rected their steps towards Campo Mayor; where on the left of the camp they reported to General Picton, as the senior officer. In the mean while General Spencer's corps, which, in obedience to directions previously given, had advanced to Portalegre, formed a separate encampment for itself. It was kept there, because Portalegre constituted a convenient centre from whence it might either be brought, in case of need, into the camp at Torre del Mouro, or thrown back across the Tagus, should Marmont demonstrate in that quarter; whilst the communication between the two, which happened to be neither remote nor intricate, was sufficiently preserved by patrols and flying parties.

It is to be observed that the object of this new alignment was purely one of defence. It was assumed under the persuasion that the enemy, who had collected in strength, would not content themselves with the relief of Badajoz, but press forward with a view to besiege Elvas, and probably make an irruption into Alentejo. Now, as the loss of Elvas would have been productive to us of consequences the most disastrous, inasmuch as it would have supplied the French with an additional pivot on which to turn, and completed the exposure of the richest and most fertile districts in Portugal, Lord Wellington made up his mind to risk everything for its preservation; and with this view he disposed his army in such order, as that it might

seize the first favourable opportunity of striking a blow. Should Marmont, previously to sitting down before the place, choose to risk a great battle by attacking us in our position, the nature of the ground which we occupied would give to us advantages the most decided; should he, on the other hand, commence his operations before the town, leaving us to observe or molest him as best suited our own convenience, we might wait with patience till the fitting moment had arrived, and then become ourselves the assailants. Thus were we provided against either extremities, supposing the notion formed touching the enemy's designs to be well-founded; whereas, if no forward movement were made on their parts, then might we either remain quietly where we were, till general events should take a turn more favourable, or resume the offensive as soon as our own circumstances, and the distribution of the enemy's force, might appear to authorise the measure. That Lord Wellington himself anticipated a general action is, I believe, true; he spoke of its probable occurrence, and took all the precautions to insure a victory, which his genius pointed out; and as he possessed sources of information to which no other individual had access, there can be little doubt that he came to that conclusion on grounds perfectly reasonable. As to myself, I own that I considered the enemy had gained a great deal by

the successful resistance of Badajoz; more, perhaps, than in the present state of the campaign they had any right to expect; and as their troops stood at least as much in need of repose and re-organisation as ours, it appeared somewhat improbable that they would, for the sake of harassing us, deny to themselves that of which they strongly experienced the want.

But whilst Lord Wellington thus distributed his own forces, he was neither unmindful of the advantages to be derived from a diversion, nor careless of the condition of the strong-holds which he had fallen back to protect.

To effect the former of these objects, General Blake was directed to put his corps in motion, and, marching down the right bank of the Guadiana upon the Conde de Unebla, to cross at Mertola, so as to threaten, at once, Seville, the camp before Cadiz, and the rear of the French army. For the purpose of prosecuting the latter, numerous working parties were employed every day, not only at Elvas—where, in truth, their exertions were much needed—but likewise at Campo Mayor, and the fortress of Juramenha. I have said that the exertions of our artificers were in a peculiar manner needed at Elvas, and I said truly. By the negligence of the Portuguese government, that city—the most important by far upon the southern frontier—had fallen into a state of mise-

rable dilapidation. The walls were in many places broken down; the ditches filled up; and the few pieces of artillery mounted upon the ramparts were all of the worst description; whilst, to add to its general disabilities, it was held at this time by a garrison composed entirely of Portuguese troops; and the Governor, though one of the best of his class, was still only a Portuguese officer. On these several accounts it became sufficiently manifest, that if the place were intended to offer a moderate resistance, great care must be taken to remedy some, at least, of its defects; and since it suited not the policy of the times to change the garrison, or displace the Governor, Lord Wellington determined that the excuse of ruined defences should not be at hand to sanction a too ready submission. Its works were carefully and scientifically repaired, and rendered capable, under proper management, of holding out for a very considerable length of time. Besides these operations, however, which, though doubtless very useful, were certainly not very interesting, nothing was attempted on our part; and as the enemy, with a few trifling exceptions, continued as peaceably disposed as ourselves, we were left, somewhat to our surprise, and not a little to our mortification, to spend the best of the summer months in idleness.

From the 20th of June to the 21st of July, our army remained in its double encampment, at Por-

talegre and Torre del Mouro. Few incidents occurred, during the whole of that time, calculated, in a military point of view, to arrest our attention, or rouse us from our lethargy; and of these few, it unhappily occurred that almost all proved of an unsatisfactory nature. The enemy, instead of following us up, as had been anticipated, confined their operations entirely to the southern side of the Guadiana, never venturing upon anything on our bank of the river, except an occasional recognisance; and these recognisances, being conducted generally by cavalry, were generally successful, as far as success was desired. On one occasion, in particular, they contrived to make prisoners of nearly one hundred and twenty men, belonging to the 11th light dragoons, and twenty hussars of the German legion; and as this was the most serious affair which took place during an entire month, it may not be amiss if I give a particular account of it.

It has been stated that, in forming our present encampment, the line of the Caya was taken up: it may be necessary to remind the reader, that in making use of this expression, no more is meant than that our troops were posted in the rear of that river, and in a direction parallel with its general course. The Caya is a shallow and winding stream, which runs in one of its branches, nearly north and south from the mountains near

Campo Mayor, to the Guadiana. Its banks are in general low and open, though on our side there was a range of commanding heights, not very far removed from the stream. It so happened that our cavalry pickets, instead of being posted upon this rising ground, were ranged along the margin of the river, some of them in the very angles formed by its detours, and in spots where no vigilance could enable the videttes to observe an enemy till he was close at hand. In one of these most inappropriate spots was a considerable party of the 11th stationed, on a morning, when the French thought fit to push a large force across the river, for the purpose of ascertaining how we were employed. Our cavalry behaved with their accustomed gallantry, charging the leading squadron of the force immediately opposed to them, and driving it back with precipitation upon its support; but they were ignorant all the while that other squadrons had turned them, and that overwhelming numbers were already formed in their rear. The consequence was, that the whole party was surrounded, and with the exception of a few individuals, who contrived to cut their way through, all were taken. It is scarcely necessary to add, that the disaster gave rise to a variety of reports, and to much condemnation; but I consider it not worth while to repeat it.

In addition to such occurrences as this, the only

sources of public interest which we possessed, arose from the various reports which, from time to time, came in, of the movements both of the French armies and of the Spanish corps. We learned, for example, that Soult had returned to Seville with the whole of his force, and that he had detached a division to oppose Blake, who had crossed the Guadiana, according to the preconcerted plan, at Mertola. Instead, however, of pushing for Seville, Blake contented himself with making a night attack upon the castles of Puebla and Unebla, in which, as a matter of course, he failed; and now, on receiving intelligence of the march of Soult's detachment against him, he withdrew to Ayamonte, and embarked for Cadiz. Marmont, in the mean while, was stated to remain stationary at Merida and its vicinity; from whence his cavalry were sent to the front for the purpose of foraging, as often as necessity required. Large reinforcements of stores and artillery were, at the same time, thrown into Badajoz; its works were thoroughly repaired, and its garrison was increased to the amount of five thousand men. But the most satisfactory piece of intelligence which came to us, was conveyed in a letter from Marmont himself; which, though addressed to Marshal Berthier, fell, by great good fortune, into our hands. The General had intrusted it to one of his aides-de-camp, whom he despatched, as a most confi-

dential person, to Paris; and who, being intercepted, as well as his communication, by a wandering band of Spaniards, was sent in person to our camp. As the letter was really a curious one, and as it served to convey a very correct idea of the state of the French army, as well as an extremely favourable notion of the judgment and good sense of its commander, it may not be amiss to repeat here a brief outline of its contents.

The letter in question was dated from Merida, at a period posterior to the relief of Badajoz, and the consequent retrogression of our divisions. It began by informing his Excellency the Prince of Neufchatel, that having succeeded, in conjunction with the Duke of Dalmatia, in raising the siege of Badajoz, the writer had since directed his undivided attention to the re-organisation and re-establishment of discipline in the army of Portugal. The system of requisitions, and the irregularity of supply, had been carried, it was continued, to so great a height, that the army was become little better than a rabble of banditti; nor could any thing be attempted with the slightest prospect of success, till the method should be entirely changed, and the troops provided and paid in such a manner, as to render them both contented and manageable. To accomplish this, the Marshal was then devising plans; and he earnestly pressed for instructions and assistance from the Emperor,

in carrying them into execution. In the mean time, however, he meditated a removal to the right bank of the Tagus ; whilst Soult, who had heard of succours being sent from Cadiz to Tarragona, and considered his presence in the south as indispensable, was preparing to march thither without delay. With him the Marshal would leave the fifth corps of infantry as well as several battalions of cavalry, these being more immediately destined for the defence of Estremadura; but he added an earnest request, that they might thenceforth be attached to the army of Portugal, as an arrangement not only natural, but necessary.

The letter went on to state, that with his own corps, amounting to thirty-two thousand infantry, and from three to four thousand cavalry, the writer intended to place himself in some convenient camp between the Teitar and the Tagus, where he should be able more narrowly to watch the conduct of his troops, and improve their discipline. The only obstacle to this arrangement arose from the difficulty of providing adequate supplies of food and forage ; but though doubtless very great, Marmont expressed sanguine hopes that he should be able to surmount it. In this case, and supposing that two or three months' repose were obtained, and that the remounts of horses, and re-equipments of various kinds promised should arrive, he entertained no doubt that the fine army of Portugal would

again become *très redoutable*, and capable of executing any service in which the Emperor might be pleased to employ it. He next proceeded to specify the position and supposed strength of our army. He reported the departure of Blake's corps, and its embarkation for Cadiz, subsequent to the failure of its attack upon the castle of Puebla, and entered into a variety of other particulars, which abundantly testified that the channels of information possessed by the French, were at least as perfect and as open as those possessed by ourselves. But of his own plans, Marmont said nothing more, inasmuch as it was his design to remain wholly upon the defensive, till specific orders should reach him from Paris. In addition to this despatch from Marmont, a letter from General Tresion, chief of the staff, was likewise intercepted; but it contained little calculated to interest, except an explicit declaration that the French troops were unable to cope with the English, and that their best chance of success lay in manœuvring.

I have reason to believe that the communications made in Marshal Marmont's despatch, combined with other circumstances of less moment, determined Lord Wellington to forego, for the present, all offensive operations against the enemy in Spain. It was clear that against odds so tremendous he could not, with his present strength,

hope to accomplish any object of importance, since Marmont's corps alone was capable of offering to him a stout resistance; and should it fall back upon that of Soult, its superiority would become at once overwhelming. He accordingly made up his mind to place his troops in temporary cantonments; and the divisions began, on the 21st, to break up from their respective stations for that purpose. Two of these, the third and the sixth, were ordered to cross the Tagus, and to occupy Castello Branco, and the villages near; the seventh was directed to move upon Niza; the light to Campo Mayor; the first and fifth to Portalegre, whither the head-quarters likewise removed; and the second and fourth to Evora and its adjacents. Thus was a very strong corps of infantry, supported by the whole of the cavalry, kept in Alentejo; whilst the remainder of the army taking post in the vicinity of the Tagus, beame disposable towards any point which might chance to be threatened.

CHAPTER VII.

Amusements of the officers in quarters—Lord Wellington suddenly moves towards Rodrigo, and invests the place—Disposition of the army in its new alignment—Description of the country round Ciudad Rodrigo—Reports of the preparations made by the enemy to raise the siege of that city, and arrangements entered into in consequence.

In the preceding pages, my narrative has been so completely confined to a detail of the great operations of the army, and of the results arising out of them, that I have as yet found no opportunity of making the reader acquainted with the general mode and style of living adopted at this time among the staff and other officers. It may be sufficient to state here, that no set of persons could more industriously strive to unite mirth with hardships, and relaxation with severe duty. For some time, we contented ourselves with keeping pointers and greyhounds, and indulging, as often as oppor-

tunities offered, in the sports of shooting, coursing, and fishing; but now a taste for hunting began to prevail amongst us, and fox-hounds and harriers, more or less numerous and good, were established in the different divisions of the army. At head-quarters we were fortunate enough to become possessed of an excellent pack, which afforded us much amusement, and occupied time which would have otherwise hung heavily on our hands; and it is worthy of remark, that in such minor undertakings, no man entered more heartily than our leader. It was during this summer that he first instituted the custom, which he never afterwards laid aside, of throwing off at settled points on established days in every week, whilst the army was not in the field, and the incidents, replete with mirth, to which these meetings gave rise, are far too numerous to be recorded, though they will be long remembered. Then, in our quarters, we lived gaily and well. A spirit of good-fellowship and hospitality everywhere prevailed; and in the midst of war,—balls, private theatricals, and agreeable parties, were things of continual occurrence. It is unnecessary to add that this system, whilst it detracted in no degree from the discipline and efficiency of the troops, spread abroad among those who came under its influence the very best disposition and temper; and all men really learned to love their occupation, even at its most trying mo-

ments, from a recollection of the many enjoyments of which it became the source.

It has been stated that on the 21st of July the army broke up from its camps, for the purpose of taking possession of a line of temporary cantonments on each side of the Tagus. All was duly executed by the 23rd; and on that day the whole of the divisions, with the exception of the fifth alone, which still kept the field at about a league's distance from Portalegre, were comfortably housed at their respective destinations. The movement was hardly made, when we were joined by four regiments of infantry and one of cavalry, from England—namely, by the 26th, 32nd, 68th, and 77th infantry, and the 12th light dragoons; all of them strong in numbers, and extremely effective; whilst the arrival of General Graham at Lisbon, who came as second in command from Cadiz, was officially announced to us. The latter piece of intelligence was received with much satisfaction; for General Graham had seen a great deal of service, and wherever employed, had proved himself always to be an officer of enterprise and talent; and his late success at Barossa, however much it may be supposed to have depended upon the valour of the troops engaged, certainly took not away from the reputation which their leader had previously acquired.

We were scarcely settled in our new quarters,

when a variety of rumours began to circulate, most of them calculated to inspire apprehension, and very few of a contrary tendency. In the first place, a report was conveyed to us through certain Spanish officers at head-quarters, that two separate columns, consisting of thirty thousand men each, were on their march to reinforce the French armies in Spain; one from the side of Dalmatia, and the other from an opposite direction. Nor could the numerous details with which we were favoured, of the formation of bands of guerillas, and of their daring enterprises, in any effectual degree lessen the impression which it had produced. Much has been said of these guerillas, as well by the Spaniards themselves as by the historians of other countries, who have derived their information chiefly from Spanish sources; but all who served in the Peninsula can attest that a less efficient and more mischievous body of marauders never infested any country. It is not denied that they cut off, from time to time, a small convoy, or an isolated detachment; but unfortunately they did not confine their operations to attacks upon the enemy. Whoever fell in their way, be he friend or foe, rarely escaped unplundered; and the inhabitants of the smaller villages everywhere dreaded their appearance as much as that of the French. Yet were these the only portions of the population of Spain which could be said to be in

arms. In the country places, it is true that the people were generally disposed to favour the cause of independence; and that from the little hamlets and solitary cottages, by far the larger proportion of recruits for the Spanish army was procured; but in the towns, one wish, and one alone, seemed to prevail—namely, that the repose of the inhabitants might not be interrupted by the approach of any troops, whether French or British. Tranquillity at all hazards, and at any cost, was the boon for which the mass of the population of Spain now pined, till it became too apparent, that were we to withdraw from the Peninsula, the war would come to an end before the close of a single summer. Nor, in truth, was the existence of that feeling very greatly to be wondered at. The Spaniards possessed no force competent, at any point, to make head against the invaders; almost all their strong places were in the hands of the French; whilst discord the most atrocious and the most palpable reigned in those very assemblies which ought to have guided the energies of the people, and directed their exertions. We heard, indeed, about this time, of the re-capture of Figueras, and it was one of the few rumours which served to keep alive anything like a hope that Spain might yet do something worthy of her ancient renown, and of the cause in which she was embarked; but neither this, nor a few trifling

successes near Astorga, nor even the triumphs of Don Julian, who was intercepting convoys, and making prisoners about Salamanca, was sufficient to inspire us with any great degree of confidence in the exertions of our allies. On the contrary, we felt that the British army was, and must continue to be, the principal in this war of Peninsular independence; and hence it was not very easy even for the most sanguine amongst us to believe that, should Russia and the northern states persist in their pacific policy, Great Britain could possibly retire from a contest so unequal, in triumph, and with honour.

When the army first took up its line of cantonments, an opinion generally prevailed, that nothing further would be attempted, on our parts, till the sultry season should have passed away. With respect to the enemy, every thing appeared to indicate that, whatever might be done in other parts of the Peninsula, Portugal would be left undisturbed, till the arrival of the promised reinforcements from France, and other favourable circumstances, should authorise a fresh invasion. Marmont, it was ascertained, having withdrawn his troops into the vale of Plasencia, with the exception of one division only under General Foy, which was appointed to watch the left bank of the Tagus, had established his own head-quarters at Talavera de la Reyna. Soult was gone to the

south, with the intention, as was believed, of laying siege to Carthagena; and Suchet, to whom Tarragona had lately submitted, was preparing to push his conquests in Alicant and Catalonia. In the mean time, Bessieres was assembling one considerable corps at Valladolid, and Bonnet another at Leon and Benavente; whilst Joseph, who had lately returned to Madrid, was amusing himself and his subjects with proclamations, as absurd in their language as they were nugatory in their effects. He was assuring them at once, of the increased love of the Emperor towards the Spaniards, and of the march of sixty thousand fresh troops from France into Spain; and whilst he threatened the severest vengeance against the bands of plunderers by whom the roads and passes were everywhere infested, he held out the brightest hopes to all such guerilla chiefs as chose to accept rank in the imperial service. Not a word, however, was said, either by him or his generals, of further attempts against Portugal or the English; and hence there were few amongst us who anticipated any other result, than that the line which we had now assumed would be maintained, at all events, throughout the dog-days, if not till the return of spring.

Whilst the rest of the army were thus indulging in dreams of quiet and repose, the ever-active mind of their leader was meditating an enterprise,

hazardous, no doubt, and at the best beset with difficulties, but in the highest degree influential upon the general issue of the war. The possession of Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajoz on one side of Spain, and of three out of the four principal fortresses on the other, gave to the enemy a facility of movement, of which it was of the utmost consequence to deprive them; and Lord Wellington's principal views had, in consequence, been, for some time back, directed to the recovery of places of the importance of which every day brought proofs more and more decided. How he failed in his attempt upon one of these, the reader has already been informed, as well as of the circumstances which would have rendered a fresh effort, in the same quarter, even more hopeless than the effort already made. But with respect to Ciudad Rodrigo, the case was somewhat different. Should Soult really embark in the siege of Carthagena, or in any other expedition calculated to give to his army full occupation, Ciudad Rodrigo must necessarily be left, in a great degree, to the protection of its own garrison; and with the garrison of Ciudad Rodrigo, even though it should be supported by the single corps of Marmont, Lord Wellington believed himself fully adequate to cope. With the hope, therefore, that some such occurrence might fall out, stores and guns were quietly, but industriously, transported from Lisbon to Oporto, and

from Oporto to Lamego; and at the moment when, to all external appearance, his undivided attention was bestowed upon recruiting the health of his troops, he was looking to their employment in a species of operations, for which, to confess the truth, the British army was, at this period, less prepared than any other army in Europe.

I have said that, at the period to which my present narrative refers, the British army was, among all the armies of Europe, the least prepared to undertake the duties of a siege,—and for this obvious reason, that it was, and long continued to be, deficient in those establishments, without which it is utterly impossible either to defend or attack fortified places to advantage. In expressing myself thus, it is very far from my intention to cast the slightest stigma upon the corps of engineers. Our engineer officers were then, as they are now, equally able and scientific; but besides that, in the Peninsula at least, they were few in number, the absence of all adequate support in the other departments of the army, rendered them quite incapable of applying the science to its legitimate ends, or causing it to produce its legitimate effects. Ours was, perhaps, the only army in Europe which possessed no corps of sappers and miners, nor any body of men peculiarly trained to carry on the more intricate details of a siege. We had, it is true, what was termed the regiment of royal military artificers;

that is to say, a battalion of carpenters, blacksmiths, stonemasons, and other handicraftsmen; but not one of these had ever seen a mine; and as to a sap, they were probably incapable of understanding the very meaning of the word. In the regiments of the line again, there were but few, even among the officers, who had ever bestowed much attention upon these important matters; whilst the men may be pronounced, without reservation, to have been universally ignorant of them. Now, when with such materials our engineers began the labours of a siege, how was it possible that they could carry them on either with rapidity or success? These officers could not be present in a variety of places at the same moment; and wherever they were not present, the probability was, that nothing was done as it ought to have been done. Then, again, in all the materials requisite for sieges, we were greatly deficient. We had no pontoons nor pontooneers; our breaching artillery, chiefly of Portuguese manufacture, was both meagre and badly supplied; and our intrenching tools consisted simply of the most common description of spades, bill-hooks, and pick-axes. The truth is, that the British government, never having contemplated the possibility of its armies being engaged in a serious continental war, and feeling secure against invasion from the decided superiority of its fleets, had never bestowed

attention upon the organisation of means, without which the bravest troops in the world will be liable to disaster, as often as they find themselves opposed by ramparts and ditches; and hence the British army, in no single instance from the commencement to the close of the Peninsular struggle, sat down before a fortified place but under disadvantages. Both the General and his followers were conscious that they possessed neither the physical nor moral elements for such enterprises, and they never entered upon them except when an irresistible necessity compelled.

But though the case was so, and though now, more perhaps than at subsequent periods, we felt our own inferiority in these respects, Lord Wellington was not, on that account, disposed to permit what appeared to be a favourable opportunity for the re-capture of Ciudad Rodrigo to pass unheeded. The divisions had taken up their cantonments but a few days, when an intercepted return of the provisions in that place fell into our hands, from which it appeared that the existing stock was scanty, and that the prospects of securing a fresh supply were both remote and contingent. It instantly occurred to him, that were it practicable to invest Rodrigo previous to the arrival of a convoy, famine might be made to do the work of a siege, whilst, at all events, a knowledge that the fortress was in danger, could not but dishearten

Marmont, even if it should fail in alarming Soult in the midst of his southern operations. The plan was no sooner conceived than carried into execution. Whilst the second British, and General Hamilton's Portuguese division of infantry, supported by two brigades of cavalry, received orders to remain at Estremos and Portalegre, under General Hill, for the protection of Alentejo, the remainder of the army, consisting of the dragoons, the light, 1st, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, and 7th divisions, was suddenly called into the field, and on the sixth day after it had taken up its cantonments, found itself in full march towards the north.

On the 1st of August head-quarters reached Castello Branco, where a halt of a single day occurred. On the 8th they were transferred to Sabugal; and on the 10th, Lord Wellington fixed his residence in the town of Fuente Guenaldo. A loose and extensive line was then taken up, from Villa Vicosa on the right, to Gallegos on the left, along which the several divisions and brigades were distributed, the 1st occupying Penamacor, the 4th Pedrogao, the 5th Payo, near the pass of Perales, the 6th Gallegos, the 7th Alfayates and Villa Mayor, and the light Mortegao, on the opposite side of the Agueda. With respect to the 3rd division, it remained, with the bulk of the artillery, at Fuente Guenaldo; whilst the cavalry was scattered here and there in squadrons and

small parties, according as the nature of the ground rendered their presence desirable, or facility of accommodation invited.

Before I proceed to give any account of the operations to which these arrangements proved a prelude, it will be necessary to make the reader somewhat better acquainted with the real state and local situation of the fortress, towards which our attention was now turned.

Ciudad Rodrigo is situated upon one of three hills, or rather eminences, which stand upon the right bank of the Agueda, and rise abruptly out of an extensive plain, in a state of high cultivation, and at this time covered with an abundant crop of corn. The plain in question is bordered on the north and west by a range of rugged mountains; and on the south-east, by a similar range, still more rugged and impervious. The former of these ranges consists of cliffs and crags, separated from one another here and there by wide passes, through which several excellent roads conduct to Salamanca and into Castile; the latter can boast only of the pass of Perales, a defile so precipitous, as to be perfectly useless in a military point of view, because perfectly impassable. Both are at the distance of many miles from the walls, and hence both are equally unavailing for the purposes of a blockading force; whilst neither offers a posi-

tion at all favourable or commodious to an army intended to cover the progress of a siege.

It is rather singular, in a country like Spain, that the whole flat should be deficient in springs and pools, and that the only source from which water can be procured by the inhabitants, is the Agueda. I need scarcely add that this circumstance alone, independently of all other considerations, gave to the projected siege no very favourable aspect, since it was manifest that, should it be undertaken, the mass of our troops must establish themselves at a distance from the river, and suffer serious inconvenience in a matter, not less important than any by which they were liable to be effected. But the difficulty which would thus be experienced in supplying the men with one of the most essential necessaries of life, was not the only, nor, perhaps, the greatest obstacle, which stood in the way of our design on the present occasion. Should we fairly embark in the siege, we must do so with the full determination either of abandoning our whole train, or staking everything upon the fate of a battle, in case the enemy should approach in force to the relief of the garrison; because the condition of the country in our rear was such, as to preclude all hope that heavy guns and stores, once brought up, could ever be removed hastily, and in the presence of a superior

force. In the first place, the roads in this part of the country are rarely such as deserve to be termed good; during the dry season, they may, indeed, be traversed by carriages of any description; but after rain they are impervious to all except the lightest and best constructed. In the next place, the rivers which separate Rodrigo from Portugal, particularly the Agueda and the Coa, are not only difficult on account of the steep and rugged nature of their banks, but they are liable to sudden rises of many feet, which will, in the course of a few hours, sweep away bridges, and render fords impassable. Supposing, therefore, that we should bring up our guns and stores unmolested, open our trenches, and establish our magazines, it would be vain to speculate upon any other issue than success; for retreat we could not, even if defeated, without abandoning all these to the enemy. There was not, either, as I have already hinted, any ground upon which a covering army could draw up to advantage. Were we to take possession of the north-western ridges, our troops would be separated into numberless little bands, no two of which could co-operate well together, inasmuch as the heights are all a great deal too rugged in their faces to permit of easy communication from the one to the other; whilst we should be exposed to the risk of being forced at some one point, and having the enemy in our rear, before we were

properly aware of their approach. To post ourselves in the plain, again, could be done only at the expense of prodigious labour and much time, since the plain ought to be fortified before it could offer a position; and even then it would be exposed to the hazard of turning, or being drawn out till it became feeble from its very extent. In the outward appearances of nature, therefore, we saw nothing calculated to inspire us with confidence as to the issue of the intended operation; and no man can say our chief examined the ground superficially. He spent an entire week, from three o'clock in the morning till six in the evening of every day, on horseback.

If the nature of the country was not such as very strongly to encourage us in our designs, the information which we received from a variety of quarters, both as to the state of the fortress, and the probabilities of its being relieved, were equally at variance with our wishes and expectations. It was soon discovered that the scarcity of provisions under which the garrison was reported to labour, had long ago been removed. A convoy of stores of every description had entered the place just before our arrival, and it was now victualled and provided for at least two months to come. Evidence, likewise, was not wanting, that the French marshals were determined to hazard all, rather than permit a post of so much importance to be

wrested from them; and hence, that our siege must be commenced, under the moral certainty of being attacked by all the disposable force in the country long before it could be brought to a conclusion. The following is a brief summary of the rumours which now prevailed, relative to the disposition and numbers of the enemy's troops; and by which, in the event of our embarking in the affair, we should, in all probability, be assailed.

The corps of Marshal Marmont, distributed through the vale of Plasencia, mustered in all thirty-five thousand men; there were at Benavente, Toro, Valladolid, &c. about fifteen thousand more; whilst ten thousand fresh troops, from the reinforcements lately introduced into the country, were understood to be within a few marches of Salamanca. It was not difficult to foresee that, whenever Marmont should deem it expedient to take the field, he would do so at the head of these corps combined; or, in other words, with a force of not less than sixty thousand men. Now, it unfortunately happened that the allied army was suffering at this moment more severely from sickness than it had done at almost any previous period. There were in hospital, or unfit for duty, no fewer than thirteen thousand British, and five thousand Portuguese—a full thousand of whom had broken down during the late march; and hence the utmost amount upon which it was possible for us to