

of the hill did not admit of its being occupied by any considerable body of troops, and Sir Arthur Wellesley determined to derange, if possible, the combinations of the enemy, by a charge of cavalry. General Anson's brigade, consisting of the twenty-third light dragoons, and the first regiment of German hussars, supported by the heavy cavalry under General Fane, were accordingly ordered to charge the enemy's column, at the moment when emerging from the valley they should attempt to deploy.

These regiments advanced with great gallantry, regardless of the fire of several battalions of infantry. Unfortunately, the front of the enemy was protected by a deep ravine, which had not been perceived, and which was found impassable for many of the horses. Confusion ensued in consequence. A considerable body of the twenty-third, however, led by Major Ponsonby, succeeded in crossing it, and passing between the divisions of Ruffin and Villatte, fell with irresistible impetuosity on two regiments of mounted chasseurs, which at once gave way. The twenty-third was then charged by some regiments in reserve, surrounded, broken, and almost destroyed. A few only escaped (among

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CHAP. VII. whom was Lord William Russel) by passing at
 1809. full speed through the intervals of the French
 July. columns.

This charge was the only unfortunate occurrence of the day. It was ill-timed and injudicious. The ground had not been reconnoitred. Sir Arthur Wellesley's intention was, that the cavalry should charge when the enemy, by deploying, had extended and exposed their flank. When the charge was actually made, the enemy were still in column, and too strongly posted to afford any prospect of success. Yet notwithstanding its failure, the French were so astonished at the boldness and gallantry of the attempt, as to desist from all further effort to gain possession of the hill; and this imposing movement, which at first threatened to compromise the safety of the whole army, was in effect attended by no important result.

In the meanwhile, the entire corps of Marshal Victor advanced against the centre. One column, composed chiefly of Germans, deployed on the level ground before they attempted to ascend the position. The point selected for attack was immediately on the right of the ground occupied by General Hill's division, which form-

ed the extreme left of the line. On the first indication of the enemy's intention, General Sherbrooke gave orders that his division should prepare for the charge. The assailants came on, over the rough and broken ground in the valley, with great resolution, and in the most imposing regularity, and were encountered by the British with their usual firmness. The whole division, as if moved by one powerful and undivided impulse, advanced to meet them; and pouring in a most galling and destructive fire, their ranks were speedily broken, and they gave way.

The impetuosity of the troops, however, was not to be restrained; and the Guards, having advanced too far in the ardour of pursuit, were powerfully attacked in flank by the enemy's reserve. The period was critical. In a few minutes the Guards had lost above five hundred of their number; their ranks were mowed down by the fire of the enemy's artillery; and the destruction of the whole brigade appeared inevitable. But the prescience of Sir Arthur Wellesley retrieved the army from the consequences of this misfortune. He had foreseen the danger to which the impetuosity of the Guards was likely to expose them, and ordered the forty-eighth re-

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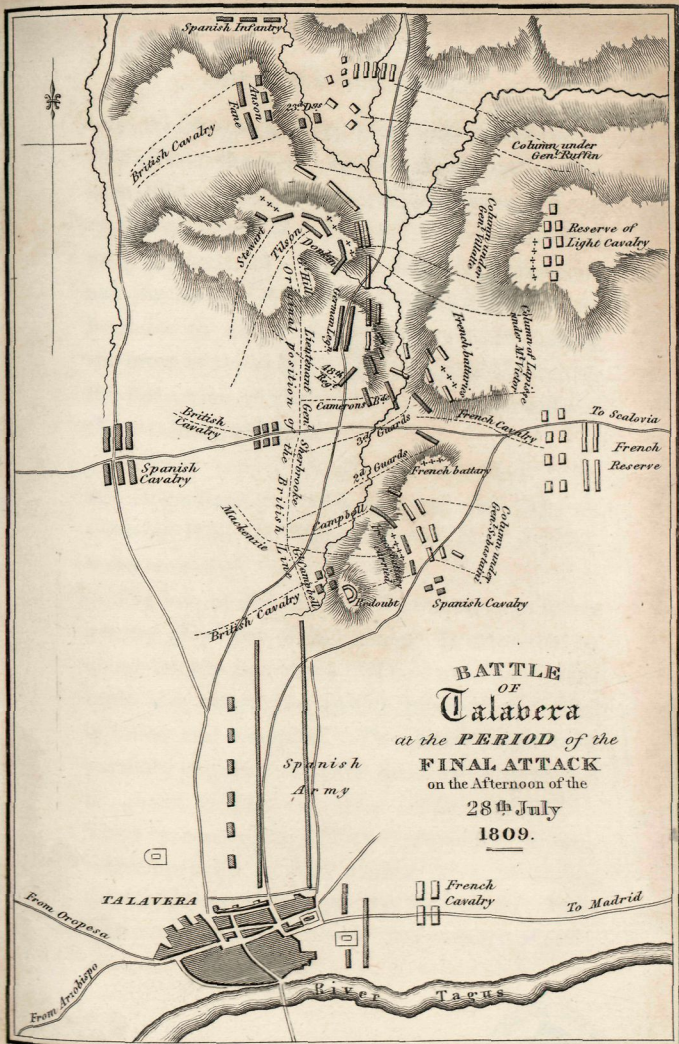
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CHAP. VII. giment, and the cavalry under General Cotton, to
1809. advance to their support. Under the cover thus
July. afforded, the Guards, entirely broken, were enabled to effect their retreat. The enemy then directed their efforts against the forty-eighth; but that regiment bravely stood its ground, till the Guards again rallying advanced with cheers to its support. The French then gave way, and were pursued for a considerable distance, though covered in their retreat by a strong body of cavalry and artillery.

Thus foiled at all points, the enemy withdrew their columns, and again concentrated on their position. But the fire of their artillery did not cease till dark. A dim and cheerless moon then rose, and threw a pallid lustre on the field, covered by the dying and the dead. Parties were sent out to bring in the wounded. The enemy was similarly employed, and large fires were lighted along the whole front of his line.

The loss of the British army in this battle was severe: it amounted in killed, wounded, and missing, to five thousand three hundred and sixty-seven, and was occasioned chiefly by the close and well directed fire of the French artil-



BATTLE
 OF
Talavera
 at the *PERIOD* of the
FINAL ATTACK
 on the Afternoon of the
28th July
1809.



lery, which was kept up with little intermission throughout the day. Great as this amount of casualties unquestionably was, in an army whose numerical force did not exceed nineteen thousand men, it would have been incalculably greater had not Sir Arthur Wellesley directed the different brigades to lie extended on the ground behind the crest of the ridge, and only exposed them to the full action of the guns on the approach of the attacking columns.

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In this action, Major-General Mackenzie, and Brigadier-General Langworth, fell; Major-General Hill, and Major-General R. Campbell, were wounded.

The loss of the French, however, was much greater than that of the allies. It amounted to about ten thousand men. The loss of the Spaniards did not exceed twelve hundred and fifty in killed and wounded. The latter were only partially engaged; but the little which devolved on them to perform, was performed well.— Their presence in position prevented a considerable body of the enemy from becoming disposable for attack on the British. A body of Spanish artillery on the left was excellently

CHAP. VII. served; and their cavalry made a gallant charge, which was entirely successful.

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About six o'clock in the evening, a dreadful occurrence took place. The long, dry grass took fire, and the flames spreading rapidly over the field of action, a great number of the wounded were scorched to death. For those who escaped, a large hospital was established in the town of Talavera.

During the night, the soldiers lay upon their arms, without provisions of any kind. It was expected that the French would remain in their position, and renew the battle in the morning. But this anticipation was not realized. Under cover of the night they retired, leaving in the hands of the British twenty pieces of artillery. One standard was taken, and one destroyed, by the twenty-ninth regiment. At daybreak, the rear-guard, consisting of cavalry, was alone visible.

Jul. 29.

— In the course of the twenty-ninth, the army was reinforced by the arrival of a troop of horse-artillery, and a brigade of light troops from Lisbon, under General Crawford. Under the circumstances of his situation, however, it was im-

possible for Sir Arthur Wellesley to follow up his victory. The position he occupied was still one of extreme peril. A powerful enemy was advancing on his rear; and no reliance could be placed for the supply of his army, either on the promises of the Spanish General, or of the Junta.

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The army of Vanegas, which, in obedience to the orders of the Supreme Junta, had advanced from Madrilejos, was engaged, during the twenty-eighth and twenty-ninth, in endeavouring, to dislodge the French garrison from Toledo. His advance pushed on during the night to the neighbourhood of Madrid, and took prisoners some patroles of the enemy. Vanegas, however, no sooner learned from the prisoners that Joseph and Sebastiani were approaching, than he recalled the parties which had crossed the Tagus; and, moving on his right, desisted from any further offensive operations.

The intelligence that Vanegas had failed in executing the part allotted to him, was speedily followed by information that Soult had with facility driven the Spaniards from the passes leading from Salamanca to Placentia. It was in consequence arranged between the Gen-

CHAP.VII. erals, that the British army should immediately
 1809. march to attack Soult, and that Cuesta should re-
 July. main in the position of Talavera, to protect this
 movement from any operation of Victor. The
 wounded likewise were to be left in charge of
 Cuesta, who declared himself delighted with this
 mark of confidence, and promised, that, if by
 any chance a retrogressive movement should be-
 come necessary, his first care would be the safety
 of the British committed to his protection.

Aug. 3. On the morning of the third of August, the
 British accordingly commenced their march on
 Oropesa. On his arrival there, Sir Arthur
 Wellesley received intelligence that Soult was
 already at Naval Moral, thus cutting off the
 communication with Almaraz, at which place he
 was informed the Spaniards, in their retreat
 from Banos, had crossed the river, and destroy-
 ed the bridge.

The information thus brought, did not, how-
 ever, change his intention of advancing against
 Soult, and bringing him to battle. But, shortly
 after, a courier arrived from Cuesta, announcing,
 that, as the enemy were stated to be advancing
 on his flank, and as it was ascertained that the
 corps of Ney and Mortier had been united un-

der Soult, he had determined on quitting his position, and joining the British army at Orope-
sa. This movement was executed the same
night; and nearly the whole of the British
wounded were left unprotected in the town of
Talavera.

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The conduct of Cuesta, in this precipitate retreat, is altogether indefensible. He had suddenly abandoned the position intrusted to him, without any urgent necessity; for it subsequently appeared that Victor was then at some distance, and not engaged in any movement on the Spanish army. Nothing indeed but the presence of a superior force, and the impossibility of providing for their safety, could justify his relinquishing the British wounded. The distance which separated the allied armies was only five leagues, and in the course of a few hours he could have exchanged communications with Sir Arthur Wellesley. But Cuesta, acting on his first impulse, put his army at once in motion; and, so regardless was he of the sacred trust which had been confided to him, that he allotted but seven waggons for the transport of the wounded. By indefatigable exertion, and by the sacrifice of much baggage, Sir Arthur Wellesley succeeded

CHAP. VII. in procuring about forty more, by which the greater number of the sufferers were rescued.

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In quitting the position of Talavera, Cuesta had abandoned the only situation in which the advance of Victor on the British rear could be resisted with any prospect of success. By this unexpected movement, the whole circumstances of the armies had been changed. Whether, had Cuesta remained faithful to his engagement, the projected scheme of operations was likely to be crowned with success, is a speculative question, on the discussion of which we shall not enter. This at least is certain, that by the vacillation of the Spanish leader the whole calculations of Sir Arthur Wellesley were at once overthrown. With a powerful enemy, both in front and rear, who, by a combination of movements, might bring an overwhelming force against him, one course only remained. The bridge of Almaraz had been destroyed, and Sir Arthur determined to throw his army across the Tagus by the bridge of Arzobispo, which the retreat of Cuesta had left open to the enemy.

Aug. 4. Before quitting Oropesa on the morning of the fourth, Sir Arthur Wellesley had an interview with Cuesta, and represented to him that,

situated as the armies then were, the only prudent measure was to take up the line of the Tagus, and, in a strong defensive position, to await the collection of stores, and the occurrence of more favourable prospects. But the Spaniard, who, but the day before, had been driven by his fears to a precipitate retreat, now felt his courage restored by the presence of the British, and vehemently urged the propriety of giving battle to the enemy. He refused to accede to the proposal of Sir Arthur Wellesley, who tired with combating the reasons of so shallow and obstinate an opponent, at length thought it necessary to state, that whatever course the Spanish leader might pursue, he certainly would not expose the army under his orders to foolish and unprofitable hazard. On the conclusion of the conference, orders were accordingly given for the march of the British, who on the same day crossed the Tagus at Arzobispo.

On the fifth, the army pursued its march through a country of extreme difficulty, and halted in the neighbourhood of Valdela Casa. On the seventh it reached Deleytosa, where a halt was found necessary, in order to refresh the troops, whose sufferings had been very great,

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 August.

Aug. 5.

CHAP.VII. from the extreme heat of the weather, insufficient nourishment, and the miserable condition of the roads.

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On the same day, Victor entered Talavera, where he behaved with the utmost humanity and kindness to the wounded British. Joseph, when it was ascertained that Sir Arthur Wellesley had crossed the Tagus, went to Aranjuez. Mortier and Soult marched on Arzobisbo, and Ney on Almaraz, with the view of cutting off the retreat of the Allies. But this object was defeated by the precaution of Sir Arthur Wellesley, who had posted the division of General Crawford to prevent the passage of the river.

In the meanwhile, Cuesta had followed the British in their retreat to the bridge of Arzobisbo, and leaving the Duke del Albuquerque with two divisions of infantry and one of cavalry to defend it, he withdrew the remainder of his army to Paraleda de Garben. The French, however, having taken post on the opposite side of the river, soon succeeded in discovering a ford by which they crossed, and surprising the Spaniards, drove them at once from the works, with the loss of thirty pieces of cannon. After this, Cuesta with his whole force

fell back on Deleytosa, while the British moved to Xaraicejo. CHAP.VII.

Frustrated in his hopes of passing the Tagus at Almaraz, which would have placed the allies in a situation of great danger, Soult was desirous of again uniting the corps of Ney and Mortier to his own; and, by a rapid march, to interpose his army between those of Wellesley and Beresford, while two divisions of the corps of Victor should guard the passages of the Tagus from Talavera to Almaraz. Soult then proposed to push on to Abrantes; and having gained possession of that important stronghold, to advance on Lisbon, entertaining little doubt of the immediate submission of the capital.

This plan, however, did not meet the approbation of Jourdan. The corps of Ney was ordered to Salamanca, in the neighbourhood of which the Spaniards, under the Duke del Parque, were actively engaged in the prosecution of a desultory war. Soult himself, was directed to remain at Placentia, and to leave the corps of Mortier to guard the Tagus.

Meanwhile, Sir Robert Wilson, who, at Escalona, found himself cut off by the enemy from Arzobispo, moved rapidly to his right,

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CHAP. VII. crossed the Tietar, and scrambling over the mountains, gained with difficulty the pass of Banos, at the very moment when the corps of Ney was discovered to be approaching on its march from Placentia to the North. Sir Robert Wilson, with his usual enterprize and gallantry, determined to make an effort to defend the pass; but, after a spirited resistance of several hours, the superior numbers of the enemy prevailed, and the Lusitanian legion was dislodged with great slaughter, and its fugitive remnant with difficulty escaped to Castello Branco.

Vanegas, after relinquishing his attempt on Toledo, remained with his army in the neighbourhood of Aranjuez. On the fifth of August, he succeeded in gaining a decided advantage over an advanced division of the enemy. On learning the retreat of Cuesta, he subsequently fell back to Madrilejos, and opened a communication with that General, who directed him on no account to risk an action, but to remain prepared to combine his movements with those of the allied armies. But between Cuesta and the Supreme Junta there was no unity of purpose; and harassed by

inconsistent orders, Vanegas was unfortunately induced again to advance, and give battle to the corps of Sebastiani at Almonacid. This engagement, though many of the Spanish troops behaved with great gallantry, terminated in the complete defeat of the army of Vanegas. It was driven to the Sierra Morena, with the loss of all its baggage and artillery.

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Aug. 11.

With this action terminated the campaign which had been undertaken for the relief of Madrid, and the expulsion of the enemy from the central provinces of Spain. The British army at Xaraicejo, still served as a shield to the southern provinces, and Sir Arthur Wellesley, (whom the gratitude of his country had now ennobled,) considered it of importance to maintain the position he then occupied. But the total failure of supplies rendered this impossible, and about the twentieth of August he fell back through Merida on Badajos, in the neighbourhood of which he established his army.

Aug. 20.

At this period all operations in concert ceased between the English and Spanish armies. The Supreme Junta complained bitterly of the retreat of the former, which left the road to Se-

CHAP. VII. ville and Cadiz open to the enemy, while the
1809. Marquis Wellesley, then ambassador in Spain,
August. made strong representations of the privations
to which the British army had been exposed, by
the inattention and neglect of the authorities.
In the correspondence which ensued, it appeared
that the measure of retreat had been forced on
Lord Wellington, by the absolute impossibility of
supporting his army in the ground he occupied;
and that so far from shewing a contemptuous dis-
regard of the wishes of the Junta, it was in com-
pliance with their earnest entreaty that he had
retained his army in the neighbourhood of Ba-
dajos, notwithstanding the well-known unhealth-
iness of the situation.

By these unpleasant discussions, however, a
spirit of temporary estrangement was generated
between the nations, and jealousies were excited
which could not fail to operate injuriously on
the interests of the common cause.

Thus ended the campaign. Of its policy we shall
say little, because, in truth, little remains to be
said. The calculations of the allied Generals ap-
pear throughout to have been founded on prin-
ciples radically vicious, and it seems impossible
that any permanent and important benefit could,

under the most favourable circumstances, have resulted from the execution of a project so rash and precarious. Fortunately there was no concert in the operations of the adverse Generals. The battle of Talavera was fought by the enemy, in utter recklessness and ignorance of the advantages they possessed. Had Lord Wellington been induced to proceed another march towards Madrid, and had the advance of Soult been accelerated by a single day, the retreat of the British army would have been cut off, and the most fatal consequences must have ensued.

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In all the details of the campaign, however, abstracted from the error of its general conception, we find the same skill, promptitude, and unhesitating self-reliance, by which the character of Lord Wellington has been uniformly marked. The ground which he selected to receive the enemy's attack was admirably chosen. His manœuvres during the battle were those of a great general, at once perceiving and preserving the full advantages of his situation. His subsequent determination of attacking Soult, while Cuesta should keep Victor in check, was one which could have originated only in a mind of the

CHAP. VII. highest energy and vigour. All these things
 1809. are admirable; yet it may be safely asserted,
 that but a small part of Lord Wellington's mil-
 itary reputation, will be found eventually to rest
 on the campaign of Talavera.

CHAPTER VIII.

OPERATIONS OF THE SPANISH ARMIES.

THE utter incapacity of Cuesta had been strongly represented to the Spanish government, and that officer was at length removed from his command. He was a man of strong passions and of narrow mind, who too often mistook rashness for courage, obstinacy for firmness, and procrastination for prudence. Buoyed up under every reverse by the most overweening self-confidence, he was disqualified, by narrow bigotry of opinion, from profiting even by the dear-bought lessons of experience. His measures uniformly failed, because they were uniformly adopted on the dictates of temporary impulse, rather than of any patient calculation of probabilities. Yet with all his defects, Cuesta was a man of upright intentions

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1809.

CHAP. VIII and untarnished honour. While too many of

1809.

October.

his associates were disposed to truckle to the usurper, Cuesta trod steadily in the path of patriotism and honour. He adhered to the cause of his country through every misfortune; and the sincerity of the zeal with which he laboured to promote its success, has never, we believe, been questioned by friend or enemy.

On the retirement of Cuesta, the command of his army was assumed by General Eguia, who, in conjunction with Vanegas, could bring into the field an army of about fifty thousand men. Blake, after his defeat at Belchite, had only been able to re-assemble a corps of about six thousand men, with which his main object was to relieve Gerona. There were in Galicia about fifteen thousand men, under Noronha, but without cavalry or artillery. The Duke del Parque had nine thousand, at Ciudad Rodrigo.

Such was the disposition and strength of the Spanish armies. The disposable force of the French amounted to about one hundred and twenty-five thousand men, exclusive of garrisons. Of these about thirty-five thousand were occupied in Arragon and Catalonia; the remainder were in the two Castilles and Estramadura.

Ney's head-quarters were at Salamanca; and part of his corps was stationed at Ledesma and Alba de Tormes. Soult's were at Placentia; and he occupied Coria, Galesteo, and the banks of the Tietar and the Tagus, to the bridge of Arzobispo. The corps of Mortier was at Talavera, Oropesa, and Naval Moral. Victor's head-quarters were at Toledo, his advanced posts at Daymiel. The corps of Sebastiani extended from Aranjuez to Alcala. Marshal Jourdan had been recalled, and Soult appointed Major-General of the armies. This appointment gave offence to Ney, who, in consequence, solicited leave to quit the army; and the command of his corps was assumed by General Marchand.

It was in this state of things, when the enemy had a force of above seventy thousand men immediately disposable for its defence, that the Junta adopted the insane project of advancing on Madrid, with the armies of Vanegas and Eguia. The former leader had been superseded by General Arisaigo, a very young man, without talent or experience; and to this person the command of this perilous enterprize was entrusted. In Arisaigo the Supreme Junta calculated on finding a submissive instrument of their schemes; and by

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CHAP. VIII these wretched calculators it was thought possible, by a rapid advance, to gain possession of the capital, and thus to strike a signal blow, by which the grasp of the invader would at once be loosened.

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Without any communication with Lord Wellington, therefore, and without concerting any combined movement with the other armies, Arisaigo put his force in motion against the capital. The French were unprepared for the suddenness of this advance; and Latour Maubourg, who commanded a considerable body of horse at Madrilejos, on learning that the Spaniards were entering the town, with difficulty effected his escape. The Spanish army were successful in several skirmishes; and on the sixteenth of

Nov. 16.

November Arisaigo reached Santa Cruz de la Zorza, where he encamped his army on the heights.

On receiving intelligence of this movement, Joseph Buonaparte immediately advanced with the main body of his forces to bring the enemy to battle. In order to deceive the Spanish General, the French at first made demonstrations of acting only on the defensive; but Arisaigo, learning that a large force

had assembled at Toledo, on his flank, became CHAP. VIII
alarmed at the peril of his situation, and marched 1809.
towards Ocana, in order to occupy the great November.
road from Seville to Aranjuez. In the neigh-
bourhood of that town he was attacked on the
day following, by the army under Joseph.

Arisaigo waited his approach in a position of which the town of Ocana formed the centre. The country being flat, his wings were without support, the right terminating in an olive-grove, the left extending across the road from Aranjuez. The town was covered by a ravine which ran along its front. The artillery, consisting of about sixty pieces, was chiefly disposed in batteries on the right and left; and the cavalry were formed in a body, a little in advance of the right flank. The second line was posted so near to the first, that, in case of the latter being thrown into disorder, there was no room for it to rally.

About ten o'clock the French commenced their attack. A column, under General Leval, supported by artillery, advanced on the right flank of the Spaniards.

They were received with so heavy a fire, that Leval's division, in attempting to deploy, fell

CHAP.VIII into confusion, and two pieces of artillery were
1809. dismantled. At this critical moment, a division
November. in reserve was ordered to advance through the
intervals of the discomfited columns, and form
line in front of them. This was immediately
done, and a change soon took place in the fortune
of the day. The cavalry, under Sebastiani charg-
ed, and the whole right wing of the Spaniards
at once went down.

The left wing, however, was untouched, and
an able General might yet have secured a retreat.
But Arisaigo, utterly confounded, quitted the field,
desiring this portion of the army to follow him.
Lord Macduff, who was present in the action,
entreated the second in command to assume the
direction ; but the French cavalry broke through
the centre, and the rout became complete. The
surrounding county was flat and open to the
action of cavalry, which vigorously pursued the
fugitives, and cut them down on all sides. Vic-
tor, whose corps came up at the conclusion of
the action, continued the pursuit all night.
In this unfortunate battle the Spaniards lost all
their baggage and artillery, and about thirty
thousand stand of arms. The number of killed
and wounded was about four thousand. Eigh-

teen thousand were made prisoners; and, by many, the number has been estimated still higher. The loss of the victors amounted only to seventeen hundred.

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Lamentable, in every point of view, as this defeat unquestionably was, it carried with it disgrace rather to the General than the troops which he commanded. The latter displayed courage; and the right wing received the onset of the French with firmness and resolution. The artillery was excellently served; and several regiments shewed an unshaken front to the enemy, when above half their number had fallen. Had the army, thus sacrificed, been reserved for defence of the Sierra Morena, Andalusia would probably have been rescued from the grasp of the enemy. But thus it was, by ignorance, obstinacy, and mismanagement, that the hopes of Spain were blighted, and the blood of her sons unprofitably wasted.

This disastrous battle, which, at a blow, laid open the southern provinces, was speedily followed by another scarcely less ruinous. The Duke del Parque, with an army augmented by recent levies to about twenty thousand men, had, for some time back, kept his ground in the neigh-

CHAP. VIII bourhood of Ciudad Rodrigo, where, being joined by Sir Robert Wilson, he had succeeded in causing great annoyance to the enemy. In the middle of October, General Marchand advanced against this army, with the view of bringing it to action, and found it strongly posted near Tamames. The force of Marchand consisted of ten thousand foot, twelve hundred cavalry, and fourteen pieces of cannon. Despising his opponents, who enjoyed all advantages of ground, he attacked them with an imprudent impetuosity, which terminated in the defeat of his army. After this engagement, in which he lost about three thousand men, Marchand retreated on Salamanca. There he was followed by the Duke, and Marchand withdrew his force across the Douro.

For some time after this event, the Spanish army remained inactive at Salamanca; and the defeated corps having received reinforcements, again advanced, under General Kellerman, to retrieve its disaster. The Duke del Parque, elated by victory, determined on again standing the hazard of a battle. It took place near Alba de Tormes. The Spaniards were driven from the high ground which they occupied, but retreated on Tamames in tolerable order. On the following