and the country completely cleared of all stores before the enemy approached. But the local magistrates had not taken effectual measures for enforcing these orders; while the danger was at a distance, they had continued to hope it might be averted, or at least that it would not reach their particular districts; and in very many places the farmers had secreted their stores, that they