

sion, immediately advanced a body of dismounted chasseurs, who, dashing forward through the stream with great spirit, attacked the ninety-fifth, which had barely gained time to extend in skirmishing order. The regiment received the attack with admirable steadiness, and, retreating up a hill in rear of the town, took post among some vineyards, from which they continued to gall the enemy by a well-directed fire. From this position the French cavalry attempted to dislodge them, but without success. The ninety-fifth again repulsed them; and they retreated with the loss of a considerable number in killed and wounded. General Colbert, an officer of great gallantry and distinction, was among the number of the former.

In a short time after, a strong body of the enemy's infantry was observed on the opposite hills, in full march on our position. The artillery was instantly ordered to open its fire, which it did with such precision as to check the advance of the French column, which retired with considerable loss, and without firing a shot.

From Villa Franca, the country afforded no field for the action of cavalry; and it was therefore ordered to precede the infantry by forced

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CHAP. I. marches to Lugo, where the leading division
1809. was directed to concentrate. Towards this
January. point, also, the infantry were pushed on with in-
creased speed, and, if possible, with augmented
suffering. The road was bestrewed by the bodies
of men dead and dying. But the agonies of
women were still more dreadful to behold. Of
these, by some strange neglect, or by some mis-
taken sentiment of humanity, an unusually large
proportion had been suffered to accompany the
army. Some of these unhappy creatures were
taken in labour on the road, and, amid storms of
sleet and snow, gave birth to infants, which, with
their mothers, perished as soon as they had seen
the light. Others, in the unconquerable energy
of maternal love, would toil on, with one or two
children on their backs; till, on looking round,
they perceived that the hapless objects of their
attachment were frozen to death. But more
frightful even than this, was the depth of moral
degradation to which these wretched followers of
the camp were frequently reduced. Nothing
could be more appalling to the heart, than to
hear the dreadful curses and imprecations which
burst from the livid lips of intoxicated and des-
pairing women, as they laid them down to die.

“I am well aware,” says Lord Londonderry, CHAP. I.
himself a distinguished actor in the terrible scene,
“that the horrors of this retreat have been, 1809.
again and again, described in terms calculated to January.
freeze the blood of such as read them; but I
have no hesitation in saying, that the most har-
rowing accounts which have yet been laid be-
fore the public, fall short of the reality.”

On the march to Lugo, detachments of Span-
ish troops, by whom this precipitate abandon-
ment of their country had not been anticipated,
were met escorting convoys of cannon, ammu-
nition, clothing, and stores, to the front. These
were assailed with outrage and abuse by the
British soldiers; and, quitting their charge,
were glad to escape with their cattle, leaving
the carriages to encumber the road. A large
convoy, of between thirty and forty waggons,
with stores for the army of Romana, was met
near Nogales. These were now useless. Some
were distributed to the troops as they passed—
the remainder was destroyed. Near Constan-
tino the road crosses a hill, which Sir John
Moore was apprehensive would be taken advan-
tage of by the French, to annoy the descending

CHAP. I. column. The rifle corps and horse-artillery
1809. were ordered, therefore, to halt on its summit,
January. and obstruct the enemy's advance. The posi-
tion, thus assumed, was formidable; and, in or-
der to avoid exposure to the British guns, the
French halted behind another hill for above half
an hour. The reserve, in the meanwhile, con-
tinued its march; and no sooner had the rear
crossed the bridge of Constantino, than the ar-
tillery and rifle corps suddenly retired, and the
whole passed the river without loss. General
Paget, with the reserve, then took post to de-
fend the bridge. The enemy advanced their
cavalry and dismounted chasseurs, and endeav-
oured, ineffectually, to force the post. They
were driven back by a well-directed fire. At
eleven at night General Paget received orders
to fall back on Lugo.

The distance between Villa Franca and Lugo,
was accomplished by the reserve in forty-eight
hours. During this march, likewise, a quan-
tity of valuable stores was destroyed, and two
waggon-loads of dollars fell behind. Every
effort for the further transport of the treasure
having proved abortive, the casks containing it

were rolled down a precipice, in hopes that the snow might conceal it from the observation of the enemy.

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But even with all these sacrifices, the necessity of repose to recruit the exhausted soldiers became at length apparent to Sir John Moore. At Lugo, the army halted on the sixth; and the General took up a position in front of the town, with the intention of offering battle to the enemy. Never did any measure produce a more striking and instantaneous revulsion of feeling in the troops. Insubordination was at an end,—stragglers hastened to join their regiments,—worn frames became reanimated with vigour,—and the promiscuous assemblage of disorderly soldiers, became again invested with all the attributes of a disciplined army.

Jan. 6.

It was at length ascertained by the General, that Corunna was a more eligible place for embarkation than Vigo; and as it besides possessed the advantage of being considerably nearer, it was determined to direct the march of the army on that point. Orders, therefore, had been despatched to recall the light brigades and the division of General Fraser, which had been previously directed to proceed to Vigo. These or-

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ders were transmitted to Sir David Baird by a staff-officer; but the orderly-dragoon who was employed by Sir David Baird to convey the despatch to its destination, unfortunately got drunk, and lost it. This occurrence was productive of the worst effects. General Fraser's troops had proceeded a full day on their march before the order reached them; and, in consequence, without food or rest, were compelled to retrace their steps, and arrived at Lugo with the loss of four hundred of their number.

The ground on which Sir John Moore proposed to receive the enemy's attack at Lugo, was selected with skill. The right of the position rested on the Tamboga; its front extended along the sides of a strong ravine; and the left, somewhat withdrawn, was protected by precipitous acclivities.

About mid-day on the sixth, the French columns were observed to be advancing on the English position. Preparation was immediately made for their reception; but no engagement ensued. The French took possession of a strong mountainous ridge in front of the British; and, formed in order of battle, seemed to challenge attack. For several hours did the lines thus

continue gazing on each other, without hostile movement on either side. The hope of battle gradually faded; at last evening closed, and the troops returned to their quarters.

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On the following morning the enemy advanced four guns, protected by a few squadrons of cavalry, towards the centre, and commenced a sharp cannonade. The fire was immediately returned by the English, with such effect, that one of their guns was dismounted, and the rest silenced. For above an hour no further hostilities took place. The enemy then made a feint on the British right, in order to cover the advance of five guns, and a strong column of infantry on the left. Sir John Moore immediately rode at full speed to that part of the line. In the meanwhile, a warm skirmish had taken place with the piquets, which were driven hastily back. The enemy's column were already ascending the height occupied by the seventy-sixth regiment, which gradually fell back, until joined by the fifty-first, when, after a few discharges of musketry, these regiments advanced to the charge, and drove back the French in confusion. The setting in of night again disappointed the hope of immediate engagement; and the British

Jan. 7.

CHAP. I. army retired to their quarters, with the fervent
1809. wish that the dawn of morning might light them
January. to battle.

Jan. 8. Sir John Moore was impressed with the conviction, that this wish would be realized. He considered the preceding attack as made only, by Marshal Soult, with the view of reconnoitring the strength of the force opposed to him, and expected that the day following would produce a more general engagement. In this he was disappointed. On the morning of the eighth the French were still observed in their position; yet hour after hour passed, and they made no movement. At length night fell, and with it fell all the fond hopes of battle which had been cherished by the army. In order to deceive the enemy, large fires were lighted along the line; and at ten o'clock the British army again commenced their retreat.

No sooner did Marshal Soult become aware of the evasion of his enemy, than the pursuit was immediately recommenced, and followed up with unabated vigour; but the British had already gained so much ground, that it was not till the evening that the enemy's advanced-guard came up with the rear. The horrors of

this march were of the most aggravated description. The night was dark and stormy, the cold intense, and the sleet fell heavily. The troops, already jaded and half-famished, and many of them barefoot, marched along roads knee-deep in mud. Insubordination again spread among the ranks,—and the number of stragglers was enormous.

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About ten in the morning the army arrived at Valmeda. Here positive exhaustion compelled a halt; and the men lay on the open ground for several hours, exposed to the continual action of a heavy rain. But even this brief interval was not granted to undisturbed repose. A cry arose, from time to time, that the enemy were advancing; and, at each alarm, the troops were ordered to fall in. Such an intermission was little calculated to refresh the worn strength of the soldiers; and, towards evening, when they again resumed their march, little benefit was found to have resulted from the halt.

Jan. 9.

On the tenth, the army halted at Betanzos; and General Paget, with the reserve, remained in position, a few miles in front of that town, for the protection of the stragglers. The con-

Jan. 10.

CHAP. I. duct of this officer, and the troops he command-
1809. ed, throughout the retreat, was such as to com-
January. mand the admiration of the army. The reserve
marched better, and bore their sufferings with
greater resolution than any other portion of the
troops; and the skill, promptitude, and unwea-
ried vigilance of General Paget, were, on every
occasion, remarkable.

From Betanzos, the army accomplished its
march to Corunna, with little molestation from
the enemy. A bridge near the town was at-
tempted to be destroyed, but without success. At
Astorga the General had ordered the whole of
the engineers' equipments to be burned; and the
army were thus most imprudently deprived of
the power of impeding the progress of the ene-
my, which the destruction of the numerous
bridges would have afforded. Near Corunna,
however, the bridge across the Mero was blown
up, the necessary tools for the purpose having
been brought from the town; but owing to the
premature explosion of a mine, the superintend-
ing-officer of engineers was killed.

The army had now reached their destined
point of embarkation, but the transports had not
yet arrived from Vigo. Only a few ships lay in

the harbour, on board of which the sick, who preceded the army, were immediately embarked; and it became necessary that the army should assume a position, and once more shew front to the enemy. That this necessity was imposed on Sir John Moore, never to any Englishman can be matter of regret. It saved the British army from the disgrace of having quitted Spain like downcast and disheartened fugitives,—of having sought refuge in their ships from the hostility of an enemy, with whom they had never measured strength in combat.

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Sir John Moore preceded the army on its march to Corunna, and surveyed the country in its neighbourhood. There were two ranges of heights in front of the town. The higher and more distant of these would, unquestionably, have afforded a position of considerable strength, had the numerical force of the army been sufficient for its occupation. But, as this was not the case, it became necessary to occupy the nearer range, though of inferior altitude. Such, however, were the disadvantages of this position, that some of the general-officers recommended Sir John Moore to propose terms to Soult, in order to induce him to permit the army to em-

CHAP. I. bark unmolested. Sir John Moore, however, declared himself averse from adopting this melancholy and disgraceful alternative; and, besides, was exceedingly doubtful whether any such proposal, if made, would be attended with success. Most fortunately, therefore, for his own fame, and most fortunately for the honour of the army he commanded, this degrading counsel was rejected,—and England was not destined to blush for her sons.

The enemy were now rapidly collecting on the Mero, and it became necessary that arrangements should be promptly made for the impending battle. The division of General Hope was directed to occupy a ridge on the left, commanding the road to Betanzos, and sloping with a gradual declivity towards Elvina. The post of Sir David Baird's division was on the right, extending from Elvina along a series of heights, which bent, in an oblique direction, towards the front, and terminated in a valley, which divided this range from another on the opposite side of the Vigo road. The rifle corps was ordered to form a chain across the valley. The reserve, under General Paget, was posted at Airis, a small village in rear of the centre.

The left flank of this position was well protected by the high banks of the Mero, but the right was weak; it rested on the village of Elvina, situated low down, at the extremity of the hills on which the front of the army was formed. To remedy this defect, the division of General Fraser was posted about half-a-mile in rear of the right, on some high ground commanding the road to Vigo. The artillery was disposed along the front of the line.

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During the whole of the thirteenth, Sir John Moore was occupied in making these dispositions. Having completed them, he returned to his quarters, and, writing his last despatch, directed Brigadier-General Stewart to proceed with it to England.

Jan. 13.

On the fourteenth, the enemy commenced a cannonade on the left, which was returned by the British artillery, with such effect, that the French at last drew off their guns.

Jan. 14.

In the evening the transports from Vigo hove in sight.

On the heights, about a league distant from the town, was a powder-magazine, which it was deemed advisable to destroy. It contained about four thousand barrels of gunpowder, which

CHAP. I. had been brought from England some months before, and, by an unpardonable negligence, had been suffered to remain in store, while the Spanish armies were without ammunition! A few hundred barrels had, on the preceding day, been removed to Corunna—the remainder was directed to be blown up. The explosion was tremendous. Corunna shook as if convulsed by an earthquake. Huge masses of rock were cast from their pedestals. The calm waters in the bay became furiously agitated. A vast column of smoke and dust arose perpendicularly and slowly to a great height, and then bursting with a roaring sound, a shower of stones, and fragments of all kinds, reverted to the earth, killing several persons who incautiously had remained too near to the scene of peril. A stillness, only interrupted by the lashing of the waves on the shore, succeeded—and the business of war went on.

On the arrival of the transports, preparations were immediately made for the embarkation of the army. With the exception of eight British, and four Spanish guns, the artillery was sent on board—the ground being considered unfavourable for its use. The dismounted cavalry and a



BATTLE
OF
CORUNNA
16th Jan^y
1809.



- 1 Battery opened by the Enemy against the Shipping on the 17th
- 2 Place of Embarkation in the night of the 15th
- 3 Places of D^o on the 16th

few horses were likewise embarked,—the remainder were shot. CHAP. I.

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Jan. 15.

The bridge of El Burgo having been repaired, two divisions of infantry, and one of cavalry, passed the Mero, and, driving back the British outposts, marched into position. On the fifteenth, Delaborde's division followed, and took post on the height of Portoso, forming the right of the army. The ground thus chosen by the enemy, was the ridge of rocky and irregular heights by which the British position was nearly encompassed. Their right was placed on the Betanzos and St. Jago roads, and their left rested on a hill covered with wood, overlooking the British line, of which, after some resistance from the light troops, they succeeded in gaining possession.

In the evening Colonel Mackenzie of the fifth, perceived two of the enemy's guns not far distant, and imagined that by a sudden attack he might surprise them. The attempt failed. Colonel Mackenzie was killed during the advance, and his party were driven back with loss.

During the night of the fifteenth, Marshal Soult succeeded in establishing a battery of eleven guns, on the wooded hill at the extremity of his

CHAP. I. left. This was an operation of great difficulty.

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The ground was rugged; the French were in possession of no road, and the horses were weak and exhausted. By great exertion, however, the object was accomplished; and the French thus acquired a decided superiority in point of artillery.

Jan. 16.

The preparations for embarking were completed on the morning of the sixteenth, and Sir John Moore gave notice, that, in case the enemy should not move during the day, the embarkation of the reserve should commence at four o'clock. The tranquillity of the armies remained undisturbed till noon, when the General, mounting his horse, rode off to visit the outposts. He had not proceeded far, when he received a report from General Hope, stating that the enemy's line were getting under arms; and a deserter who came in at the same moment confirmed the intelligence. He spurred forward. The piquets had already opened fire on the enemy's light troops, which were pouring rapidly down on the right wing. A heavy fire was shortly opened from the French battery on the height; the piquets were driven rapidly back; and four strong columns of the enemy, supported

by a reserve, were observed descending the hill. Two of these—one emerging from a wood, the other skirting its edge—threatened the right of the position; another directed its march on the centre; and the fourth on the left. The two first of these columns advanced with rapidity, and, by a bold attack, at once carried the village of Elvina. Thus far successful, they endeavoured to turn the right of the position. It was defended by Lord William Bentinck's brigade, having the brigade of Guards in their rear. In order to prevent the success of this manœuvre, General Paget was ordered to advance with the reserve, and take post on the right of the line.

Lord William Bentinck's brigade received the attack with firmness; and the fourth regiment, being thrown back *en potence*, met the enemy with a well-directed fire. The order was at length given to charge; and the forty-second and fiftieth regiments advanced to regain the village of Elvina. The ground around the village was so intersected by walls and enclosures as to prevent any general collision. A severe but irregular fight ensued, which terminated in the French being driven back with great loss. The fiftieth regiment, led by Major Napier, rushed

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CHAP. I. into Elvina, and with great gallantry drove out
the enemy with the bayonet, and pursued him
for some distance beyond it.

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In the meanwhile, from some misapprehension, the forty-second had retired; and the enemy being reinforced, took advantage of that circumstance to renew the conflict. Elvina became again the scene of struggle; the forty-second, after a brief but animating address from the General, returned to the attack; and the Guards being brought up to their support, the enemy gave way.

It was at this period of the action that Sir John Moore received his death wound. He was engaged in watching the result of the contest about Elvina, when a cannon shot struck him on the breast and beat him to the ground. He raised himself immediately to a sitting posture, and continued with a calm gaze to regard the regiments engaged in his front. Captain Hardinge threw himself from his horse, and took him by the hand; then, observing his anxiety, he told him the forty-second were advancing, and on this intelligence his countenance was observed to brighten.

His friend Colonel Graham now dismounted,

and from the composure of his features, entertained hopes that he was not even wounded; but observing the horrid laceration and effusion of blood he rode off for surgical assistance.

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Sir John Moore was removed from the field by a party of the forty-second. As the soldiers placed him in a blanket, his sword became entangled, and the hilt entered the wound. Captain Hardinge attempted to take it off, but he stopped him, saying, "It is as well as it is, I had rather it should go out of the field with me." Sir David Baird had previously been disabled by a severe wound; and the command of the army now devolved on General Hope.

In the meanwhile all went prosperously in the field. The reserve pushed on to the right, and, driving back the enemy, continued advancing on their flank, overthrowing every thing before them. The enemy, perceiving their left wing to be exposed, drew it entirely back.

An attack made on the British centre, was successfully resisted by the brigades of Generals Manningham and Leith. The ground in that quarter being more elevated and favourable for artillery, the guns were of great service.

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On the left, the enemy had taken possession of the village of Palavio on the road to Betanzos. From this a fire was still kept up by their troops, till Colonel Nichols, at the head of some companies of the fourteenth, attacked it and beat them out.

Day was now fast closing ; and the enemy had lost ground in all parts of the field. The firing, however, still continued, and night alone brought the contest to a close.

Thus ended the battle of Corunna. Let no man say that it was fought in vain, because it was attended with no result of immediate benefit to the victorious army. It gave a glorious termination to an inglorious retreat. It vindicated, in the eyes of Europe, the character of the army. It embalmed the memory of their commander in the hearts of his countrymen. It erased a dark stain from the military blazon of England. It gave to the world an imperishable proof, that, after a retreat of unexampled suffering and privation, the firmness of British troops remained unshaken. The courage of her sons was assayed by the ordeal of fire, and it is, and will be, the pride of England, that it came forth pure gold from the furnace.

While Sir John Moore was removing from the field, the expression of his countenance remained unchanged, and he gave utterance to no expression of pain. From this circumstance, Captain Hardinge gathered temporary hope that the wound might not be mortal, and expressed it to the dying General. Hearing this, he turned his head for a moment, and looking steadfastly at the wound, said, "*No, Hardinge, I feel that to be impossible.*" Several times he caused his attendants to stop and turn him round, that he might gaze on the field of battle, and when the firing indicated the advance of the British, he signified his satisfaction, and permitted the bearers to proceed.

On examination by the surgeons, the wound of Sir John Moore was at once pronounced to be mortal, and from increasing pain he could speak but with difficulty. Observing his friend Colonel Anderson by his bed, he asked if the French were beaten, and then said, "*You know, Anderson, I have always wished to die this way. You will see my friends as soon as you can. Tell them every thing. Say to my mother*"—Here his voice failed from agitation, and he did not again

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CHAP. I. venture to name her. When his strength was
1809. fast waning, and little more than a glimmering
January. of life remained, he said to Colonel Anderson,
“*I hope the people of England will be satisfied !
I hope my country will do me justice.*” After
a while, he pressed the hand of Colonel Ander-
son to his body ; and in a few minutes died with-
out a struggle.

Thus fell Sir John Moore. Kind in feeling,
generous in spirit, dauntless in heart,—no man
was more beloved ; none more lamented. Other
leaders have been more fortunate in life ; none
were ever more glorious in death. Whatever
may have been the military errors of such a man,
however little the cast and temper of his mind
may have fitted him for the task he was called
on to discharge, at a crisis of peculiar difficulty,
what is there in this,—what is there in any fail-
ing which even malice has ventured to charge on
Sir John Moore, that England should quench
her pride in so noble a son ? Columns may rise
to others, and temples and triumphal arches
may consecrate a nation’s gratitude in the me-
mory of posterity to warriors of prouder fame
and more brilliant achievement ; but the name

of Moore will *not* die. It will be loved and honoured in all after generations, and his memory will stand undimmed by time, *κτῆμα εἰς αἰετ.*

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The night succeeding the action was passed in the embarkation of the troops. At ten o'clock they moved off the field by brigades, and marched down to Corunna. Major-General Beresford was posted with the rear-guard, on the lines fronting Corunna, to watch the motions of the enemy. Major-General Hill, with his brigade, was stationed on an eminence behind the town, ready to afford support to Beresford, if necessary. The embarkation proceeded rapidly during the night, and no attempt was made to molest the covering brigades. On the following morning, however, the enemy pushed forward a corps of light troops to the heights of St. Lucia, which commanded the harbour, and, planting a few cannon, fired at the transports. At three o'clock, General Hill's brigade was withdrawn, and at night the rear-guard embarked without molestation from the enemy.

Jan. 17.

At twelve o'clock, on the night of the sixteenth, the remains of Sir John Moore were removed to the citadel of Corunna. He had

CHAP. I. often said, that, if killed in battle, he wished to
1809. be buried where he fell; and it was determined
January. that the body should be interred on the rampart
of the citadel. A grave was dug by a party of
the ninth regiment, the Aides-de-camp attending
by turns. No coffin could be procured; and
the body, without being undressed, was wrapt
by the officers of his staff in a military cloak and
blankets. The interment was hastened, for,
about eight in the morning, the sound of firing
was heard, and they feared that, in the event of
a serious attack, they might be prevented from
paying the last duties to their General.

The body was borne to the grave by the officers of his family; the funeral service was read by the chaplain; the corpse was covered with earth; and Sir John Moore "was left alone with his glory."

During the retreat to Corunna, his country sustained a severe loss in the death of Major-General Anstruther. No man had more honourably distinguished himself by zeal, gallantry, and talent. He died of inflammation of the lungs, brought on by exposure to the extreme inclemency of the weather. His devotion to the service induced him to neglect the precau-

tions and remedies his situation required; and he continued to perform his duty till approaching dissolution rendered farther exertion impossible. When no longer able to mount his horse, he was placed in a carriage, and conveyed to Corunna. There he expired amid the universal regret of his fellow-soldiers; and his remains were deposited in a grave on the ramparts, near that of his commander.

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The campaign of Sir John Moore has perhaps given rise to greater differences of opinion than any other portion of the Spanish war. Almost every operation by which its progress was marked has been made to furnish matter for vehement and angry discussion. By one party, the combinations of the General have been indiscriminately lauded as a masterpiece of strategy; by another, the misfortunes of the army are considered to have solely originated in the vacillation and timidity of its leader. Friends have praised, enemies have abused, and both have at last rested in conclusions from which more unbiassed reasoners will probably feel inclined to dissent. The indiscriminating defenders of Sir John Moore are actuated by motives, generous though mistaken; his opponents, by somewhat more of

CHAP. I. personal and political prejudice, than can be
1809. made to comport with the character of disinter-
January. ested and impartial inquirers after abstract
truth.

But, thank Heaven! party spirit is not eternal, though truth is. Twenty years have passed since the retreat to Corunna, and the time has at length come, when it is possible to write with strict justice and impartiality of Sir John Moore. In doing so, there is no fear of derogating from his just and well-earned reputation. The fame of Moore is not, as the injudicious eulogies of his friends would leave us to believe, a sickly and infirm bantling, which requires to be nursed and cockered into life by praise and puffery. The column of his honour rests, not on any single achievement of extraordinary genius, but on the broad pedestal of a life actively, zealously, and successfully devoted to his country's service, of a character marked by a singular combination of high and noble qualities, and of a death worthy of such a character and such a life.

Nothing, perhaps, can now be said of Sir John Moore's campaign which shall be found either new or original; and he who is neither influenced

by the zeal of a partisan, nor the hostile vehemence of a declared opponent, may be expected rather to restrict both the praises and the censures of his predecessors within due limits, than to furnish novelty of thought or illustration, on topics which have so frequently been made the subject of ardent and copious discussion. This fact is undoubted, that, in the very outset of the campaign, Sir John Moore was placed by his government in a situation of difficulty, to which no General should be deliberately exposed. He was sent into Spain without any concerted scheme of operations, or the possibility of forming one. He was left utterly in the dark, with regard to the plans of the Spanish Government. He was without any organized channel of communication with the chiefs of the armies; and the fundamental assumption on which he had been directed to rely, was soon proved to be fallacious. He was not enabled to concentrate his forces under the protection of the Spanish armies on the Ebro. These were successively defeated; and Sir John Moore, before he could effect a junction with the divisions of Baird and Hope, found himself exposed to an enemy, who

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