

found that the Coimbra students had performed a service of real importance in winning Figueira from the enemy; the landing in the Mondego being so difficult, that with all the zeal and ability of the navy, it would have been impossible to effect it without the cordial assistance of the Portuguese. They began to disembark on the first of August. The weather was so little favourable, and the surf so high, that the whole of the troops were not landed till the 5th, and on that day General Spencer arrived, his corps following him the next. He had embarked immediately upon learning the surrender of Dupont, not waiting for instructions. This corps was disembarked on the 7th and 8th, on which night the whole army were in readiness to advance; the march of the main body was, however, delayed till the 10th, at the desire of the Portuguese general officers. Sir Arthur conferred with them at Montemor o Velho, and arranged the plan of operations: he armed and inspected their troops, recommended and superintended their organization, and offered as large a sum as his military funds could afford, to defray the expenses of their equipment: this, however, was declined by their officers. While the troops were landing, a party of the police cavalry arrived at Coimbra, having effected their escape from Lisbon. This hazardous attempt was planned and conducted by Eliziario de Carvalho. A serjeant, by name Gamboa, as soon as their flight was discovered, was dispatched to the French commander at Santarem, with orders to intercept and make an example of them, according to the system of the French tyranny. Gamboa, however, with the party under his command, followed and joined his countrymen; and they accomplished their dangerous march in safety.

Sir Arthur determined to march along the road nearest the sea, for the sake of communicating with the store-ships; but as this communication must needs be very precarious, both as de-

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They advance to Leiria.

CHAP. pending upon the state of the surf, and also because the army
 XI. might find it expedient to strike more into the country, arrange-
 1808. ments were made for taking with them sufficient stores to last
 August. till they should reach the Tagus. The advanced guard marched
 on the 9th, supported by the brigades under Generals Hill and
 Ferguson. Laborde and Thomieres had collected their corps,
 to the amount of from 5000 to 6000 men, in the neighbourhood
 of Leiria; they threatened the magazines formed in that city
 for the Portugueze army; and Sir Arthur was urged to advance
 as speedily as possible, for the sake of preserving them. The
 main body followed on the 10th: on that day Sir Arthur re-
 ceived advices from Coruña, informing him that neither Blake
 nor Cuesta was in a condition to act offensively against Bessieres,
 nor to follow him, if he should enter Portugal. But at the same
 time news arrived of the flight of the Intruder from Madrid;
 and Sir Arthur perceived that Bessieres would be more solicitous
 to cover his retreat towards the French frontier, than to attempt
 a diversion in favour of Junot. At all events, there was time
 enough for his operations against the latter before Bessieres
 could arrive; and it was to be expected that General Acland, or
 Sir John Moore, would land before he could come up. These
 advices, therefore, only determined him to follow up with the
 utmost celerity the plan which he had concerted. On the 11th
 the main body joined the advanced guard at Leiria, and the
 next day the Portugueze force, consisting of 6000 men, including
 600 cavalry, arrived, the whole force being now collected there.
 When the English advanced guard entered that city, they found
 in one of the convents the dead bodies of several monks who had
 been murdered by the French; the murderers had amused them-
 selves with dipping their hands in the blood of these victims,
 and printing the red mark upon the wall.

*Early Cam-
 paigns of
 the Duke of
 Wellington,
 p. 8.*

The arrival of the British troops in Portugal had the imme-

diate effect of putting an end to that anarchy which had already produced so much evil in the northern provinces. Meantime the wildest reports were afloat at Lisbon. The miserable people looking every where for deliverance, believed that an army from Morocco was coming to their aid. The trick of the egg was repeated, not as before, with mysterious initials, referring to King Sebastian, but with a distinct annunciation that the French were speedily to be destroyed. The egg thus inscribed was found upon the high altars of the Patriarchal Church: but the former instance had led the French to discover the easy process by which an inscription in relief may be produced, and on the following morning eggs with a counter prophecy, in the same fashion, were to be seen upon the high altar in every church in Lisbon: at the same time a paper was fixed up, explaining the trick. This was fair matter of mirth for the day; but Junot and his officers well knew that the hostile prediction was not made now without a reasonable and near prospect of its fulfilment; and very soon intelligence came that the only foe of which he stood in fear had actually disembarked. The Portugueze commanders at Coimbra and Pombal used their utmost endeavours that no information of the British movements might reach the enemy, and in this they were assisted by the disposition of the people. But entire concealment was not possible; . . . the news came to Lisbon at the same time from General Thomieres, from the agents of the police, by private letters, and by public report; and if Junot could have doubted the accuracy of his dispatches, all doubt would have been removed by the altered appearance of the Lisbonians, who now knew that of a truth their deliverance was at hand.

Loison was immediately recalled from Alem-Tejo, and Laborde, who was supposed to be the ablest of the French generals, was sent with the two brigades of Generals Brenier and Tho-

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*Joy of the
Portugueze
in Lisbon.*

*Neves, v.
67.*

*Thiebault,
170.*

*Neves, v.
62, 65.*

*Thiebault,
172.*

*Measures of
the French.*

CHAP. mieres to manœuvre and delay the enemy till Loison could
 XI. arrive, Travot being appointed to the command at Lisbon in
 1808. Laborde's stead; . . this general was chosen because having
 August. demeaned himself as a man of honour and humanity, he had
 Thiebault, deserved and obtained the respect and good opinion of the Por-
 175. tugueze. The castle at Lisbon, which had now been strongly
 fortified, was supplied with more ammunition and stores. The
 fowling-pieces and other weapons, which had been delivered up
 in obedience to a former edict, were broken, or rendered useless,
 . . the bars of silver into which the church plate had been cast,
 and the other portable plunder, packed for removal, and de-
 posited on board one of the Portugueze ships of war. Whole
 piles of rich hangings and vestments, the spoils of palaces and
 churches, were burnt in a building erected for the purpose near
 head-quarters, and in the sight of the people, for the sake of the
 gold and silver wherewith they were embroidered. In order to
 counteract the excitement of hope in the citizens, it was con-
 fidently asserted that 20,000 French had entered Portugal on
 the side of Braganza; and for the chance, vain as it was, of
 provoking their bigotry, they were reproached as having brought
 a stain upon their country by inviting heretics and Mahometans
 to fight against the French, who, like themselves, professed the
 true religion. It was indeed actually believed by the Portugueze
 that the British had brought with them a Moorish force: the
 Portugueze Consul in Barbary had in fact obtained from the
 Emperor of Morocco a promise of 200,000 *cruzados* for the
 service of Portugal; and this may have given occasion to a
 belief which was confirmed by the appearance of the High-
 landers: . . their dress was immediately pronounced not to be
 Christian, and for a time no doubt was entertained but that
 these were the Moorish auxiliaries.

*Observador
 Portuguez,
 402.
 Neves, v.
 65, 118.*

The French apprehended that Sir Arthur would move upon

the Zezere and the Tagus, for the purpose of interposing between Loison's detachment and their main force. Laborde therefore proceeded by Villa Franca and Rio-Maior to Candieiros, where he encamped; from Rio-Maior he might either take the direction of Alcobaça, Leiria, or Thomar, and, it was hoped, co-operate with Loison, in case any attempt were made to prevent their junction. Learning, however, that the British army kept the line of the coast, and that Loison had crossed the Tagus without opposition, and was in no danger of being impeded in his march, he proceeded to Alcobaça, where he found Thomieres. Junot had instructed him to reconnoitre the position of Batalha; . . the last ground, it might have been thought, on which an invader would have risked a battle; for there it was where Portugal, (and then also with English aid,) had achieved her own deliverance in the battle of Aljubarrota, one of the most signal and important victories in the age of chivalry. The country was too open for his force, and he therefore remained at Alcobaça, watching the movements of the enemy, and hoping to be joined by Loison. That general, meantime, had suffered much on his march through Alem-Tejo, from the excessive heat and the want of water. Though there were none to oppose them in the field or harass them, the French felt what it was to be in a country where every inhabitant regarded them with a deadly hatred. Wherever they went the towns and villages were deserted; . . meat, wine, and even bread, were wanting; and the persons who fell into their hands, or perhaps remained in their line for the purpose of deceiving them, sent them out of their way in search of springs or rivulets, which when they reached them were dry; . . or of stagnant waters, wherein hemp was steeped, and of which, nauseous and noisome as it was, the men could not be prevented from drinking greedily. Many died of heat

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1808.

*August.**Movements
of Laborde
and Loison.**Thiebault,
175.**Thiebault,
172.*

CHAP. and exhaustion on the way; and they who from fatigue or sick-
 XI. ness fell behind, were killed by the peasantry.

1808.

August.

*G. Freire
 separates
 from the
 English.*

Loison reached Abrantes on the 9th, crossing the Tagus by the bridge of boats at that city. He rested there one day, and, leaving 200 men in garrison, proceeded on the next across the Zezere to Thomar, where he arrived on the same day that the main body of the English reached Leiria, the two cities being about thirty miles from each other. Laborde was at Alcobaça, six leagues from the latter city, on the road to Lisbon. Their object had been to join at Leiria, but in this the British army had anticipated them; and as there was no practicable road for carriages between Thomar and Alcobaça, Loison could only effect a junction with Laborde by a circuitous route to the southward, and thus the latter general was exposed to be attacked alone. Bernardim de Freire, the Portugueze commander, in his former conferences with Sir Arthur, had expressed a wish that the British commissariat would supply his troops with British stores during the campaign. The impossibility of complying with so unreasonable a demand was pointed out; and Sir Arthur observed, that it was a new thing to require any army landing from its ships to supply not only its own consumption of meal, but also that of the native army which it was come to assist. He added, however, that he did not expect to have occasion to call upon the country for bread during his march towards Lisbon; but that beef, wine, and forage would be required, all of which the Bishop of Porto had engaged should be supplied. Notwithstanding this explanation, General Freire renewed the subject on his arrival at Leiria; and, instead of pursuing his march, the following morning, at the hour appointed, he sent a message to the British commander, saying, that unless the Portugueze were to be fed by the English commissariat, he would separate them

from the English army, and march for Santarem by way of Thomar; urging as his reason, that supplies would be scarce on the straight road, but here there was great plenty, and he should also be in a situation to cut off the retreat of the French from Lisbon. Freire had voluntarily placed himself and his troops under Sir Arthur's command only the day preceding.

There was another reason for this conduct, which he did not communicate to the British General. A fear had come upon the Portugueze officers during the night, that Loison, whose arrival at Abrantes they knew, would turn upon the northern provinces; the fate of Beja and Evora was before their eyes, and they trembled for Coimbra. Their apprehensions were confirmed by the arrival that night of dispatches from the Governor of Coimbra, communicating to General Freire, as information of the utmost importance, that Laborde's orders were to amuse the Portugueze army, in order that Loison might pass in their rear and destroy that city; thus, the Governor added, it had been determined in a council of war at Lisbon, and the advice was sent to him by a person upon whom he had entire reliance. It is very possible that the advice came from the French themselves, for the purpose of deceiving him. General Freire began now to fear not only for his own retreat, but even that the English, if they met with a repulse, would be cut off from the Mondego, and unable to retire to their ships. The truth is, that he was unequal to his situation, and having persons about him of as little experience as himself, they confused one another. Concealing from Sir Arthur this, which was the real cause of his vacillation, he chose to separate upon the question of supplies. The danger of the plan was pointed out to him, but in vain: Sir Arthur urged him, equally in vain, to co-operate with the British army in the deliverance of Portugal, if he had any regard to his own honour, to the honour of his country, or of his

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1808.

August.

*Motives for
his separation.*

*Neves, v.
79—81.*

CHAP. Prince : he then requested him to send him 1000 infantry, with
 XI. his cavalry, 250 in number, and his 400 light troops, engaging
 1808. to feed them ; and this was done. He advised him, at all events,
 August. to remain at Leiria, or Alcobaça, or any where in the rear of the
 English, that his troops might not be unnecessarily exposed to
 destruction ; but notwithstanding he was now assured that the
 English General had found resources in the country fully adequate
 to their subsistence, he said he should persist in his plan. Sir
 Arthur, considering it of importance, on political grounds, that
 the Portugueze troops should accompany his march, would have
 undertaken to feed them, if he could have relied upon his com-
 missariat ; but this, he complained, was so ill * composed, as to
 be incapable of distributing, even to the British troops, the
 ample supplies which had been procured for them. Freire's
 conduct was imputed to an opinion that the English were too
 weak for the service upon which they were advancing ; it was
 not suspected that he had received intelligence which alarmed
 him, and which he had withheld from the British commander.
 He was, however, wise enough to follow the advice which he
 had at first refused, and remained at Leiria.

*Skirmish
 near Caldas*

On the 14th, Sir Arthur reached Alcobaça, from which the

* Sir Arthur, upon the court of inquiry, begged leave, in justice to the individuals composing this commissariat, to state, that he did not intend to complain of want of zeal, nor of any deficiency of exertion on their part. "The fact is," said he, "that I wished to draw the attention of the government to this important branch of the service, which is but little understood in this country. The evils of which I complained are probably to be attributed to the nature of our political situation, which prevents us from undertaking great military operations, in which the subsistence of armies becomes a subject of serious consideration and difficulty, and these evils consisted in the inexperience of almost every individual belonging to the commissariat, of the mode of procuring, conveying, and distributing supplies." He requested that this explanation might stand upon the minutes.

French fell back the preceding night: the next day he arrived at Caldas. Laborde and Thomieres were now at Roliça, about ten miles off, and their advanced posts were within a league of the Caldas. Four companies of riflemen were ordered to drive them back; they were tempted to an incautious pursuit; a superior body of the enemy endeavoured to cut them off, and would have succeeded, had not General Spencer come to their support. A trifling loss was sustained in this affair, but the village was won, and the French retired entirely from the neighbourhood; their picquets having been driven from Obidos.

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The country between the Caldas and Obidos is a sandy level, with an open pine wood. Obidos itself stands finely upon an insulated hill, and a little beyond a mountainous or hilly region begins, the ascent from the low country being abrupt and difficult. Laborde had retired thither, knowing the strength of the ground, and expecting to be joined there by Loison, who, he knew, would make every exertion to effect his junction in time. That junction had once already been prevented by the timely arrival of the British at Leiria, and Sir Arthur now advanced for the purpose of a second time preventing it. The enemy were drawn up at the foot of the hill, in front of their position; they retired to the heights, and Sir Arthur, having reconnoitred the ground, and seen how difficult the attack in front would be, determined to attack both flanks. He therefore directed Major-General Ferguson, with 3000 men, to turn the enemy's right, and Major-General Hill to attack the left, while the Portuguese troops, under Colonel Trant, by a wider movement on that side, were to penetrate to his rear. Meanwhile columns under Major-Generals Crawford, Nightingale, and Fane, were to assemble in the plain, ready to force their way up the passes as soon as it should be seen that the enemy were shaken. This plan, which would have ensured success with the least possible loss, was

*Laborde
takes a po-
sition at
Roliça.*

August 17.