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OF THE  
PENINSULAR  
CAMPAIGNS

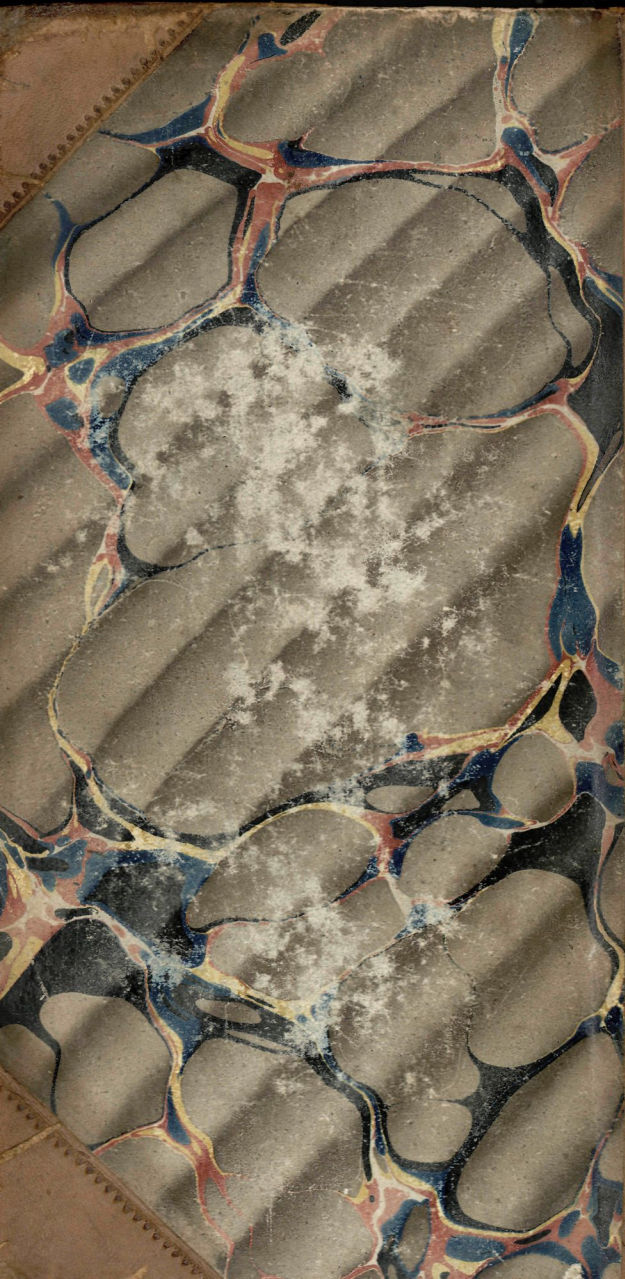
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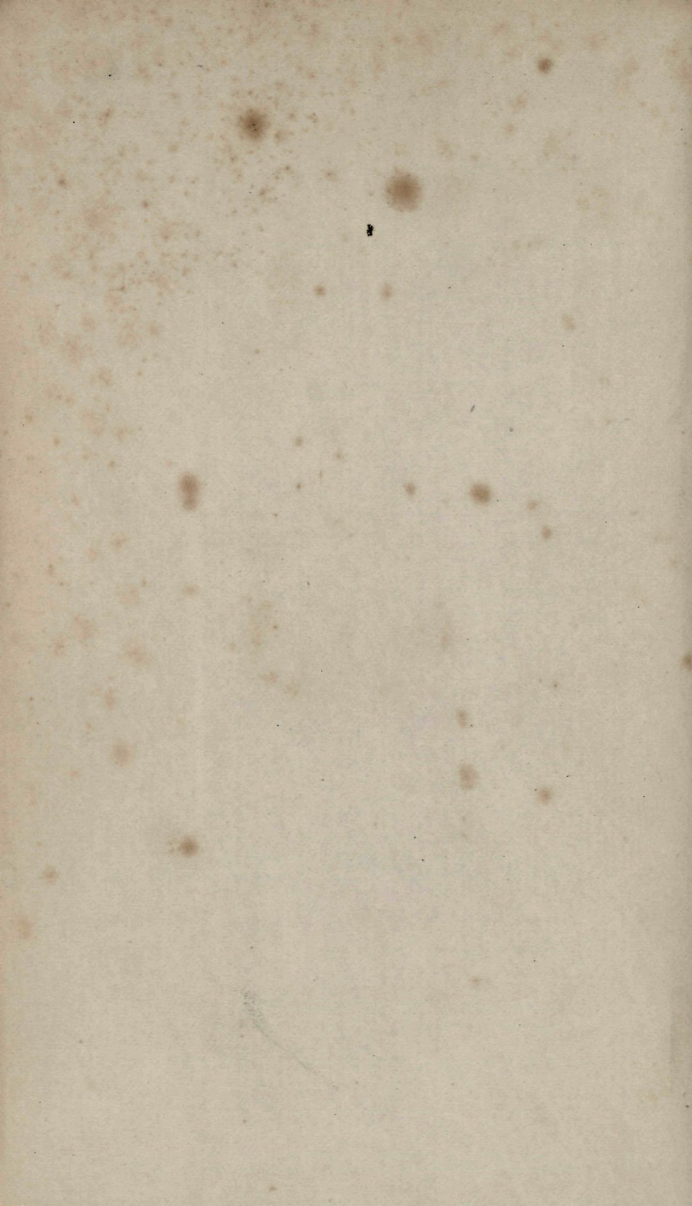
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ANNALES

OF THE

PENINSULAR CAMPAIGNS,

FROM

MDCCLVIII TO MDCCCXIV.

BY THE AUTHOR OF CYRIL THORNTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

WILLIAM BLACKSCOT, EDINBURGH, AND  
T. CADELL STRAND, LONDON.

MDCCLXXII.



ANNALS

OF THE

PENINSULAR CAMPAIGNS

FROM

MDCCLXVIII TO MDCCLXXIV

BY THE REV. JOHN BRIDGES, ESQ.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

WILLIAM BELL AND SONS, EDINBURGH AND

LONDON: AND T. ADAMS, LONDON.

MDCCLXXIX.

**ANNALS**  
OF THE  
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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH: AND  
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MDCCCXXIX.

ANNALS

OF THE

CONTENTS OF THE  
PENINSULAR CAMPAIGNS

1807

MDCCLXXVII TO MDCCLXXIX

EDITED BY THE AUTHOR OF CYRIL THORNTON.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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WILLIAM BLACKWOOD, EDINBURGH: AND

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MDCCLXXIX



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John Moore received official information of his being appointed to command the troops destined for this service. The despatch stated that the officer commanding the forces of his Majesty in Portugal was directed to detach a corps of twenty thousand infantry, with two regiments of German artillery, and a suitable body of artillery, to be placed under his orders.

CHAP. I.  
1808.  
October.

# ANNALS

OF THE

## PENINSULAR CAMPAIGNS.

Ralmouth, under the command of Sir David Baird. Sir John Moore was directed to proceed with the troops immediately commanded, without any avoidable delay; and was instructed to march on the whole army, either in Galicia or on the

### CHAPTER I.

#### CAMPAIGN OF SIR JOHN MOORE.

ON the liberation of Portugal, by the Convention of Cintra, it was determined by the British government to despatch an expedition to the north of Spain. Preparations for this purpose were immediately set on foot by Sir Hew Dalrymple, and continued by Sir Harry Burrard, without any considerable progress being made in the equipment of the army for active service.

CHAP. I.  
1808.  
October.

It was not till the sixth of October that Sir

CHAP. I. John Moore received official information of his  

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1808.  
October. being appointed to command the troops des-  
tined for this service. The despatch stated,  
that the officer commanding the forces of his  
Majesty in Portugal, was directed to detach a  
corps of twenty thousand infantry, with two re-  
giments of German light cavalry, and a suitable  
body of artillery, to be placed under his orders,  
and that this force would be joined by a corps  
of above ten thousand men, then assembling at  
Falmouth, under command of Sir David Baird.

Sir John Moore was directed to proceed,  
with the troops under his more immediate com-  
mand, without any avoidable delay; and was in-  
structed to fix on some place of rendezvous for  
the whole army, either in Galicia or on the  
borders of Leon. The specific plan of opera-  
tions to be subsequently adopted, he was to con-  
cert with the commanders of the Spanish ar-  
mies.

Sir John Moore had no sooner assumed the  
command, than he found he had considera-  
ble difficulties to overcome. Few effective  
preparations had been made for the equip-  
ment of the troops by his predecessors in com-  
mand. Magazines were to be formed, and



means of transport to be provided, in an impoverished and exhausted country. The approach of the rainy season rendered it, above all things, desirable, that the army should, as soon as possible, set forward on its march ; yet all the complicated preliminaries, necessary for this purpose, were still to be accomplished. These formidable difficulties were overcome by the energy of Sir John Moore ; and, in less than a fortnight from the period of his assuming the command, the greater part of the army was on its march to the frontier.

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It formed part of the instructions of Government, that the cavalry should proceed by land ; but a discretionary power was vested in the commander, to move the infantry by sea or land, as he might judge most advisable. Sir John Moore preferred the latter, because, at that season of the year, a coasting voyage was uncertain and precarious, and because he was informed that, at Corunna, there were scarcely means of equipment for the force under Sir David Baird, already destined for that port.

Considerable difficulties occurred in ascertaining the state of the roads ; and, deceived by er-

CHAP. I. roneous information on that point, Sir John  
 1808. Moore determined on dividing his army, a  
 October. dangerous arrangement, and one by which the  
 period of concentration would of necessity be  
 retarded. In consequence of this decision, the  
 troops were ordered to march in three col-  
 umns.

A corps of six thousand men, composed of  
 the cavalry, four brigades of artillery, and four  
 regiments of infantry, under command of Lieu-  
 tenant-General Hope, were directed to pass  
 through the Alentejo, and proceed by the  
 route of Badajos, Merida, Truxillo, Talavera de  
 la Reyna, and the Escorial.

Three brigades, under Lieutenant-General  
 Fraser, marched by Abrantes and Almeida.

Two brigades, commanded by Major-Gen-  
 eral Beresford, were sent by Coimbra and  
 Almeida. As it was deemed imprudent, by  
 Sir John Moore, that the two latter columns  
 should be without artillery, a brigade of light  
 six-pounders was likewise directed on Almeida.

The different corps of the army having com-  
 menced their march, Sir John Moore quitted  
 Lisbon on the twenty-seventh of October. On  
 Nov. 8. the eighth of November he was at Almeida.

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November.

On the thirteenth he arrived at Salamanca, where he received intelligence of the defeat and dispersion of Belvidere's army before Burgos. This event seems to have inspired the British general with melancholy forebodings of the fate of the contest in which he was about to engage. On the second night after his arrival, he was awakened by an express from General Pignatelli, conveying intelligence that the enemy had pushed on a body of cavalry to Valladolid, a city not above three marches from Salamanca.

The situation of Sir John Moore had thus suddenly become one of extreme peril. The enemy were in his front; and he had in Salamanca only three brigades of infantry, and not a single gun. In these circumstances, he contemplated again retiring on Portugal. He assembled the Junta of Salamanca; and laying before them the information he had received, stated, that, should the enemy continue their advance on his front—now wholly uncovered—the British army had no option but retreat. On the arrival of intelligence, however, that the French troops had been withdrawn to Palencia, he determined on continuing his head-quarters at Salamanca; and directed Generals Baird



CHAP. I. and Hope to close on that city with their divisions.

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November.

Every day brought with it intelligence of fresh disasters. By the battle of Espinosa, Blake's army had been dispersed. The whole left wing of the Spanish army, which occupied a line reaching from Bilboa to Burgos, had thus been annihilated; and the flank of the centre, under Castanos, was laid open to the enemy.

The situation of Sir John Moore at Salamanca, with respect to the Spanish armies, was very extraordinary. He was at the vertex of a triangle, the base of which, at the distance of between two hundred and fifty, and three hundred miles, was the French position,—the points at the extremities of the base, that is the French flanks, were the positions of the Spanish armies.

The army of Castanos was, at this period, posted in the neighbourhood of Tudela, but on the opposite or north side of the Ebro, and about three hundred miles to the north-east of Salamanca. The French were thus completely interposed between the Spanish and British armies; and might, at any moment, advance on the latter in overwhelming force. For this state of things, Sir John Moore was unpre-



pared. All his arrangements had been framed on the assurance that the assembling of his forces would be protected by the Spanish armies. To effect the union of his isolated divisions had now become an operation of danger and difficulty. The position of these bodies was such as to prevent the possibility of immediate action. He was placed as a central point between the two wings of his army, and found it impracticable to approach the one, without hazarding the safety of the other.

Thus compelled to remain inactive at Salamanca, Sir John Moore endeavoured to stimulate the local authorities into the adoption of such measures of promptitude and vigour as were suited to the exigence of the crisis. In this effort he failed. The Spanish people, though still influenced by fierce and unmitigated hatred towards their invaders, were no longer animated by that uncalculating and convulsive energy which, in the commencement of the struggle, had goaded them like madness into furious resistance. The fierceness of the paroxysm had passed; and though, in the cause of their country, the hand of every Spaniard was prepared to gripe the sword, the blows it dealt

CHAP. I.

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November.

CHAP. I. were directed with an erring aim, and by a  
1808. feebler arm. Their detestation of a foreign  
November. yoke was undiminished; but it had become a  
fixed and inert sentiment, rather than a fierce,  
uncontrollable, and all-pervading impulse.

Before entering Spain, every thing had contributed to conceal the real state of the Peninsula from the penetrating vision of Sir John Moore. The British government, itself deceived, had become, in its turn, the involuntary propagator of deception. At the commencement of the struggle, it had despatched military agents to the head-quarters of the different Spanish generals, to act as organs of communication, and transmit authentic intelligence of the progress of events in the seat of war. The persons selected for this service were, generally, officers undistinguished by talent or experience, and therefore little suited to discharge, with benefit, the duties of an office so delicate and important. They seem generally to have become the dupes of the unwarranted confidence and inflated boasting of those by whom they were surrounded; and their reports were framed in a strain of blind and sanguine anticipation, not deducible from any enlarged or rational view of the prospects

or condition of the people. Instead of true representations of the numbers, character, and state of efficiency of the armies, they were deluded into adopting the extravagant hyperboles of rash and vain-glorious men, and contributed what in them lay to propagate false and exaggerated notions of the military power of the Spanish nation. They did not venture to obtrude on the British Cabinet the unpalatable truth that the national army was, in effect, nothing more than a congregation of separate and independent bands, miserably armed, possessing but a scanty and ill-served artillery, and almost destitute of cavalry. Had they done so; and had they stated likewise, that this army was without magazines of any kind, without generals of talent or experience, without officers sufficiently versed in the details of war, to instruct and discipline the raw levies which constituted the greater part of its numerical strength; and, further, that the different leaders were prevented, by frivolous jealousies, and discordance of opinion, from cordially uniting in the execution of any great operation, the calamitous events on the Ebro would probably not have come like a thunderbolt to crush and stultify the combinations of a government, which was

CHAP. I.

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November.



CHAP. I. at least sincerely anxious to co-operate in the  
 cause of freedom.

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England had furnished Spain with supplies; she had poured arms and munitions into the country with a profuse hand; but she had taken no efficacious measures for their judicious application. She exercised little influence on the counsels of the Spanish government; and even while providing the very thews and sinews of the war, her voice was seldom listened to with obedience or respect. Arms, placed at the disposal of men swayed by petty views and local interests, were wasted and misapplied; and the supplies of money, clothing, and ammunition, so liberally afforded, became a bone of contention and of petty jealousy to the rival authorities. In truth, the provincial governors were actuated by no liberal and enlarged views of the public benefit. Supine in danger, and vain-glorious in prosperity, at once untalented and unenlightened, no men could be more unfitted to direct the resources of a nation with vigour and effect.

In such men Sir John Moore could place no trust. His expectations had been deceived. He found supineness where he expected energy; a people not filled with an active spirit-stirring



enthusiasm, but reposing in a dull, immovable, and lethargic confidence in their own prowess and resources, even in the immediate neighbourhood of a triumphant enemy. His mind became not only perplexed but irritated by the disappointment of his hopes. At Salamanca he knew himself to be placed in a difficult and precarious position, unprotected in front, separated from the wings of his army, with nothing but a barren country to retire upon. To the concentration of his forces, he was aware, indeed, that no present obstacle existed; but how long such a state of things might continue, he had no data on which to form a judgment. The enemy at any moment might interpose a body which would prevent the possibility of a junction, for there existed no Spanish force from which he could anticipate protection.

To the other embarrassments of Sir John Moore must be added, the difficulty of receiving true and faithful intelligence of the events passing around him. On public and official reports no confidence could be placed, and of more authentic sources of intelligence he was in a great measure deprived. He had been sent forward without a plan of operations, or any data on which to

CHAP. I.

1808.

November.

CHAP. I. found one. Castanos was the person with whom  
 1808. he had been directed to concert his measures ;  
 November. but that officer had been superseded by Romana ;  
 and of the situation of the latter, Sir John Moore  
 only knew that he was engaged in rallying the  
 remains of Blake's army, at a distance of about  
 two hundred miles. Naturally distrustful of the  
 apocryphal intelligence transmitted by the Bri-  
 tish military residents, he could rely only on the  
 reports of Colonel Graham and Captain Whit-  
 tingham ; and these, in conjunction with the  
 information which his own officers were ena-  
 bled to procure, contributed still further to  
 deepen the gloom by which his mind was  
 overcast.

It was in such circumstances, and under the  
 influence of such feelings, that Sir John Moore  
 wrote to Mr. Frere, the new minister at Madrid,  
 whose opinions he had been instructed to re-  
 ceive with deference and attention, proposing as  
 a question what course he should pursue, in case  
 the army of Castanos, which yet shewed front to  
 the enemy, should be defeated. Should that event  
 occur, " I must," said Sir John Moore, in a letter  
 Nov. 27. dated twenty-seventh November, " either march  
 upon Madrid, and throw myself into the heart of

Spain, and thus run all risks, and share the fortunes of the Spanish nation ; or I must fall back on Portugal. In the latter case, I fall back upon my resources, upon Lisbon ; cover a country where there is a British interest ; act as a diversion in favour of Spain, if the French detach a force against me ; and am ready to return to the assistance of the Spaniards, should circumstances again render it eligible.”

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On the day following the date of this communication, intelligence arrived for which Sir John Moore was certainly not unprepared. Castanos had been defeated at Tudela with great loss, and the road to Madrid was now open to the French armies. In this state of things, without waiting for the answer of Mr. Frere, Sir John Moore determined on immediate retreat. With this intention, he transmitted orders to Sir David Baird at Astorga, and Sir John Hope at the Escurial. The former of these officers was directed to retire on Corunna, the latter to push forward, if possible, to Salamanca. Sir David Baird was likewise directed to write immediately to England, that a supply of transports might be sent to the Tagus. “ They will be wanted,”



CHAP. I. said Sir John Moore; "for when the French  
have Spain, *Portugal cannot be defended.*"

1808.

November.

Having thus formed his decision, the Commander-in-Chief directed a Council of General Officers to assemble at head-quarters. He laid before them a full statement of the intelligence he had received, and made known the resolution which it had induced him to adopt. His tone was manly and decided. He informed the generals that he had not called them together to request their counsel, or to influence them to commit themselves by giving any opinion on the course he had determined to pursue. He took the responsibility entirely upon himself; and he only required that they would immediately take measures for carrying the plan into effect.

When the resolution of their General was made known to the army, it was received by all ranks with more than murmurs of dissatisfaction and disgust. The British army had suffered no disaster; it had never been brought into contact with the enemy; and all felt that to retreat with untried prowess from the scene of contest, would fix a tarnish on our arms, and, by diminishing



the confidence of the Spanish nation in our zeal and devotion to their cause, would proportionally contribute to strengthen and consolidate the power of the usurper. Even the personal Staff of Sir John Moore did not attempt to conceal their dissatisfaction at the adoption of a system so adverse to their hopes. All lamented the order for retreat, all felt that it must cast a blight on that cause which they were prepared to defend by the outpouring of their blood.

CHAP. I.  


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 1808.  
 November.

In his reply to the letter of Sir John Moore, Mr. Frere protested strongly against the measure of retiring on Portugal. He assured him it was one most deeply deprecated by the Spanish government. He urged the expediency of advancing to co-operate in the defence of Madrid, by every argument in his power. "Of the zeal and energy of the people," said Mr. Frere, "I have no doubt. The government are new, and have been hitherto too numerous to be very active; but I trust that this inconvenience will soon be remedied. They are resolute; and I believe every man of them determined to perish with the country. They will not, at least, set the example which the ruling powers, and higher orders of other countries have

CHAP. I. exhibited of weakness and timidity." In case, however, the arguments which he most emphatically urged for an advance on Madrid, should not to Sir John Moore appear sufficiently conclusive to authorize the adoption of the measure, Mr. Frere suggested the alternative of taking up a position in the strong country around Astorga. "A retreat from Astorga to Corunna," said the minister, "would be less difficult than through Portugal to Lisbon; and we ought, in that position, to wait for the reinforcements of cavalry from England, which would enable the army to act in the flat country which opens immediately from that point, and extends through the whole of Leon and Old Castile."

The arguments of Mr. Frere did not succeed in changing the opinions of Sir John Moore. He still adhered to the resolution he had previously formed, and only awaited the arrival of Sir John Hope, to commence his retreat on Portugal. This general, when within sixty miles of Salamanca, had been compelled to make a considerable detour in order to avoid the enemy.

In the meantime, the Supreme Junta had despatched two Spanish generals to the head-

quarters of the British army, in order to concert with its commander an united plan of operations. These missionaries corroborated the exaggerated statements of Mr. Frere with regard to the strength of the Spanish armies. They asserted that they were undismayed and increasing every hour; and that General San Juan was in possession of the pass of Somosierra, which he had fortified so strongly, as to render abortive all the enemy's hopes of reaching Madrid. Unfortunately for the credit of the generals, Colonel Graham had just arrived with intelligence that the pass had been already gained by the French. Sir John Moore was filled with perhaps merited contempt for their ignorance and weakness of character, and on that account felt less disposed to accede to their solicitations that he would form a junction with Romana, and thereby create a diversion favourable to the defence of the capital.

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At the head of the Junta, was Don Thomas Morla, who had formerly succeeded Solano as Governor of Cadiz, and now exercised the chief influence at Madrid. The conduct of this man has been attributed to treason; of which the subsequent surrender of Madrid is considered—



CHAP. I. not uncolourably—as the overt consummation.

1808.  
December.

It has been supposed, therefore, that his object at this period was, by false representations, to draw the British army nearer to the capital, and thus to throw them into the hands of the French. On a review of the whole circumstances, however, we think the imputation unwarranted by proof. The truth we take to be, that Morla was a cold, unprincipled, and selfish man, not unwilling to resist, while resistance did not compromise his own safety, but ready to join the victors, whenever adverse circumstances should threaten to involve his own in the wreck of his country's interests. But even though acquitted of previous treason, enough of infamy will be connected with his name. His acceptance of service under the intruder admits of no palliation; and he will stand recorded as a man whose conduct is irreconcilable with honour or patriotism, and whose base desertion of a noble cause marks him as unworthy to have ever been numbered among its assertors.

From this person, and from the Prince of Castelfranco, Sir John Moore received, on the  
Dec. 5. fifth of December, a joint letter, informing him that about twenty-five thousand men of the army