

southern Juntas were employed in fortifying the passes of the Sierra Morena, which were daily expected to become the object of attack. But at that moment the movements of the British army had the effect of diverting the attention of Napoleon; and it was probably expected that the force detached towards Badajos, in pursuit of the retiring Junta, would, in that direction, find easier access to Seville and Cadiz, than over the difficult and giant ranges by which Andalusia is bounded on the north.

When Sir John Moore, therefore, commenced his march from Salamanca, the different corps of the French army were disposed nearly as follows. Marshal Bessieres was pursuing the remains of the central army on the road to Valencia. Victor had entered Toledo. Lefebvre, with a strong division, was marching on Badajos. Mortier was preparing to besiege Zaragoza; Soult to enter Leon; while Napoleon, from Madrid, was ready to support all these movements, and complete the subjugation of Spain. The total of this force was estimated at one hundred and fifty thousand men. That of Sir John Moore amounted altogether to twenty-six thousand nine hundred infantry, and two

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CHAP. I. thousand four hundred and fifty cavalry. The  
1808. artillery was numerous, but of too small a cali-  
December. bre. It consisted of about fifty guns, including  
a brigade of useless three-pounders.

Dec. 12. On the twelfth, Sir John Moore moved on-  
ward from Salamanca. On the thirteenth,  
head-quarters were at Alaejos. The brigade of  
General Beresford, and the cavalry under Lord  
Paget, were at Toro. General Hope was at  
Torrecillo; the brigade of cavalry, under Briga-  
dier-General Stewart, at Rueda. By the latter,  
a party of fifty infantry and thirty cavalry, had,  
on the preceding night, been surprised and cut  
off. The prisoners declared that it was believed,  
in the French army, that the English were re-  
treating on Portugal.

Dec. 14. On the fourteenth, Sir John Moore received  
a despatch from Romana, expressive of his ap-  
probation of the movements of the British army,  
and of his intention to take immediate steps to  
effect a junction.

On the same day a packet of intercepted let-  
ters from the head-quarters of the French army  
—the bearer of which had been killed by the  
peasantry—was brought to Sir John Moore. It  
contained a despatch from Berthier to Soult,

directing him to occupy Leon, Benevente, and Zamora, to drive the Spaniards into Galicia, and maintain subjection in the flat country. It stated that no annoyance need be apprehended from the English, who were already supposed to be in full retreat on Portugal. But should this not be the case, the movement of the fourth corps on Badajos would speedily realize the anticipation. It likewise appeared from the letter, that Soult was at Saldanha, with two divisions; and that another, under Mortier, had received orders to march on Zaragoza. The eighth corps, commanded by Junot, was stated to have passed the Pyrenees, and would probably be concentrated in Burgos.

It had been the intention of Sir John Moore to push onward to Valladolid; but the intelligence contained in the intercepted despatch, induced him to alter his intention. By this it appeared that the corps of Soult was stronger than he expected; and removing his headquarters to Toro, he directed Sir David Baird to concentrate his division at Benevente, from which point an union, either by a flank or forward movement, might at any time be effected.

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While Sir John Moore was at Toro, he received another communication from Mr. Frere, written in a tone of ardent remonstrance. Ignorant of the change which had taken place in the plans of the general, it reminded him of the immense responsibility which he assumed, in adopting a measure which must be followed by the immediate, if not the final ruin of our ally, and by indelible disgrace to the country with whose resources he was intrusted. "I am unwilling," continued he, "to enlarge on a subject on which my feelings must be stifled or expressed at the risk of offence, which, with such an interest at stake, I should be unwilling to excite. But this much I must say, that if the British army had been sent for the express purpose of doing the utmost possible mischief to the Spanish cause, with the single exception of not firing a shot against their troops, they would, according to the measures now announced as about to be pursued, have completely fulfilled their purpose."

In this letter Mr. Frere enclosed another from the Supreme Junta to himself, deprecating the resolution of retreat, and urging, in the strongest terms, the advantage of his immediately engag-

ing in active operations against the enemy. The Junta assured Mr. Frere that the enthusiasm of the Spanish people had not been diminished by the recent reverses of their armies, and promised that he should be promptly joined by fourteen thousand men from Romana's army.

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The communication of Mr. Frere arrived too late to have any influence on the movements of Sir John Moore. His plans had already been decided. Against his better judgment he had engaged in operations from which he anticipated little beneficial result; and, still contemplating the probability of retreat, he declined assuming the chief command of the Spanish armies, which was at this time offered him.

The difficulties of Sir John Moore were increased by intelligence received from Sir David Baird, that the Marques de la Romana had actually commenced his retreat from Leon on Galicia. Such information could not fail of producing considerable vexation. Sir John Moore felt how materially his operations would be impeded by this unexpected circumstance; and, on his arrival at Castro Nuevo, he despatched a courier to Romana, soliciting him to retrace his steps, or else, by entering the

CHAP. I. Asturias, afford protection to the left flank  
of the communication on Corunna. To this,  
1808. Romana replied that he had commenced his re-  
December. treat in consequence of intelligence received  
from Sir David Baird; that he was anxious at  
the present to do every thing for the relief of  
Madrid; and prepared to unite in any opera-  
tion with the English army.

Sir John Moore had now resolved, if possi-  
ble, to attack Marshal Soult in his position at  
Saldanha, about eighty miles to the northward  
of Toro. He considered that even an unpro-  
fitable victory could scarcely fail to lend encour-  
agement to the patriots; and, at all events, the  
forward movement would necessarily draw on  
him the whole French force in Spain, and thereby  
create a diversion, which would give the Spanish  
armies in the south time to rally and recover  
from the effects of the recent disasters.

Dec. 18. On the eighteenth Sir John Moore moved  
forward to Castro Nuevo. The head-quarters  
of Sir David Baird on that day were at Be-  
nevente, about forty miles distant. On the  
nineteenth the march of the army was con-  
tinued on Villalpando and Valderas. On the  
Dec. 20. twentieth the junction with Sir David Baird was

formed at Mayorga. The total effective amount of the combined army, is stated to have been twenty-three thousand infantry, and two thousand five hundred cavalry. About one thousand seven hundred men were on detachment, and four thousand in hospital.

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While head-quarters were at Mayorga, several skirmishes took place between the British cavalry and that of the enemy. In Sahagun a detachment of seven hundred French cavalry was reported to be lodged, and Lord Paget deemed it practicable to cut them off. The ground was covered with deep snow, and the weather intensely cold. Lord Paget, however, set forward on his march, and detaching General Slade with the tenth hussars along the Cea to enter the town, he wheeled off with the fifteenth and horse artillery to approach it by a different route. By day-dawn, Lord Paget had reached the town, in front of which he fell in with a piquet of the enemy. It was instantly charged, and all but one man cut down or made prisoners. The escape of this individual, however, gave the alarm; and before the fifteenth could advance, the enemy were discovered drawn up to receive them in an open plain.

CHAP. I. Lord Paget immediately formed line and advanced to the charge. But the success of this manœuvre was prevented by a broad ditch or ravine, hitherto unobserved, which obstructed their progress. Some manœuvring took place between the corps, each endeavouring to gain the flank of the other. By superior skill, Lord Paget at length effected his object. The ravine was passed, and, coming down at full speed on their opponents, the fifteenth overthrew them in a moment. Many of the French were killed, and one hundred and fifty-seven prisoners, including two lieutenant-colonels, were brought back to the British camp as trophies of success. The loss of the fifteenth in this engagement was trifling.

Dec. 21. On the twenty-first the army moved to Sahagun, where Sir John Moore halted for a day to afford refreshment to the troops.

There he received a despatch from Romana, dated Leon, December nineteenth. The Marques expressed his approbation of the measures of Sir John Moore, and his willingness to cooperate in the proposed attack on Soult; but the most extraordinary feature in the letter is, that the writer of it appeared wholly ignorant



of the surrender of Madrid, nearly twenty days before! Another letter, received on the day following, stated that the corps of Soult consisted of about ten thousand men, of which one thousand were cavalry, with eight or ten pieces of artillery; but that Soult, apprehensive of attack, had applied for reinforcements; and, in the meanwhile, had collected the nearest troops, which augmented his force to about eighteen thousand men. These he had posted behind the Carrion. In the proposed operation, Romana offered to unite with nine or ten thousand of his best men, and intimated his readiness to advance immediately on receiving the answer of Sir John Moore.

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This letter arrived late on the night of the twenty-second. Early on the following morning, Sir John Moore despatched a messenger to Romana, informing him that he would on the same night march to the town of Carrion, where he had reason to believe that a body of the enemy were collected. "To-morrow," said the General, "I shall march on Saldanha. If your Excellency would march from Mansilla, either direct on Saldanha, or pass the river a little above it, whilst I march on

Dec. 23.

CHAP. I. from Carrion, I think it would distract the at-  
1808. tention of the enemy, and considerably aid my  
December. attack. My march from Carrion will probably  
be in the night. Any information of your move-  
ments, I shall thank you to address to me at  
Carrion, where I shall be at daylight to-mor-  
row."

In consequence of this determination, orders for an immediate advance were issued to the army. The march was to commence at eight o'clock in the evening in two columns. One of these was destined to force the bridge at Carrion, and so penetrate to Saldanha; and this body was already on the road, when a letter arrived from Romana, stating that the French, on the side of Madrid, were in motion to the northward. This intelligence coincided with the information received by Sir John Moore from other quarters. The corps of the enemy, which was directing its march on Badajos, had halted at Talavera. Large supplies of forage and provisions had been ordered in the villages around Palencia. It was said that Napoleon himself, had set out from Madrid, with the avowed intention of proceeding to Benevente without a halt.

Under these circumstances, Sir John Moore determined on retreat, and the march to Car-  
 rion was countermanded. He considered that  
 the beneficial object of his movement had already  
 been attained. The progress of the enemy's ar-  
 mies had been arrested in the south, and they  
 were now advancing on all hands to surround  
 him.

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Sir John Moore, therefore, felt convinced that nothing but immediate retreat could extricate him from the difficulties of his situation. His intentions were communicated to the Marques de la Romana, in the following words: "I shall take immediate measures for retiring on Astorga. There I shall stand; as my retreat thence, if necessary, will be secure. I shall be in the way to receive the supplies and the reinforcements which I expect from England. At the worst, I can maintain myself, and, with your Excellency's aid, defend the Gallicias, and give time for the formation of the armies in the south, and that which you command, to be prepared, when a joint effort may be made, which can alone be efficacious."

As Sir John Moore had not yet resigned the intention of defending Gallicia, he determined

CHAP. I. on retiring in such a direction as would facilitate the execution of this measure, should it be found desirable. To effect this it was necessary, in the first instance, to cross the Eslar, which could be done by three routes. The first is by Mansilla, where the river is crossed by a bridge. The second by Valencia de San Juan, at which point there is a ferry. The third is by Castro Gonzalo, where there is likewise a bridge, and from whence a road passes to Benevente. As Mansilla was already occupied by the Spanish troops, the two latter routes were preferred, and Astorga was indicated as the place of rendezvous, where it was understood the army would make a stand. In the meanwhile, Romana was expected to keep possession of Mansilla, and defend the city of Leon to the last extremity.

Dec. 24. The day following was employed in preparations for retreat. In the evening, General Hope, with his own division and that of General Fraser, fell back to Mayorga, and Sir David Baird retired to Valencia de San Juan. To conceal this movement, strong patrols of cavalry were pushed on to the advanced posts of the enemy. On the twenty-fifth, the Commander-in-chief followed

General Hope with the reserve and two light brigades. Lord Paget was ordered to remain with the cavalry until the evening, and then to follow the reserve.

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Much difficulty was anticipated by Sir John Moore in crossing the Eslar, from the melting of the mountain snows; but, on the twenty-sixth, Sir David Baird reached that river, and crossed it with trifling impediment. The other divisions of the army proceeded, without molestation, to Castro Gonzalo.

Dec. 26.

At this moment the British army had become almost girdled by the enemy. From the twenty-second to the twenty-fourth, Soult had received strong reinforcements, and his army alone was already superior in number to the British.

Junot, with the army liberated by the Convention of Cintra, had advanced from Burgos to Palencia, and threatened their right flank.

Napoleon, in person, had set out from Madrid with all the disposable force in that quarter; and on the same day that the van of the British quitted Sahagun, the advanced-guard of this army passed through Tordesillas, a town about fifty miles distant from Benevente.

The corps of Lefebvre had changed the di-

CHAP. I. rection of its march, and was now advancing  
 1808. on Salamanca. The retreat of the British army  
 December. on Portugal was thus cut off.

The whole disposable force of the enemy, forming an irregular crescent, were thus advancing in *radii* on the British army, as a common centre. To cut off its retreat was now the chief object of Napoleon.

Dec. 26. On the twenty-sixth an engagement took place between the British cavalry and that of the enemy. Detachments from the army of Napoleon had been pushed on to Villalpando and Mayorga; and in the neighbourhood of the latter place a considerable force of the enemy was observed to be drawn up on the acclivity of a hill, with the view apparently of cutting off any stragglers who might wander from the line of march. Two squadrons of the tenth hussars were instantly ordered to dislodge them. These, under the command of Colonel Leigh, rode gallantly up the hill, and by a successful charge drove back the French cavalry in confusion. In this affair many of the enemy were killed and wounded, and above one hundred made prisoners.

On the same day the cavalry, the horse artillery, and a brigade of light infantry, halt-

ed at Castro Gonzalo; and the divisions under Generals Hope and Fraser marched to Benevente. On the twenty-seventh the rear-guard crossed the Eslar, and followed the same route, having blown up the bridge. The hardships to which the army were now exposed, tended greatly to increase the general feeling of dissatisfaction at the measures of their leader. The route lay over miserable roads, and through an exhausted country. The weather was more than usually severe; heavy showers of rain and sleet drenched the soldiers to the skin, and it was not always that even at night they could procure shelter from the elements.—Turbulence and insubordination broke forth in the ranks. The soldiers, indignant at the Spaniards, who generally locked their doors on their approach, and concealed their little stock of provisions, were guilty of violence and robbery. These criminal excesses increased the evil. Hatred and disgust sprang up on both sides; and frequent scenes of bloodshed were the consequence.

On the twenty-seventh of December the column reached Benevente; and Sir John Moore issued a general order to the army,

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CHAP. I. characterizing its excesses in strong language.

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He expressed his deep regret that the army should have forfeited its former praise for exemplary conduct and discipline. The atrocities committed in Valderas, he declared to have exceeded any thing he could have believed of British soldiers. The situation of the army was such as to call for the display of qualities the most rare and valuable in a military body. These were not bravery alone, but patience and constancy under fatigue and hardship, obedience to command, sobriety, firmness, and resolution, in every situation in which they might be placed. It was only by the display of such qualities that the army could deserve the name of soldiers,—that they could be able to withstand the forces opposed to them, or fulfil the expectations of their country.

From Benevente, Sir John Moore despatched a courier to Romana. In the communication of which he was the bearer, Sir John informed the Marques that the enemy were in full advance, and that, on the preceding day, their main-body had reached Valladolid, only three marches to the rear. “I shall continue,” he said, “my movement on Astorga. It is there, or behind it,



we should fight a battle, if at all. If the enemy follows so far, he will leave himself more open to the efforts of the south. My opinion is, that a battle is the game of Buonaparte, not ours. We should, if followed, take defensive positions in the mountains, where his cavalry can be of no use; and there either engage him in an unequal contest with us, oblige him to employ a considerable corps to watch us, or to retire upon Madrid; in which last case we should again come forth upon the plain. In this manner we give time for the arrival of reinforcements from England, your army to be formed and equipped, and that of the south to come forth. In short, the game of England and Spain, which must always be the same, is to procrastinate and gain time, and not, if it can be helped, to place the whole stake upon the hazard of a battle."

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While at Benevente, where the army halted for two days, intelligence was received that the army of Napoleon were endeavouring, by forced marches, to overtake the British. Under these circumstances, Sir John Moore hastened to continue his retreat. The stores of the army, for which no transport could be procured, were ordered to be destroyed.

CHAP. I. From Benevente to Vigo there are two roads ;  
1808. one passing by Orense, the other by Astorga.  
December. The former, though the shortest, was impracticable for artillery, and the army were consequently compelled to retire by the latter. Orders were sent to Sir David Baird, who was still at Valencia, to continue his march on Astorga.

On the twenty-eighth, Generals Hope and Fraser proceeded with their divisions to La  
Dec. 29. Banessa. On the twenty-ninth, Sir John Moore followed with the reserve ; and Lord Paget was directed to bring up the rear with the cavalry.

The march of the cavalry, however, had not yet commenced, when a body of the enemy's horse were observed to be attempting a ford near the ruins of the bridge which had been blown up ; and presently between five and six hundred of the Imperial Guards plunged into the river and crossed over. They were instantly opposed by the piquets under Colonel Otway, which had been appointed to act as a rear-guard. Though this body mustered little more than two hundred men, they boldly advanced against the enemy, and continued bravely to dispute every inch of his advance. Repeated charges took place between the front

squadrons ; and upon the arrival of a small party of the third dragoons, the front squadron, by a furious charge, broke through that of the enemy, and were for a time surrounded. By another charge, however, they soon extricated themselves from this dilemma, and re-formed with the rest of the detachments.

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Lord Paget soon reached the field, and Brigadier-General Stewart, assuming the command of the piquets, made repeated charges on the enemy, the squadrons being sometimes intermingled. In order to draw the enemy still further from the ford, General Stewart gave ground ; when the tenth hussars, which had already formed, advanced to the charge, and the enemy's line was in an instant broken. They fled in great disorder to the river, closely pursued by the tenth, leaving fifty-five killed and wounded on the field, and seventy prisoners, among whom was General Lefebvre, the commander of the Imperial Guard. Immediately on reaching the opposite side of the river, the enemy formed on the margin ; but a few rounds from the horse artillery, which came up at that moment, was sufficient to disperse them.

CHAP. I.  
1808. The loss of the British in this affair, amounted to about fifty killed and wounded.

December. Towards evening the enemy brought up some field-pieces, and cannonaded the piquets from the heights on the opposite side of the river, but without effect. At night Lord Paget drew off the cavalry, and followed the reserve to La Bannessa.

Dec. 30. On the day following, the British headquarters were at Astorga, where Sir David Baird's column, coming from Valencia, succeeded in effecting a junction with the main body of the army.

At Astorga another disappointment awaited Sir John Moore. He found the city already occupied by five thousand of the corps of Romana. This general had not destroyed the bridge of Mansilla. The guard he left there was charged by a party of the enemy's cavalry, and driven back in confusion. At Leon no defence had been attempted, and the unexpected presence of the Spanish army at Astorga, interfered materially with the arrangements of Sir John Moore. It had been his opinion that Romana would have most contributed to the good

of the common cause, by retiring on the Asturias; because, when the enemy proceeded to Galicia, he might have intercepted their convoys, or have compelled them to employ large detachments for their protection. But the passes of the Asturian mountains were blocked up by snow, and Romana was consequently obliged, on the approach of Soult, to push across to Astorga. The consequence was, that all the houses in Astorga were filled with Spanish soldiers; and the roads were literally obstructed with men, horses, cars, and all the other accompaniments of an army, which had foundered or broken down on the march.

It is scarcely possible to conceive any thing more wretched than the condition of Romana's troops. They wanted clothing, accoutrements, arms, ammunition, and even food. A malignant fever had broken out among them, and the number of sick was sustaining hourly augmentation. Never did any congregation of human beings exhibit less external semblance of a military body. The soldiers under arms little exceeded in number the sick borne on cars and mules; and as they passed slowly along, enfeebled and emaciated by disease, the procession had more the

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CHAP. I. appearance of an ambulatory hospital, than of  
1808. a force by which the country was to be de-  
December. fended.

Such was the condition of the army of Romana. Let it also be recorded, that this brave and suffering band bore their multiplied privations with unshrinking patience; that they uniformly displayed, even in the very depth of their misfortunes, a courage and devotion worthy of that cause, in behalf of which they were alike prepared to bleed or suffer.

Before his arrival at Astorga, Sir John Moore, notwithstanding his assurances to Romana, had resigned all thoughts of making a stand in the neighbourhood of that city. From the prisoners made by the cavalry on the preceding day, it was ascertained that the head-quarters of Napoleon's army, had, on the preceding evening, been at Villalpando, a village only sixteen miles distant. No defensive preparations had been attempted, and the General determined to continue the retreat on Villa Franca. Of this measure Romana disapproved. He declared himself ready to join the English army in defending the strong ground around Astorga, from whence a secure retreat would, in any event, be open

to them by the almost impregnable passes of Manzanal and Foncebadon, which a small body might successfully maintain against any numbers.

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This project, however, did not meet the approbation of Sir John Moore. Instant preparations were made for retreat. The stores, of which Astorga had been made the depot, were destroyed or distributed among the Spanish troops, and the sick were abandoned to the enemy.

In the miserable condition of the Spanish army, it might have been supposed, that this half-naked, half-armed, half-famished, and diseased multitude, would have sought protection in their retreat from the English columns. It was not so. With a spirit which death alone could extinguish, this suffering but high-minded band, still confided in their own exertions to keep the field; and when Sir John Moore proposed to Romana that he should retire by Orense, the proposal was instantly acceded to. Romana only requested that the British troops might be restrained from the further perpetration of those acts of disgraceful violence, which had hitherto marked their progress: a request which it

CHAP. I. must have imbibed the spirit of Sir John  
 1808. Moore to know that his power was inadequate  
 December. to grant.

At Astorga, the light brigades under General Crawford separated from the army, and marched by way of Orense to Vigo, where Sir John Moore had directed transports to be sent for the embarkation of the army. This detachment preceded Romana's army in the line of march; and when the miserable band of patriots, after a halt of only one night, took their way to Orense, they found the country through which they passed already stripped of supplies. This completed the wreck of this gallant but unfortunate army. The infantry at length became completely disorganized, and Romana, with the cavalry and guns, retired to the valley of the Mincio.

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 Jan. 1.

On the first of January, Napoleon entered Astorga, and formed a junction with Marshal Soult. Leaving Ney, with eighteen thousand men, to keep Leon in subjection, he directed Soult by forced marches to continue the pursuit. This was done with uncommon vigour. On the night of the first, so closely did they already press on the rear of the British, that



their patrols fell in with the piquets of the retiring army. In the meanwhile, Napoleon counter-marched with the rest of his army, and in a few days returned to France.

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It is melancholy to contemplate the condition to which the British had already been reduced. During the march to Villa Franca, the rain came down in torrents ; men and horses, sinking through fatigue, covered the roads ; and the soldiers whose strength still enabled them to proceed, maddened by the continued suffering of cold and hunger, were no longer under any subordination. In such circumstances pillage could not be prevented. Wherever they came, the inhabitants fled from their dwellings, and sought shelter among the mountains. Enormities of all kinds were committed. Houses, and even villages, were burning in all directions. The ravages of the most ferocious enemy, could not have exceeded in atrocity those perpetrated by a British army on their allies.

At Benevente, an order had been issued by the General, assuring the army, that the only object of the retiring movement was, not to evacuate the country, but to secure a more favourable position. It had, therefore, been con-



CHAP. I. confidently expected, that a stand would be made at  
 1809. the almost impregnable defiles through which the  
 January. army passed after quitting Villa Franca. The  
 country had been traversed by Sir David Baird  
 on his advance; and it was generally held incre-  
 dible that the retreat should be continued beyond  
 that point. The sufferings which the army had  
 already endured, and the lamentable want of dis-  
 cipline to which the rapidity of the retreat had  
 given rise, tended to strengthen the conviction  
 that the General would gladly avail himself of  
 the great defensive advantages which the coun-  
 try afforded. This hope was disappointed. Sir  
 John Moore saw no safety but in embarkation;  
 and the retreat was continued with unrelenting  
 speed.

At every step of their progress, however, the  
 misfortunes of this devoted army seemed to ac-  
 cumulate. The mortality among the horses was  
 excessive; and no sooner did these noble animals  
 become unable to proceed than they were shot,  
 in order to prevent their being serviceable to the  
 enemy. The ammunition-waggons, which had  
 hitherto kept up, were falling one by one to the  
 rear, and the ammunition they contained was  
 destroyed. In the towns, many of the soldiers,

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in the recklessness of despair, broke into the cellars, and giving way to the most desperate excess, were found dead by the enemy. During the marches, the number of stragglers was enormous. Under different pretexts, whole regiments strayed from their colours; and, as often as a store or wine-house was discovered, scenes of the most revolting character ensued. The enemy's cavalry was continually pressing on our rear, and, under such circumstances, no pause could be made to afford protection to those who, from intoxication or exhaustion of strength, were compelled to fall behind. At Bembibre, in particular, the town, on the departure of the reserve, was filled with these unfortunate wretches. Every effort was made to save them from the miserable fate which they so madly courted; but in vain. The rear-guard was at length compelled to march. A small detachment of cavalry still remained, in hopes that some, at least, of the victims might be rescued. But the enemy came on in force; and the French dragoons, charging onward through a crowd of men, women, and children, slashed to the right and left with their sabres, sparing neither age nor sex. Never did British troops gaze on a spectacle more appal-

CHAP. I. ling than those who, escaping death, came up  
 1809. bleeding and lacerated, and were, by order of  
 January. the General, paraded through the ranks as a  
 warning to their comrades.

It is well that these humiliating circumstances should be recorded. It is well that war should be gazed on in all its aspects, and not unprofitable, perhaps, that such episodes should be commemorated in the emblazoned volume of our victories.

Jan. 3. Since the affair of the twenty-eighth, no engagement had taken place. On the third of January, the advanced-guard of the enemy were seen advancing on Cacabelos. The town is divided by a rivulet, along the banks of which part of the reserve was stationed. On a hill, about half a league in front, were posted the ninety-fifth rifle-corps, and a piquet of cavalry. The General ordered the ninety-fifth to retire, through the town by a bridge. While this order was executing, the French cavalry came on in force, driving the piquet before them, and, charging the rear companies, which had not yet crossed the bridge, succeeded in making some prisoners. The enemy, imagining they had thrown our rear-guard into confu-