

of right and wrong, had abundant reason to be discontented with a service so flagrantly iniquitous as that wherein they were engaged. Not knowing how far he could depend upon the fidelity of his army, and certain that such of them as had been present at Roliça and Vimeiro had not forgotten the lessons which they received there, he thought no longer of conquering Portugal, but of escaping out of it without delay. He informed Loison, therefore, who was at Amarante, that he should retreat by that road, and so by Braganza upon Zamora; and he ordered the troops from Viana to march upon Amarante, by way of Guimaraens, while he remained at Porto to secure their movements.

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*Operations,
&c. 239.*

On the day that this determination was taken, the British attempted to surprise the advanced guard of the enemy under General Franceschi. Some troops crossed the Vouga on the preceding evening, others during the night. They proceeded silently and in darkness, along rocky passes where there was sometimes room only to march in single file: but the fidelity of Portuguese guides was not doubted, and they were led safely to an open heath, where about sunrise they came in sight of the enemy's videttes. The French were not taken by surprise, as had been hoped, . . . they were formed in line with a pine wood in their rear; but they were beaten out of the field, and driven through the wood with the loss of their cannon; and having then to pass a deep ravine, the artillery came up in time to play upon their rear-guard. Such of the wounded as they were not able to bear away, the Portuguese peasantry dispatched, and miserably mutilated in their vengeance. The French had provoked them by their barbarous usage of the militia who fell into their hands, . . . for the peasants had found their bodies hanging there, and marks upon them of the cruelties which they had endured before death. The villages of Albergaria Velha and

*The French
driven from
Albergaria.*

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*Military
Chronicle,
vol. iv. 193.
General
Mackin-
non's Jour-
nal, p. 13.*

*They are
driven from
their posi-
tion at Grijó*

Nova, which the enemy had lately occupied, bore proofs of the atrocious temper in which this war was carried on by the invaders. They had destroyed in mere wantonness and malignity every thing that was destructible, . . . broken open every house, burnt the furniture and the thatch, staved all the liquor which they could not drink, slaughtered the cattle, and pigs, and poultry which they could not carry off, strewn about their limbs, and trampled them in the road. And in this manner they acted along the whole of their retreat to Porto. The inhabitants, who were thus reduced to ruin, welcomed the British with tears of joy as their deliverers, and followed them with prayers that they might overtake and punish these unprovoked invaders, who had brought such unutterable evils upon Portugal.

The enemy retired first upon Oliveira de Azemeis, then upon Feira. On the next day their outposts were driven in, and soon afterwards the two divisions of Franceschi and Mermet were seen strongly posted on the heights above Grijó, their front covered by woods and broken ground. Here they were attacked by Brigadier-General R. Stewart; Major-General Manners, with a brigade of the German Legion, turned their left; they were dislodged and pursued till night, when the British army halted, their advance on the heights beyond Carvalhos, and the rear at S. Antonio da Arrifana, the former about seven miles from the Douro, the latter about twenty-five. The enemy continued their retreat, and having crossed the bridge in the night, set fire to it, and completely destroyed it. At daybreak the British troops were again in motion, in full expectation and hope of again bringing the enemy to action; but before they could be reached there was a river to be crossed, more formidable than ever general had attempted to pass in the presence of a respectable foe.

The Douro, which has the longest course of any river in the

Peninsula, and rolls a larger volume of waters than the Tagus to the sea, is about three hundred yards wide at Porto, its deep and rapid stream being contracted between high and rocky shores. Soult had prepared for leaving the city, but he did not dream of being driven out of it. Having stood upon the quay from midnight till four in the morning, and seen not only the breaking up of the bridge, but the pontoons consumed as they floated down, and having previously given orders that all boats should be brought to the Porto side of the river, and collected at one place, that they might be the better guarded, he is said to have supposed that the English would avail themselves of their maritime means, embark their troops, and attempt a landing near the mouth of the Douro; and in that belief he went to his head-quarters, which were between the city and the sea, expecting that he could remain another day in perfect safety, which would allow time for the movements of the troops from Viana. Franceschi was instructed to guard the coast with the rear-guard; Laborde was to support him; Mermet to station one brigade at Val-longo, and two at Baltar, and to have frequent parties on his right to observe the river, and destroy all boats that could be discovered. Orders were also dispatched to Loison, requiring him to keep his ground at Mezam-frio and at Pezo da Ragoa, to prevent the enemy from crossing at either of those points. Every thing was prepared for retreating, biscuit distributed to the troops, the money from the public treasury delivered over to the paymaster, and a battalion was stationed on the quay, with the artillery. But the French were so possessed with the notion that the English must make a maritime descent, that this whole battalion was stationed below the bridge, and not a single post placed above it.

Sir A. Wellesley knew how important it was, with reference to Beresford's operations, that he should cross the Douro with-

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1809.

*May.**Measures
of Marshal
Soult to pre-
vent the
passage of
the Douro.**Operations,
&c. 241—
246.**Passage of
that river.*

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out delay. In the morning he sent Major-General Murray up the river, to send down boats if he could find any, and endeavour to effect a passage at Avintes, about five miles above the city, where it might be possible for the troops to ford. The Guards, under Lieutenant-General Sherbrooke, were to cross at the ferry below the city as soon as boats could be obtained, and he himself directed the passage of the main body from the Convent of S. Agostinho da Serra, which stands in the suburb of Villa Nova upon the most elevated spot on that side. It was certain that the enemy would have taken all common precautions for securing the boats, but it was equally certain that the inhabitants would do every thing in their power to assist their deliverers. Two boats were brought over by them to the foot of the eminence on which the Convent stands, and two more were sent down the stream to the same spot. There was a large unfinished building on the opposite side, designed for the Bishop's palace, which afforded a good position for those who should land first till they could be supported; and some guns were placed in the Convent garden, where they were masked by fir trees, in a situation to bear upon the enemy with effect.

Four boats only had been collected when the passage was begun; but more were presently on the way, for the inhabitants were on the alert to promote their own deliverance. Lieutenant-General Paget crossed in one of the first, and took up a position with the Buffs as fast as they landed and reached the summit. They were attacked in great force, and stood their ground most gallantly till the 48th and 66th and a Portugueze battalion arrived successively to support them. General Paget lost an arm early in the action, and the command devolved upon Major-General Hill. The most strenuous exertions were made by the inhabitants for transporting the troops, while this contest was maintained, in which sure hope and British resolution counter-

balanced the great inequality of numbers. About two hours after the commencement of the action General Sherbrooke, with the Guards and the 29th, appeared on the enemy's right, having crossed at the lower ferry; and about the same time General Murray was seen coming from the side of Avintes in the opposite direction. If any thing could be needed to animate the spirit of Englishmen at such a time, they had it that day. Hastening up the steep streets of Porto as fast as they could be landed and formed to support their countrymen, they were welcomed by the inhabitants with such demonstrations of joy as might have warmed colder hearts than those to which they were addressed. Handkerchiefs were waved from every balcony, and blessings breathed upon them, and shouts of triumphant gratulation and convulsive laughter mingled with the tears and prayers that greeted them.

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*Military
Chronicle,
vol. iv. p.
28.
Stoher's
Narrative,
p. 41.*

The French had been completely surprised. The very boldness of the attempt, for history has recorded no passage of the kind so bold, was its security; till they saw that it was accomplished they did not believe it would be attempted. A *chef de bataillon* told one of the generals that the English were passing, and his report was disregarded. Soult was assured by the French governor of the city that it was only some stragglers of their own people who had tarried behind till the bridge had been destroyed, and that the boatmen had gone to bring them across, but that he had forbidden the passage of boats on any pretext to the left bank. The Marshal was satisfied with this; and the report that the enemy were coming was not believed till General Foy, going upon the high ground opposite to the Convent, from whence Sir Arthur was directing the operations, saw the troops crossing, and Portuguese upon the walls making signals to them. In the confusion that ensued among the French General Foy was wounded, and narrowly escaped being taken, for the enemy

*Deliverance
of Porto.*

*Operations,
&c. 245-7.*

CHAP. thought only of retreating as fast as possible, when they saw
 XXII. troops on either side arriving to support General Hill. It was
 1809. about five in the afternoon when the action was terminated by
May. their flight. The British were too much fatigued to follow up
 their victory that evening, when they might have completed the
 destruction of an enemy not less thoroughly dispirited than dis-
 comfited. But in the last four days they had marched over
 fourscore miles of difficult country. So complete and signal a
 success against an equal enemy was perhaps never before ob-
 tained at so little cost; the loss at Porto consisted only of twenty-
 three men killed, ninety-six wounded, and two missing, and in
 the preceding affairs at Albergaria and Grijo of 102 in all. That
 of the enemy was very considerable; they left behind them five
 pieces of cannon, eight ammunition tumbrils, many prisoners,
 and about a thousand men in the hospitals.

Porto presented an extraordinary scene that night; every
 house was illuminated, while the gutters were still red with blood,
 and the streets strewn with dead bodies both of horses and men.
 There had been three hours' fighting in the suburbs, and before
 night the French who had fallen were stripped and left naked
 where they lay; . . . they had their plunder about them for re-
 moval, and they had provoked by the most intolerable wrongs a
 revengeful people. Sir Arthur the next morning issued a pro-
 clamation, requiring the inhabitants to comport themselves with
 humanity toward such of the French as might be made pri-
 soners; they were entitled to his protection by the laws of war,
 he said, it was his duty to afford it, and it would be inconsistent
 with the magnanimity of the Portugueze nation to revenge the
 outrages which it had suffered upon unfortunate individuals.
 He prohibited any person from appearing armed in the city,
 unless he belonged to a military corps; and appointed Colonel
 Trant to be commandant, provided the nomination should be

approved by the Portugueze government. D'Argenton* escaped during the night, as much through the good-will of those who guarded him, as by the services of his fellow Philadelphes.

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On the following morning Sir Arthur commenced the pursuit, the Hanoverian Legion, under Major-General Murray, moving to Val-longo, from whence the enemy had commenced their retreat during the night, in the direction for Amarante. But Beresford had moved with more celerity than even the British Commander had relied on; driving back the enemy's posts at Villa Real and Mezam-frio, he followed up his success, and drove them from the left bank of the Tamega; and Loison, not venturing to defend the bridge that had been so gallantly defended against him, retired from Amarante under cover of the night, in some apprehension that Silveira or Beresford might have crossed the Douro, and that thus he might be prevented from rejoining Soult. The intelligence of the loss of Porto reached him about the same time that Soult was apprised of his retreat, and that the point which would have opened the surest way for escape was occupied by the allies. They met, however, within a few miles of Penafiel, and it was matter of

*Soult and
Loison ef-
fect a junc-
tion on their
retreat.*

* He was sent to England, and there with commendable humanity provided for by the Government; but soon venturing over to France for the purpose of bringing back his wife and children, he was apprehended, and shot. Nothing could be drawn from him to criminate any of his confederates, but he affirmed that Marshal Soult was engaged in the design; and this he had determined to do in case he should be discovered. It cannot be doubted that the intentions of this unfortunate officer were good; and that he was a man of good and generous feelings was proved both by his conduct at Porto, and by the motive which induced him to venture into his own country, under the certainty of being put to death if he should be recognized there. And yet he made a false accusation, and persisted in it at his death. The best and purest intentions will not preserve a man from guilt, if he engages in one of those secret societies where he is required to deliver his conscience out of his own keeping.

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May.

Naylies,
123.
Operations,
&c. 249—
255.

Sir Arthur
pursues the
French.

May 14.

congratulation that the junction had been effected. Soult's determination was promptly taken. There were officers who were heard to say that the English treated their prisoners well, and that a passage to England in British transports was no great evil. Loison himself is said to have advised another convention like that of Cintra; but the Marshal well knew that the circumstances were widely different, and that nothing remained for them but flight, with the utmost speed, and by the most difficult road, abandoning every thing that might encumber them. As the treasure could not be transported, every one was allowed to take what he could of it; but there was too much haste and alarm for either officers or men to profit largely by this licence; some chests which could not readily be forced open were abandoned by the soldiers, and the greater number were so placed as to be blown to pieces when the guns were burst.

As soon as Sir Arthur was informed of the rapidity and success of Beresford's movements, he directed that General upon Chaves, to intercept the enemy should they turn to the right. Beresford had anticipated this order, and had already dispatched Silveira to occupy the passes of Salamonde and Ruyvaens; but the French were flying too fast for this to be executed in time. Their flight, however, was conducted with great presence of mind and judgement. Marshal Soult, when all his divisions were collected, made a display of them near Lanhoso, not to the pursuers, but for the sake of his own men, that they might see their own numbers, and acquire some confidence in their strength. Dispirited as they were by the abandonment of their artillery and baggage and the loss of their plunder, this had a good effect; and the retreat would have been honourable to Marshal Soult if it had not been disgraced by such cruelties as leave an uneffaceable stigma upon the commander of any troops by whom they are perpetrated. Marshal Soult's soldiers plundered and

murdered the peasantry at their pleasure : many persons, when the English arrived, were found hanging from the trees by the way-side, who had been put to death for no other reason than that they were not friendly to their insolent invaders ; and the line of their retreat might every where be traced by the smoke of the villages which they burnt. They suffered for this as was to be expected : whatever stragglers fell into the hands of the peasantry before the advanced guard could come up to save them were put to death with as little humanity as they had shown. Some of them were thrown alive amid the flames of those houses which their comrades had set on fire.

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May.

Sir Arthur
Wellesley's
dispatch,
May 18.

On the evening of the 14th Sir Arthur thought it certain, by the enemy's movements about Braga, that they intended to retreat either upon Chaves or Montalegre ; and he sent orders to Beresford, in case they should take the latter direction, to push on for Monterrey, so as to stop them if they should pass by Villa del Rey. At Salamonde the pursuers came up with their rear-guard, and drove them out of the town, which they had destroyed. The pursuers slept on the ground that night, and dressed their food and dried their clothes by the fires which the enemy had lighted for their own use. The sufferings of the French during the retreat were only not so severe as those of Sir John Moore's army, because it was in a milder season ; . . . but it was made under a fear of the pursuers which the British soldiers had never felt ; the rain was heavy and incessant, and time enough for necessary rest was not allowed, . . . their danger was so imminent. They who halted at ten at night were on the march again at three in the morning, and in the few intervening hours the cavalry had to seek both provisions and forage, and the infantry to provide for themselves as they could. The greater part of the men had nothing for eight days except parched maize ; very many died of want and exhaustion, and not a few lay down by the way to

*Sufferings
of the enemy
in their
flight.*

May 16.

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1809.

*May.**Loss of the
French at
Puente de
Misarella.*

take the chance of life or death, as they might fall into the hands of the British troops or of the peasantry. Their track was strewn with dead horses and mules, who had either been driven till they fell, or killed, or more barbarously hamstrung, when it was not possible by any goading to make them proceed farther.

A bridge over the Cavado had been occupied by the armed peasantry, but mistaking some Swiss troops who were clothed in red for British, they allowed them to pass; but many hurrying over in the darkness, fell into the torrent and were lost. A greater destruction took place at the Puente de Misarella, a bridge with a low parapet over a deep ravine, and so narrow as not to admit two horsemen abreast. The enemy had driven away the peasants who were attempting to destroy it, but a fire was kept up upon them by others from the crags of that wild and awful pass; and upon the report of some cannon fired by the advanced guard of the pursuers upon their rear, the French were seized with panic; many threw down their arms and ran; they struggled with each other to cross the bridge, losing all self-command; and the British advance, when they arrived at the spot, found the ravine on both sides choked with men and horses, who had been jostled over in the frantic precipitancy of their flight. Here the papers of the army, and the little and more precious part of the baggage, which had hitherto been saved, were lost.

*Naples,
126.
Operations,
&c. 262.**The pursuit
given over
at Montalegre.**May 18.*

Marshal Soult was guided in this retreat by an itinerant Navarrese, who, in the exercise of one of the vilest callings (that of hangman alone excepted) in which a human creature can be employed, had acquired a thorough knowledge of the country. This man conducted him by cross roads and mountainous paths, where neither artillery nor commissariat could follow. Sir Arthur continued the pursuit as far as Montalegre, and then halted, finding that the enemy had gone through the mountains toward Orense by roads impracticable for carriages,