

might not be constrained to sell them to the commissioners at a low price and at long credit. The precautionary measures of the government were so far carried into effect, that the enemy were severely distressed, and finally found it necessary to abandon their enterprise ; but they were able to subsist some months upon what they found, for nothing escaped their search. The French soldiers had been so long accustomed to plunder, that they proceeded in their researches for booty of every kind upon a regular system. They were provided with tools for the work of pillage, and every piece of furniture in which places of concealment could be constructed they broke open from behind, so that no valuables could be hidden from them by any contrivance of that kind. Having satisfied themselves that nothing was secreted above ground, they proceeded to examine whether there was any new masonry, or if any part of the cellar or ground-floor had been disturbed : if it appeared uneven, they dug there : where there was no such indication, they poured water, and if it were absorbed in one place faster than another, there they broke the earth. There were men who at the first glance could pronounce whether any thing had been buried beneath the soil, and when they probed with an iron rod, or, in default of it, with sword or bayonet, it was found that they were seldom mistaken in their judgement. The habit of living by prey called forth, as in beasts, a faculty of discovering it : there was one soldier whose scent became so acute, that if he approached the place where wine had been concealed, he would go unerringly to the spot.

But before supplies could be brought in by this marauding system, the distress which was felt in the invading army occasioned a considerable desertion. The more desperate deserters, instead of going over to the British lines, collected in strong parties in the country about Alcobaça, Nazaré, and As Caldas da Rainha, and at length formed themselves into a regular army

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*October.*

*Deserters  
form them-  
selves into  
a corps of  
plunderers.*

CHAP. of robbers, calling themselves the 11th corps, under their officers  
 XXXII. and general. When they fell in with a detachment of their  
 1810. countrymen, they compelled them to join with them, and in a  
October. short time their numbers amounted to more than 1600. The  
 annoyance became at length more serious to Massena than to  
 the Portugueze; he sent two strong detachments against them,  
 and it was not till after an obstinate action that they surrendered  
 to a superior force, . . . their leaders were then shot, and the men  
 returned to a course of duty which differed very little from their  
 predatory life.

*State of  
 Lisbon.*

There was necessarily great distress meantime at Lisbon, because so many families had taken refuge there in a state of destitution; but that distress was alleviated by the care of the government, and by a religion in which alms-giving ranks high in the scale of religious works, and is enjoined as a regular compensation for sin. Thousands of these poor fugitives were huddled in the open country; many were sent across the river, and they who came from those parts of the country which, by the recovery of Coimbra, were delivered from the French, returned home. Provisions were dear, but there was neither danger nor dread of famine. That country from which the capital receives all its garden produce was within the British lines; on the other side the river Alentejo and Algarve were free from the enemy; and the latter fertile province, with that part of the former which is considered as the granary of the south of Portugal, perfectly secure from them, unless the subjugation of the kingdom were effected. The Barbary coast was close at hand; ships from America and England were daily arriving, and the supply of wheat was soon fully equal to the consumption of the army and of the increased population.

*Opinions of  
 the opposi-  
 tion in Eng-  
 land.*

But the opposition writers in England endeavoured to raise an alarm, "that Lisbon, not Massena, was in danger of famine;

he," they said, " could drive in upon our lines the population of the surrounding country to increase our difficulties, and to relieve his own could send his foraging parties into an immense track of country as yet untouched. England, meantime, must send out not merely regiment after regiment, but cargo after cargo of grain throughout the winter ; and what if the bar of the Tagus should be locked up by adverse winds ? Massena, we might be sure, with the talents and prudence universally ascribed to him, did not act without a confident prospect of success. It had been said in the Gazette, that he possessed only the ground on which his army stood ; this was an *erratum*, where for Massena we ought to read Wellington. Our situation in Portugal would become infinitely more disagreeable than his, even if he did not, bringing his whole force to bear on one, two, or three points, by his superior numbers thus concentrated, break the lines in which Lord Wellington's army was so much drawn out. He would have the most productive part of the kingdom open to him ; we should have only Lisbon and its vicinity, with the whole Portuguese army to maintain, as well as the British ; nay, with the whole population of Lisbon, increased by the fugitives who had taken asylum there, deprived of their usual resources, and thrown upon us even for daily bread ! What a delicate and irksome part then would our troops have to support, if they were to pass the winter upon those mountains, possessing no part of Portugal but that in which they were posted, incessantly harassed by the French in their front, with a Portuguese army double their own number within their lines, and a starving metropolis in the rear ? The French had obviously the advantage ; they could remain in their post as long or as short a time as they pleased : they could retire and return at their discretion. They might wait for the reinforcements which the despot their master would draw to their aid from every quarter of subjected

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October.

CHAP. Europe: they were likely to accumulate, while the British must  
 XXXII. in the nature of things decrease. Massena was in truth master  
 1810. of the game he had to play. The most disastrous thing that  
 October. could happen to us, next to positive defeat, would be the ne-  
 cessity of keeping our position on these heights for the winter;  
 and we trust," said these hopeful directors of public opinion,  
 "we trust that we shall not have to incur that calamity! Lord  
 Wellington may re-embark his troops without much molestation;  
 and rather than he should be driven to the necessity of con-  
 tinuing in these positions for the winter, we confess, we wish  
 that he were re-embarked."

*General La  
 Croix killed*

The people of Lisbon had not been without some apprehension that the British government would withdraw, rather in hopelessness than in weakness, from the contest. The merchants, therefore, had prepared to take flight, some for Brazil, others for England. But when they saw with what determination the lines were manned, this apprehension was laid aside; the fullest confidence succeeded, and all persons relied upon the skill of Lord Wellington, the strength of his position, and the discipline and courage of the allied armies. Such was the security which they felt behind his impregnable lines, that parties resorted to Alhandra for the sake of seeing them, as idlers flock from London to behold a review. A battalion of British seamen had been formed to serve in defending that part of the position. Land service was a jubilee to these men; they had the town of Alhandra to themselves, the inhabitants having forsaken it, and there those who were off guard sat in large armed chairs of embossed leather, two centuries old, smoking and drinking in the open streets. In reconnoitring this part of the line from the side of Villa Franca, General La Croix was killed by a shot from the water. Frequent skirmishes took place on the right flank and in the rear of the French encampment; but the

piquets, by one of those agreements which mutual convenience will sometimes produce between enemies, did not fire upon each other, and this gave occasion for some of the old humanities of war. Some of our men even went and drank wine with the French, till an order was issued prohibiting a sort of intercourse which could neither with propriety nor safety be permitted.

Certain movements of the enemy seemed at this time to indicate an intention of crossing the Tagus. Laborde was sent to garrison Santarem. He threatened to destroy the little town of Chamusca on the Alentejo side (noted for its sweet wine), if the boats there were not sent over for his use: upon which the inhabitants burnt them. A detachment advanced toward Villa Velha, in hopes of winning the bridge there, but it had been removed in time. Abrantes secured the passage against them at one practicable point; and Major-General Fane was sent into Alentejo to observe the enemy at Santarem, with a sufficient force to defeat any attempt that might be made in that quarter. Meantime Massena's apparent inactivity was regarded with some wonder, and made the subject of pasquinades in his own army. Sickness and desertion were daily reducing his numbers; his only possibility of success depended upon effecting a plan of co-operation with Soult; but time must elapse before that could be attempted, and without reinforcements he could not maintain his ground in Portugal the while. For these he had applied pressingly, and having determined where to await them, and prepared accordingly, after remaining a month in front of the British lines, he broke up from his bivouac on the night of the 14th of November, for the purpose of retiring into cantonments. The allies were immediately put in motion to follow him, but the movement was so ably conducted on the enemy's part, that not above 400 prisoners were taken during the retreat.

Lord Wellington, not knowing what might be Massena's

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*Lord Wel-  
lington ad-  
vances to  
Santarem.*

intention, could not pursue him with his whole force; Picton's division was retained in its station, in case the enemy should move round Monte Junto for the purpose of making an attack on that side; and Hill was sent across the Tagus with his corps, to protect Alentejo, and communicate with Abrantes, if that place should be attacked. With the remainder of the army Lord Wellington followed the French, and came up with them near Santarem, where they occupied a position strong in itself, and rendered formidable by retrenchments and abattis. It was where the high road, which is in that place a raised causeway walled on either side, crosses a wide morass, through which the Rio Mayor makes its way to the Tagus. The approach was defended by breast-works and trees cut down, and the causeway was commanded from a hill, close to its termination on the Santarem side, by artillery, which would have swept its whole length. Demonstrations for attacking them were made, rather to ascertain whether a retreat from the country were intended, than with any intent of assailing a position so well chosen and secured. Had this indeed been seriously designed, the heavy rain which fell during the night, and rendered the fords of the Rio Mayor impassable, must have frustrated it. Perceiving that the enemy were in considerable force there, instead of being, as had been at first supposed, only the rear-guard, and having ascertained that Massena's purpose was to canton his troops in the finest part of that country, Lord Wellington retained only his light division in front of Santarem, and cantoned the army at Cartaxo (where his head-quarters were fixed), Azambuja, Alcoentre, Alenquer, and Villa Franca, from whence they might at any time fall back within their lines, if the enemy should receive such reinforcements as might render this expedient. Massena's head-quarters were first at Santarem, but he soon removed them to Torres Novas: Regnier was left at Santarem with his corps; Junot's was

*Both armies  
go into can-  
tonments.*

canton'd at Pernes; Ney's at Thomar, Torres Novas, and Punhete; the companies of artificers at Barquinha, and a reserve of cavalry at Ourem. In this state both armies prepared to pass the winter, both expecting reinforcements, and each ready to take advantage of any favourable opportunity that circumstances might present.

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“ If this,” said the despondents in England, “ be termed the defence of a country, the Portugueze or any other people may well exclaim, God preserve us from such defenders!” “ The campaign,” they predicted, “ would be renewed in February, with such an accumulation of force on the part of the enemy, as must make the protection even of Lisbon hopeless, much less the deliverance of the Peninsula.” “ They knew how galling it must be to the pride of the nation thus to be foiled, and thus, in expedition after expedition, to see the treasures and the blood of their countrymen squandered in vain; but if the public would give confidence to men of shallow intellects, . . . to men who, having no real stake in the country, submitted to execute the projects, however extravagant, of the Junta who had so long misguided us, . . . they must bear the calamity and disgrace of constant miscarriage. It was a most erroneous view of British policy, to conceive that we could ever, with our limited population and commercial habits, become a military people; and it would be just as rational for the French to strive to cope with us by sea, as for us to enter the lists with them by land. All that they now prayed for was, that our eyes might be at length opened to the true policy which we ought to pursue, that of retrieving our finances, and employing our resources upon objects truly British.” This was the language of the opposition, and it excited now for the first time the fears of the English public, because circumstances as melancholy as they were unforeseen seemed



CHAP. to render it probable that they would soon have it in their power  
 XXXII. to act upon the principles which they professed.

1810.

*The King's  
 illness.*

Toward the latter end of October the Princess Amelia died, after a protracted and painful illness, which she had endured with exemplary meekness and resignation. Aware of what must be its termination, she had some of her hair set in a ring, and one day when her blind father, making his daily visit, came to her bed-side, and held out his hand to her, she put this sad memorial upon his finger silently. Her dissolution occurred so soon afterwards, that she never knew the fatal consequences. The King had suffered intense anxiety during her illness, and when he felt this last indication of his daughter's love, feeling at the same time but too surely all that it implied, it affected him so strongly as to bring on the recurrence of a malady which had rendered the appointment of a regent necessary two-and-twenty years before. There was, however, good reason for hope, because the disease of mind was not constitutional and hereditary; they who had the best grounds for forming an opinion believed that its foundation was laid by extreme anxiety and consequent insomnience during the latter years of the American war. The physicians confidently expected that it would prove of short continuance, and therefore parliament having met according to summons, adjourned for a fortnight without a dissentient voice. At the expiration of that term a second adjournment for a similar time was proposed, upon the same grounds, and carried against a small minority: that time also having elapsed, a report of the privy council was laid before parliament, containing the examination of the King's physicians, all of whom declared it highly probable that he would recover. Upon this report the house adjourned for a third fortnight, but not without warm debate and a great increase of numbers to the minority. At the end of this



third adjournment ministers informed parliament that although a considerable degree of progressive amendment had taken place, and the same confident hopes of ultimate recovery were still entertained, yet the immediate state of his Majesty's health was not such as could warrant them to propose a farther adjournment. It became necessary, therefore, to deliberate in what manner a regency should be formed.

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During the subsequent proceedings, ministers were accused in the most vehement language of flagrant usurpation, and of grossly violating the constitution. They were called a parcel of second-rate lawyers and needy adventurers, who in their desperate ambition cared not for the fate of the nation, so they could only contrive to keep their places and retain the command of the public purse. Their proceedings, it was said, were miserable shams and pretences, tending to inflict a mortal stab upon the constitution of the country, and to vest the government in an oligarchical House of Commons. Mr. Perceval would fain persuade that house to make him governor of the country, and let him put the crown in his pocket. Parliament, therefore, was exhorted to withdraw from ministers as speedily as possible the power which they enjoyed, for the day of their dismissal, it was said, would be the best day England had ever seen. Among the evils which might be expected from the suspension of the executive power, it was urged that no assistance could be sent to Lord Wellington, no money drawn from the exchequer, however indispensable a supply might be at this time. Lord Holland dwelt upon this argument; to which Lord Liverpool replied, he was not aware of any injury to the public service from any such delay, nor that ministers had abstained from any acts, from which, under other circumstances, they would not have advised his Majesty to abstain. At whatever risk to themselves, he said, they would do that which they deemed most conducive to the safety, honour,

*Proceed-  
ings con-  
cerning a  
regency.*

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and interest of the country, leaving it for the justice of parliament to consider of, and decide upon the grounds of their justification. This reply was not received as it ought to have been. Lord Holland made answer, it was highly proper that indemnity should follow statesman-like measures, called for by necessity; but those who had assumed the functions of the executive power could not be entitled to indemnity for measures rendered necessary by a delay which they themselves had caused. And the Duke of Norfolk observed in the same tone, that if no inconvenience had resulted from the suspension of the executive power, then had ministers in effect taken the sovereignty into their own hands.

*Mr. Perceval.*

Upon this subject Mr. Perceval spoke with characteristic manliness. "We have not," said he, "been blind to these things. If ministers should find it necessary to take such steps, they would be justified under the particular circumstances of the case; but they would act under a heavy responsibility, and parliament would be bound in duty to examine their conduct afterwards. I am deeply convinced, that I stand in a situation of as deep responsibility as ever a minister stood in; a double responsibility, a responsibility to the public, and a responsibility to the King my master. I feel this to be our situation; and parliament must have felt it so too, in suffering the delays that have already taken place. Gentlemen opposite may put what construction they please upon what I am about to say; but I do contend boldly before parliament, and before my country, that if, under these circumstances, any measure, in any of the public departments, required the sign manual, the officer at the head of that department would act most culpably if he did not issue the necessary orders to his inferior upon his responsibility. This is the view I have of the situation and of the duties of his Majesty's ministers; and although gentlemen on the other side have