

been expected even from him, was receiving every hour fresh encouragements to persevere in the judicious system which he had adopted. For some time back he had been very urgent with his own government, to send such reinforcements as his circumstances required; and he was about this time gratified by the arrival in camp of six battalions from England, and four from Cadiz; amounting, in all, to between seven and eight thousand men. By this happy addition, the effective strength of the British army was increased to thirty-three thousand soldiers; whilst the sum total of its strength upon paper fell not short of forty-one thousand. Nor was this the only addition which he received to his force at a moment so critical. He prevailed upon Romana, whose continuance on the southern frontier was proved to be productive of no serious advantage, to join him with as large a portion of his corps as he could venture to remove; and there came in, in consequence, about three thousand Spaniards, the élite of the Spanish army, under that officer. The corps in question marched from Badajoz and Campo Major, and reaching the Tagus at Aldea Gallega, was brought over from thence, and took post at Exara de los Cavalleiros, as a support to our centre. Thus, with thirty-three thousand British, thirty thousand Portuguese, and three

thousand Spaniards, the allied army could muster nearly seventy thousand men ; of which the comparative inefficiency of some of its parts was more than compensated by the nature of the ground which it occupied.

CHAPTER II.

Massena halts before the lines, which are industriously strengthened by the British troops—Lord Wellington, alarmed for Abrantes, sends a corps across the Tagus to secure it—Fortifies a new position on the south side of the harbour—The enemy construct boats on the river—Retire to Santarem, and take up a position—The allies follow, and go into cantonments in front of them—Various movements of detached bodies, and many rumours touching the future.

LITTLE occurred in our immediate presence particularly deserving of notice, for some time after we finally took up the position of the Zebreira. At first, indeed, a few affairs of cavalry took place, most of which ended in our favour; but latterly this force was removed to the rear, as well because their services were not needed, as because they could there be better supplied with forage, than among the rugged defiles in front. There were also two partial rencontres of infantry; one in which some Portuguese regiments, attached to

General Cole's division, behaved well whilst retiring from Ribaldusa towards Guaxara; and another, which gave to the 71st regiment, assisted by a company of the 95th and a few Germans, a brilliant opportunity of distinguishing themselves. On the 14th, a strong body of French troops attacked a redoubt at Sobral, which the 71st were appointed to hold. That gallant regiment not only repulsed the assailants, but following them beyond the lines, drove them, in their turn, from a work which they had begun to construct on a height opposite, and kept possession of the ground which they had gained. These, however, were the only instances in which large bodies of men came into contact. The pickets, particularly on our right, would, from time to time, engage, and a good deal of desultory firing was the consequence; but such skirmishes produced no memorable results, and were, in general, productive of few casualties. The only person of note, indeed, that fell on either side, was the French General St. Croix, who was killed by a cannon-shot from one of our gun-boats, as he was reconnoitring. He was an officer of distinguished gallantry and high character—one of the best in the cavalry service of the Emperor; and I own that we sincerely lamented the sorry manner in which a brave soldier, who came with honour and safety through

the perils of Austerlitz, Esling, and Wagram, lost his life.

But though all remained quiet in our camp, and in that of the enemy, the latter were beginning every day to experience more and more severely the difficulties of the undertaking in which they had embarked. Their communications became hourly less and less open; sickness began to spread itself through their ranks; the stock of provisions which, in spite of our exertions to prevent it, they had, on their first arrival, contrived to discover, was rapidly wasting; and desertions were exceedingly frequent. Their regular troops in the rear, were, moreover, singularly active; and their enterprises proved to be, for the most part, not more spirited than successful. A corps of Portuguese militia, under Colonel Trant and General Miller, entered Coimbra on the 7th, where they captured a considerable depot of stores, as well as four thousand sick and wounded, who had been lodged there in hospital. This done, they made ready the bridge over the Mondego for destruction; and then pushing their cavalry towards Condeixa, harassed Massena's rear with continual skirmishes. In entering upon the latter undertaking, they felt themselves perfectly secure; for it was in their power, at any moment, to retire, if attacked by superior force, across the river, and

breaking down the bridge in their rear, to set all the enemy's efforts to molest them at defiance. The consequence was, that their attacks were both bold and well managed ; and the enemy lost not a few, as well of those who met the assailants face to face, as from the stragglers and plundering parties, which, in spite of all risks, persisted in straying from their column.

A delay so continued, and so little expected from the French Marshal, not unnaturally led to a variety of conjectures, on our parts, as to its originating causes and probable results. The whole of Massena's operations, considered merely in a military point of view, appeared to be so inexplicable, that we found ourselves under the necessity of regarding them in a different light, and referring them to political considerations entirely. He had acted, from his first assumption of the command, as if he were embarked in an undertaking, of the ultimate success of which he was far from being sanguine ; and in which he hazarded his reputation on no other account, than because he knew it to be a business, in the prosecution of which the Emperor was deeply interested. There fell into our hands, during this interval, several letters ; some of instruction to Massena from Napoleon ; others, on private business between Massena and his brother marshals. Many of these were curious and interesting docu-

ments; and those of the former class showed that the sources of information open to the enemy were more ample and more correct than could have been supposed. The Emperor's directions to Massena, which had reference to the opening of the campaign, required him to enter Portugal without delay, and to bring the English to battle wherever he should find them. It was stated that there were but sixteen thousand British troops under Lord Wellington in person, and only four thousand under Hill; that the whole united, inclusive of the Portuguese, could not exceed thirty thousand men; that the Portuguese were little better than brigands; and that there could be nothing capable of arresting the progress of a French force, which counted sixty thousand infantry and twelve thousand cavalry, between Ciudad Rodrigo and the capital. The probability that four thousand men would shortly be brought from Cadiz, was, moreover, urged as a reason why Massena should suffer no delays on his march; whilst it was added that the spies in London wrote strongly of the intentions of the English to embark as soon as they should be hard pressed, and abandon the country. Now it is worthy of notice, that the numbers specified above, corresponded exactly with the effective state of our army during the early summer; and there is no doubt that, at the moment when Buonaparte

wrote, serious thoughts were entertained, if not in Portugal, certainly in London, of relinquishing the contest as profitless, and beyond the means of England to support.

From the tenor of this communication we were led to believe that Massena had, as I have already hinted, embarked in a series of operations which his judgment condemned; and that he now found himself reduced to the mortifying alternative of either risking all upon the chances of a battle, or of remaining where he was, in spite of the numerous privations to which he was subject, till fresh instructions should reach him from Paris. Had he confined his views, if not previously to his defeat at Busaco, at all events after that event occurred, to the north of Portugal, taking up the line of the Mondego for the winter, and detaching a corps to occupy Oporto, he would have made himself master of a portion of the country; and making the most of his successes at Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, would have obtained credit for having accomplished a tolerably brilliant campaign. But that opportunity was gone by. He had been repulsed at Busaco; he had passed the Mondego, with a perfect knowledge all the while, that his communications would become at every step more uncertain; he saw the whole militia of Portugal rising in his rear, and yet left his sick at Coimbra, without a sufficient garrison to protect them. He

had done all this, not that he might follow us with vigour, for the pursuit was so deliberate, that all our stragglers and almost all our baggage escaped uninjured; and now he lay perfectly inactive in our front. It was quite impossible to imagine that an officer of Massena's character could have acted thus, had he not acted under the influence of compulsion. To that, therefore, we unhesitatingly attributed the proceedings of our opponent. We had reason to believe that he had despatched messengers to demand, either that strong reinforcements should be sent to him, or that fresh instructions, suitable to the turn which affairs had taken, might be granted; and we accordingly looked forward to a continuance of the procrastinating system for some time to come; for reinforcements, supposing the plan of reinforcing to be adopted, could not arrive in a day. It is true that the French corps in Galicia, augmented by everything in Castile, would prove formidable; and that the space between Galicia and Massena's encampment, might be traversed with perfect ease in a fortnight. But the garrisons could not be withdrawn from Galicia and Castile till others arrived to replace them; and of the movement of any force adequate to that purpose we knew nothing. Our minister at Lisbon, Sir Charles Stuart, spoke indeed of full forty thousand men as on their way through Spain; but the only corps of which

our intelligence took notice, consisted of no more than nine battalions of infantry, and two thousand cavalry, on its march from Vittoria, towards the Portuguese frontier. There was, no doubt, a possibility that the blockade of Cadiz might be intermitted; in which case the army hitherto employed there, uniting itself to Mortier's corps, might enter Alentejo full twenty-five thousand strong; and if to this twenty thousand more could be added, on the route from Galicia to Oporto, then indeed we might expect some severe service before long. But however judicious all these measures might be in themselves, there was nothing before us calculated to excite an apprehension, that they were really in process of completion. On the contrary, we were led, from a variety of occurrences, to guess that Massena's views leaned more to a retreat than to an advance; and that he delayed the former movement only till the sanction of his master should be obtained, and his own credit should be thereby saved.

The advanced parties of the Portuguese being pushed on as far as Leira, and the garrison of Abrantes seriously incommoding the French, the latter moved in force upon Salvatierra, where they succeeded in establishing a bridge across the Tagus, and so laid open to themselves the province of Alentejo. This might be for the purpose of securing those supplies which were no longer to

be had from the north ; but taken in connexion with a rumour which prevailed of an intended attack upon Abrantes, it appeared to us that Massena was anxious to keep the Alentejo open as a line by which his escape would be secured. Abrantes, however, was so well supplied and garrisoned, as to leave us little ground to apprehend any misfortune there, unless, indeed, it were attacked by a force greater than the enemy could well spare from our front ; and hence we reflected, that if he should retreat by the Alentejo, he must march by a single road, and that the means were still in our hands of intercepting him, should we feel ourselves sufficiently strong ; or at least of harassing him dreadfully, should that course appear more advisable. To speak with candour, however, it must be confessed that Massena's designs were as mysterious to us as they were probably vague and undefined even to himself ; and we accordingly remained to watch the result, not in idleness, but in security, upon our line of impregnable hills and fortifications.

There arose, at this time, something like a question amongst us, whether a movement on the offensive, entered upon at this critical juncture, might not bring about the most favourable results. By such as argued in favour of the movement, it was urged that the French were diminished in numbers, broken in spirit, and devoid of confidence ; that the soldiers distrusted their leaders, and the

leaders distrusted the soldiers ; and that a spirited attack made at such a moment, would not only not be resisted, but that it would probably end in a victory more complete than had been obtained during the war. Fortunately for the cause of which he was the main support, our chief saw matters in a very different light. We estimated the losses of the French army at the highest, when we put down the amount, by deaths, sickness, desertion, and the casualties of battle, at fifteen thousand men. Now, as they moved into the country with full sixty-two thousand, this would still leave them forty-seven thousand with which to meet us ; and as we could not pretend to bring more than fifty thousand beyond the lines, our numerical superiority would be an advantage hardly worth calculating upon. To counterbalance it entirely, again, it was to be considered that the enemy were all veteran troops ; whilst of ours, the larger proportion were raw levies of Portuguese and Spaniards, in many instances wretchedly officered, and in all, but little accustomed to field movements. The Portuguese had, indeed, behaved gallantly at Busaco ; and we were disposed to place in them as much confidence as could be reposed in any soldiers as yet so imperfectly instructed in their duty ; but we should have hardly looked to them for that regularity of manœuvre over a broken and varied tract of country, which we should be sure

to find in the well-trained troops to whom they would be opposed. Besides, our attack, if made at all, must be made without cannon ; for we had so completely destroyed the roads, and scarped the faces of the heights, that artillery could not be advanced, either by the one or the other, as long as an enemy lay before us to impede its progress. The enemy, therefore, if beaten at all—which was surely, under such circumstances, problematical—could not be beaten without a heavy loss on our side ; and that loss would, as a matter of course, fall upon the best men ; because such only would be found at their posts. Now if, again, the defeat were not perfect, if it amounted to anything less than a total rout and dissolution of the army, where would be the benefit arising from it ? Massena would retire upon some strong positions, disputing with us every inch of the country, and finally make his escape to the reinforcements in his rear ; whilst we should have exhausted ours, and crippled our whole resources, for the attainment of only a momentary advantage. Nay, it was far from being impossible, that whilst we were following up the corps opposed to us, others might advance upon the lines, of necessity feebly manned ; and should these be carried, not even the total destruction of Massena and his army would compensate for the misfortune. On all these accounts, and with the firm conviction on his mind, that

things were working as advantageously as he could desire, Lord Wellington determined to adhere to his defensive system; and the event proved, that as his reasoning had not proceeded upon mistaken grounds, so the results to which it led were not fallacious.

Neither the time of our soldiers nor that of their chief was, however, wasted in idleness. The former were busily employed in the construction of new works, wherever their erection appeared at all desirable, and in giving additional solidity to those already thrown up; till the lines became as perfect a specimen of a fortified position as it was possible for nature and art to produce. The latter was indefatigable in his exertions to bring his army into a condition of general efficiency, and his exertions were too judiciously applied not to be crowned with success. The Portuguese being now thoroughly amalgamated with the British troops, learned from them all those lessons which in after campaigns they turned to an excellent account; and Beresford, to whom the entire merit of their first training is due, was in consequence relieved from all further responsibility in field operations. Every day brought in its improvements among them; and the General was soon rewarded for all his trouble by the conviction that he might rely upon them almost as perfectly as upon his countrymen. Nor was Lord Wellington inattentive

to the comforts, and even luxuries of his followers. Provisions were abundant; there was no want of wine; and sports and amusements went on as if we had been, not at the seat of war, but in England. Officers of all ranks, and in every department, from the Commander-in-chief down to the regimental subaltern, occasionally enjoyed the field-sports of hunting, shooting, and fishing. The men, too, had their pastimes when not employed on duty; in a word, seldom has an army, occupying ground in the face of its enemy, enjoyed so many hours of relaxation, or contrived to unite so completely the pleasures of country life with the serious business of war. It is probably needless to add, that so great a show of security in their leader had the best possible effect upon the temper of the troops; or that the morale of the army was sustained, not more by a contemplation of things as they really were, than by a conviction that they must be going on prosperously, otherwise so much relaxation could not abound.

I have said that, in this interval of quiet, a variety of intercepted letters, as well private as official, fell into our hands. Among others, we were fortunate enough to become possessed of Massena's account of the battle of Busaco, given in a demi-official communication addressed to Berthier. It was rather a curious despatch, but contained, upon the whole, more of truth and can-

did admissions than were usually to be found in French reports of actions. He acknowledged that he had been repulsed in both attempts upon our position, with the loss of four thousand men, besides a large proportion of his best officers, whom he requested Berthier to replace without delay; and he stated the force with which he had attacked, almost exactly as it had been represented by Lord Wellington. Where alone he fell into error, was in representing Regnier's corps as having been opposed by a "colonne serrée" of twenty thousand men under Hill; whereas it is well known to every military man in our army, that the *colonne serrée* was a mode of formation of which Lord Wellington constantly disapproved. He had succeeded in overthrowing it at Vimiera, Talavera, and in this very affair of Busaco, and was not, therefore, likely to have adopted it on either occasion himself. But it was then so much in favour with the French generals, that they put no faith in any other method of fighting; and probably when Massena wrote his detail, he believed all that he was writing.

So passed the time, from the beginning of October, when we took up our ground at Torres Vedras, to the middle of November, when we were called upon to quit it. Rumours in abundance poured in upon us during this interval, some of them exhilarating enough, others sufficiently

gloomy; but as we seldom paid to such more attention than was their due, we rarely permitted them to exert any permanent influence over our feelings and expectations. The circumstance which served most decidedly to impress us with a belief that the enemy were far from being at their ease, was, that desertions from their army occurred daily; indeed, we received as many as 200 and 250 deserters in one week. Latterly, however, these became less frequent, and strange to say, several instances of the kind occurred amongst ourselves. We had, moreover, abundant sources of private gratification, in the many little fêtes and galas which from time to time occurred; more especially after the arrival of a king's messenger with crosses and medals for the army. But the gayest by far which took place at this time was held at Mafra, on the 7th of November, on which occasion Marshal Beresford was formally invested with the order of the Bath. The thing was conducted with great state and singular decorum, and gave universal satisfaction, both to the British officers and to the Portuguese inhabitants. At length, however, we were roused from this state of pleasurable inactivity, by a piece of intelligence which we were hardly prepared to receive, and which, in consequence, came upon us with a degree of surprise, of which I confess myself inadequate to convey any just idea.

On the 13th of November advices reached us, that a reinforcement of fifteen or twenty thousand men was on its way to join the army of Massena ; that it had already passed the frontier ; and that the advance had arrived that day in Sabugal. At the same time we were perfectly aware that the enemy had for some time back been busily employed in the construction of a multitude of boats at Santarem ; and that these, with many already built, which had fallen into their hands, were mounted upon wheels, and put in a condition to be transported overland to any point where they might be needed. Whilst we were wavering between the belief that Massena meditated a retreat, and the notion that very possibly he might be disposed to make an attempt upon the fort of Lisbon from the opposite bank of the Tagus, intelligence came in, that not a man was to be seen, either at the outposts, or along the position which the French army had lately occupied. They broke up, it appeared, on the night of the 14th, and were departed ; but whether in full flight with a view to abandon Portugal, or merely for the purpose of taking up a winter's line, no one appeared to know. The movement was altogether as sudden and as unlooked-for as frequently occurs in war ; and it threw us, for a time, into a state of amazement, which instantly set all our speculating propensities into full play.

One idea, and not entirely a visionary one, was, that Massena despairing of success, at least during the present season, had determined to fall back upon Spain ; that his wheeled boats were destined to supply the place of bridges over the Zezere, or, in case of need, over the Tagus ; and that in the mean while he was retrograding by Thomar and Estrada-nova, for the purpose of meeting and carrying along with him the corps which had arrived at Sabugal. It was objected, however, to this, that nothing short of the most pressing necessity could justify a measure, which, besides the immediate abandonment of Portugal, must produce the very worst effects upon the French interests in Spain ; and the objection, to say the least of it, was not more wanting in force, than the supposition which it was brought forward to combat. True, the army might have exhausted, and they probably had exhausted, the supplies which their confined situation furnished ; and hence it became necessary to shift their ground, for the purpose of meeting the force now on its march, and the stores it was supposed to convey ; but a flight into Spain was, upon more mature deliberation, pronounced improbable ; and hence other and no less feasible theories were started to supply the place of that rejected as soon as proposed.

It was supposed, first, that Massena, guessing that we might be informed of his coming reinforce-

ment, had become apprehensive of a disposition, on our part, to attack him before it arrived; and that he deemed it a wise measure to fall back upon stronger ground, there to await its junction. Secondly, and this was the most general opinion of the whole, it was surmised that he intended to attempt the reduction of Abrantes by bombardment and assault, the fall of which would supply him with numerous means of every sort for the future prosecution of a scheme, upon which, at present, he was manifestly too weak to think of embarking. It was therefore believed that the French army designed to place itself in position behind the Zezere; from whence it might oppose a formidable barrier to any efforts on our part, for the relief of a fortress, the possession of which would be of incalculable advantage to them, whenever they should find themselves sufficiently strong to advance again upon the capital.

Abrantes had long been put in an excellent state of defence, and it was garrisoned by no fewer than two regiments of the line and three of militia; had it been left, therefore, entirely to its own resources, there was every prospect of its holding out vigorously. This, however, was not the first occasion on which we had been alarmed for its safety; and measures had in consequence been adopted, which placed it further beyond the risk, not only of capture, but of insult. General Fane,

with a brigade of Portuguese cavalry, accompanied by several guns and a howitzer, had been passed over the Tagus from Lisbon, with orders to march along the southern bank of the river, and to destroy, if possible, any boats which he might observe in progress of preparation at Santarem or elsewhere. He had obeyed these orders, and kept up a long and warm cannonade on the enemy's incipient flotilla; but his howitzer having been disabled, his round-shot proved of little utility; and as no attempt was made with the Congreve rockets, which now, for the first time, might have been brought into play, the enemy succeeded in completing the task which they had begun, and in furnishing themselves with ample means to cross the rivers at their pleasure. This was certainly unfortunate, seeing that all the bridges had been carefully destroyed in their rear; and they were, to a certain degree, hemmed in between unfordable streams on one hand, and our impassable lines on the other; but there was no help for it; and Fane, finding his exertions profitless, went into cantonments. He was thus circumstanced in quarters opposite to Santarem, when the retreat of the French began, and accordingly in a situation to render to the garrison of Abrantes, in case of an attack, the most powerful and opportune assistance.

The enemy's movement commenced from the right of the line from Ribaldeira, Sobral, and Villa

Franca; consequently the first alarm was given by General Campbell's division upon our left. Lord Wellington instantly wrote to Admiral Berkeley, to request that he would send up the launches and boats of his fleet, in order that means might be at hand to pass over General Hill's or any other corps which might be selected, to the left bank of the Tagus. At the same time, General Crawford's division was ordered to advance from the Arruda heights to Alenquer; and General Hill's, from Alhandra to Villa Franca, with directions to feel their way further to the front, but to act with caution. On the 15th, it was discovered that the enemy were moving the whole of their force on the great road by the Tagus, a small detachment only being left to protect the path which leads by Alcantara and Rio Major to Santarem. As soon as this was known, General Spencer's division pushed into Sobral and Alenquer; whilst Crawford, pressing forward from the latter place to Villa Nova and Azembaja, discovered the enemy's rear-guard in position between it and Cartaxo. These last-mentioned movements occurred on the 16th; on which day likewise the head-quarters were transferred to Alenquer; but as it was of essential importance that we should be fully informed respecting the enemy's probable designs, before we committed ourselves too far by any more rapid pursuit, a halt was ordered to take place on the

17th, in order that time might be granted for the arrival of a report from General Fane, whose situation gave him excellent opportunities of watching with effect the movement of Massena's columns.

The report in question arrived in due time, and it led us to believe that the enemy were continuing their retreat from Santarem, and that nothing more than a strong rear-guard remained behind for the purpose of covering the movement. It may be advisable to state here that the position of Santarem is exceedingly formidable, and that it cannot be turned except by a very large army, and at the expense of much time and fatigue in making a lengthened detour. We were, therefore, far from experiencing regret, that Massena had not deemed it advisable to offer us battle on that line, more especially as his abandonment of the strong ground left us at liberty to look to the protection of Abrantes, and to throw such a force there as might act with effect upon the enemy's flank, under cover of the place. Under these circumstances, Lord Wellington determined to establish his head-quarters at Santarem, to push on Crawford further in front, and to bring up the whole of his army in the same direction, except Hill's corps only, which, crossing the river at Vee-lada in boats, and returning again by the bridge below Abrantes, would be able to harass and im-

pede the enemy's communications, and render great assistance to us in our projected operations. This was the more to be reckoned upon, because Massena possessed but a single bridge across the Zezere ; and as he must move his entire army in one column, it was not probable that he could do so with such rapidity as to insure its passage unmolested from either quarter.

The troops being put in motion for these several purposes, it was soon discovered that General Fane's first report respecting the enemy's designs was not likely to be realised, and that they had assumed the position from which we thought they would have retired. The advance, under Crawford, found Santarem occupied by what appeared at first to be a strong rear-guard, but which proved in the end to be the second corps which had there taken up its cantonments. Upon this the head-quarters, attended by Spencer's division, were established at Cartaxo ; General Cotton's cavalry were sent forward to join the light division ; General Anson's brigade took the road to Aleventre and Rio Major ; and the fourth and fifth divisions fixed themselves at Alenquer and Sobral ; whilst the sixth remained stationary at Ribaldeira, and the third at Torres Vedras.

Our army had not long taken up its new alignment, when it was satisfactorily ascertained that the enemy were strengthening and disposing them-

selves in a very judicious manner, for the double purposes, as it appeared, of securing comfortable winter-quarters, and protecting, from the side of Abrantes, all such supplies and reinforcements as might be on the way to join them. Whilst the second corps garrisoned Santarem, the eighth took possession of a line of cantonments on the right, extending by Torres Novas all the way to Thomar. Here part of the sixth corps was established; and about four thousand infantry, with three hundred cavalry, passed the Zezeze, for the purpose of establishing a tête-de-pont; for the bridge, it appeared, was already all but complete, though boats continued to be constructed in Santarem, and were hourly in movement towards the river. With respect, again, to the reinforcements, their advance was reported to be at Pinhel, whither they had arrived after sustaining a sharp action with the corps of General Silveira. The latter having come upon them at Valverde somewhat by surprise, succeeded in killing three hundred, and taking many prisoners; but as the enemy were reported to amount to fifteen thousand men, Silveira could not venture to follow up the success which he obtained. On the contrary, he very prudently retired behind the Douro, as soon as he had struck his blow; and the French, leaving a detachment to watch him, pushed on with the main body in the direction of Massena's

army. From all these particulars, we were led to the conclusion, that Massena entertained no design of evacuating Portugal ; but that he would remain where he was, till the junction of fresh troops, and the arrival of a more favourable season, should enable him once more to act upon the offensive.

Affairs continued in this state without the occurrence of any event calculated to interrupt our tranquillity, up to a late date in December. For some time the weather was so boisterous, and the rain fell in such constant torrents, as effectually to hinder any military operations from being undertaken ; and when these obstacles ceased to exist, the policy both of the English and French generals equally restrained them from entering upon a winter's campaign. Information, in the mean while, continued daily to accumulate upon us, and much of it was from a source which left no reason to doubt of its authenticity ; whilst the burden of the whole tended to strengthen our conviction, that another struggle for the preservation of Portugal must take place in the spring. Of the various rumours which reached us, it will be necessary to repeat only such as most deeply interested us at the moment ; and these I proceed to give in the order in which they came in.

We learned that the head of the enemy's reinforcement, which Silveira had encountered by the

way, was now in communication with Massena's line, and that it had closed in somewhere between the extreme right at Leira, and the extreme left at Santarem. Of the numbers which composed the entire force, a variety of accounts were in circulation, some rating it as high as fifteen or twenty thousand men, others taking it considerably below that estimate; but whatever its aggregate strength might be, no more than five thousand men had as yet arrived; nor were the remainder, as far as we could learn, ascertained to be near at hand. The reinforcement in question had, it appeared, been obtained by a forward movement of the ninth corps under Drouet; which, taking possession of the posts and cantonments on the frontier, hitherto occupied by detachments from Massena's army, enabled these detachments to proceed to their several corps. We had no reason to believe that any part of Drouet's corps was actually employed in Portugal; by many, indeed, it was imagined, that being under the orders of Joseph, it could not be moved out of Spain unless by express directions from Paris; but one of its divisions had certainly marched to the very extremity of its province; and thus the whole of Massena's three corps were rendered effective. At the same time other corps, which had been scattered through Castile, were represented as having fallen back upon Madrid; and the province, thus relieved from the presence

of the enemy, was again in a state of rebellion. Don Julian, the gallant partisan, whose services at Ciudad Rodrigo obtained for him so much well-merited renown, was once more in arms. He was preparing to attack Zamora, where a very feeble garrison had been left; and the probabilities were, that unless fresh forces speedily came up to take the stations which Drouet had abandoned, that part of Spain would become as hostile as ever.

With respect to Portugal, we heard that Silveira's affair had occurred with a detached corps, which had been thrown across the Coa to protect the march of the main body hither, by way of Sabugal, Castello Branco, and Cardijos. The Portuguese general, though deeming it prudent to retire, still held Francola with his outposts; and the enemy continued to maintain a small body of troops on the other side of the Coa, on purpose to watch him. In the mean while, Trant was at Coimbra, where all remained perfectly quiet; though his advance, under Wilson, had lately fallen back to Espinhel; whilst General Hill's movement on the left bank of the Tagus had been arrested at Chamuca. The necessity for his entrance into Abrantes no longer existing, Lord Wellington did not consider it prudent to push him on thither, as long as the enemy abstained from making some decided demonstration of their design to attack the place; and all their late ope-