

incapable of forming or of appearing again in the shape of an army, if they were followed even at a slower rate by a victorious enemy; and this he said, giving them full credit for discipline and great facility in forming after having been broken. There was plenty of ammunition in the camp for another battle, and provisions for twelve days. But neither these representations, urged as they were with natural and fitting warmth, nor the victory which was before his eyes, could induce the new Commander to deviate from his former opinion. There are some men who, in their desire for the end at which they aim, overlook the difficulties in the way; there are others who see nothing else; the former may sometimes fail, the latter never can succeed. Sir Harry's answer was, that he saw no reason to change his purpose, and that the same motives which induced him yesterday to wait for reinforcements, had still the same weight. At this moment the enemy were retiring in great disorder, and most completely disheartened by their defeat. Sir Arthur, grieved at seeing the irrecoverable opportunity go by, made a second attempt to convince the Commander that victory was in his hands. General Ferguson had sent his aide-de-camp to represent the great advantage of advancing, . . . he himself could, in fact, have cut off a considerable body of the enemy. Sir Arthur took the aide-de-camp to the Commander. But this second representation was as ineffectual as the first. His Adjutant-General, Brigadier-General Clinton, and Colonel Murray, his Quarter-Master-General, who had coincided in opinion with him the preceding evening, agreed with him now also. He had just heard from an officer who had passed through General Freire's troops, such an account of them and their proceedings, as precluded any hope of rendering them useful; the artillery horses seemed to him inefficient; but more especially the want of cavalry, he thought, incapacitated the army from following

CHAP.
XI.

1808.

August.

CHAP. XI. 1808. August. up its success. The 260 Portuguese horse which were with us had shown themselves nearly useless; the British were only 210 in number, and they had suffered severely in the action, . . . this was known, though the extent of their loss had not yet been ascertained. These difficulties preponderated with him; he adhered still to his determination; and Sir Arthur, whose sense of military duty would not allow him to act in disregard of orders, as Nelson was accustomed to do, turned to one of his officers, and concealing the bitterness of disappointment under a semblance of levity, said, "Well, then, we have nothing to do, but to go and shoot red-legged partridges," . . . the game with which that country abounds. From that moment he gave up all hope of cutting the French off from Lisbon, inclosing them there, or preventing them, if they thought proper to attempt it, from protracting the campaign by retreating upon Elvas and Almeida.

The loss of the enemy in this action was about 3000 * killed and wounded, thirteen pieces of artillery, and twenty-three ammunition waggons; that of the English little more than 700 killed, wounded, and missing. The British numbers in the field were 16,000, of which only half had been engaged; the French were about 14,000, including 1300 cavalry, and the whole of this force was brought into action. General Solignac was severely wounded; General Brenier wounded, and left on the field. He was in danger of being put to death by those into whose hands he had fallen, when a Highlander, by name Mackay, who was a corporal in the 71st, came up and rescued him. The French General, in gratitude for his preservation, offered him his watch

* According to General Thiebault, ten guns and 1800 men; but to make up the number of killed and wounded, he adds to the British loss, what he takes off from the French, and says, we had more than 500 killed and 1200 wounded.

and purse ; but Mackay refused to accept them. When he had delivered his prisoner in safety to Colonel Pack, the French General could not help saying, “ What sort of man is this ? He has done me the greatest service, and yet refuses to take the only reward which I can at present offer him ! ” Brenier no doubt contrasted this with the conduct of his countrymen, in whose rapacities and cruelties, it appears by the testimony of the Portugueze, that he had no share ; when, therefore, Colonel Pack replied, “ We are British soldiers, sir, and not plunderers,” he must have deeply felt the disgrace which had been brought upon the French character. Mackay was immediately made a serjeant by Sir Arthur Wellesley’s express desire ; and the Highland Society, at their next meeting, voted him a gold medal, with a suitable device and inscription. The piper to the grenadier company of the same regiment, Stewart was his name, received early in the action a dangerous wound in the thigh : he would not, however, be carried off the field, but, sitting down * where his comrades might hear him, he continued playing warlike airs till the end of the engagement. A handsome stand of Highland pipes, with an inscription commemorating the manner in which he had deserved the donation, was voted him by the Highland society.

Most of the wounded French who fell into the conqueror’s hands were young, and of delicate appearance, . . . apparently men whose lot would not have fallen in the army, under any other system than that of the conscription, though, having been forced into it, they had acquired the worst vices which have ever disgraced and degraded the profession of arms. They were

* *Weel, my bra’ lads, I can gang nae farther wi’ ye a-fighting ; but Deel ha’e my saul if ye sal want music,* were his words.

CHAP.

XI.

1808.

August.

dressed in long white linen coats and trowsers, their firelocks were about six inches longer in the barrel than ours, their bayonets about three shorter, the locks of their pieces much better finished, and the pans so constructed, that the powder was not liable to fall out, . . . an accident which at that time often happened to ours. A chaplain of the British army, as he was endeavouring to render assistance to some of them, while under the surgeon's hands, addressed himself to one in the language of commiseration, and uttered, at the same time, a natural expression of regret at the horrors of war: but the Frenchman fiercely answered him, with a mixture of pride and indignation, that he gloried in his wounds, and that war was the greatest happiness of life. During the whole day the armed peasantry prowled about the field, taking vengeance upon every wounded or straggling Frenchman whom they could find, for the manifold wrongs of their country, and the aggravated injuries which they had endured. So conscious indeed were the prisoners of the little mercy which they deserved at their hands, that they dreaded lest these men should break in upon them, and massacre them all; and a guard was stationed to protect them. The peasantry, however, passed the night in the field, carousing round a large fire, recounting to each other what they had done, and rejoicing over the day's work.

*The French
resolve to
propose
terms.*

In withholding the army from following up the great advantage which it had gained, Sir Harry Burrard knew how unpopular such a determination must be, and sacrificed his own feelings to his judgement. He thought it not allowable to risk much when the reinforcements which were at hand would make the British force so superior, that any further efforts of the enemy must be vain, and success would be obtained without hazard and with less loss. He erred in judgement; but this honourable testimony was borne to him by Sir Arthur Wellesley,

the person of all others by whom that error must have been felt most keenly, that he decided upon fair military grounds in the manner which he thought most conducive to the interests of the country. The French failed not to profit by the respite which was thus allowed them; they formed a rear-guard of four regiments of cavalry, and retired * at leisure, no attempt being made to harass their retreat. Junot, who is said to have exposed himself at the close of the action so as hardly to have been saved from the British cavalry, summoned Generals Laborde, Loison, Kellermann, and Thiebault, upon the field, and demanded their opinions, whether the army ought again to try the lot of arms, and if not, what course it should pursue. They agreed that they were neither in a condition to give battle, nor to stand one. Their troops were harassed, discontented, and discouraged; their ammunition would not last three hours longer; their provisions were failing, their horses already sinking for want of forage. Their losses were irreparable, whereas the enemy were looking for strong reinforcements; and, in fine, the slightest reverse would now leave them at the mercy of the English and Portuguese. Nothing remained but to preserve the best attitude they could, and retire to Lisbon, the possession of which was now their only safeguard. They retreated accordingly to Torres Vedras. A second council was held there on the morrow; and

CHAP.
XI.
1808.
August.

* They remained, according to General Thiebault, long enough to dress 800 of their wounded upon the field, and send them all off for Torres Vedras. The attitude of the grenadiers with which General Kellermann had charged, the rapidity with which the infantry re-formed, and the movements of four cavalry regiments under General Margaron, he says, *concoururent efficacement à contenir l'ennemi. Nous restâmes de cette manière, maîtres du champ de bataille, plus de trois heures après la cessation de l'action.* It is melancholy to observe, that the historical relations of this war which the French have published since its termination, are, generally speaking, as little to be relied on as their official accounts during its continuance.

CHAP. upon a full view of the difficulties and dangers * of their si-
 XI. tuation, and the impossibility of effecting a retreat through so
 1808. large a part of Spain as must be traversed before they could
August. effect a junction with their countrymen, they resolved to try
 what could be done by negotiation. General Kellermann, there-
 fore, was dispatched with a flag of truce to propose a convention
 for the evacuation of Portugal. Meantime Sir Hew Dalrymple
 had arrived and taken the command of the British army, which
 thus had three commanders-in-chief within twenty-four hours.

Arrival of
 Sir Hew
 Dalrymple.

Sir Hew Dalrymple had been expressly chosen for this com-
 mand because of the zeal and judgement which he had displayed
 during the whole of those important transactions in the south of
 Spain on which so much depended, and in which he had acted
 upon his own responsibility. In a private letter from Lord
 Castlereagh, then minister for the war department, Sir Arthur
 Wellesley was recommended to his particular confidence, and a
 full persuasion expressed that that officer's high reputation would
 alone dispose Sir Hew to select him for any service which re-
 quired great prudence and temper, combined with much military
 experience; but, above all, that the habits of communication in
 which Sir Arthur had for a length of time been with his majesty's
 ministers, concerning the affairs of Spain, would point him out
 as an officer of whom it would be desirable for the commander-
 in-chief, on all accounts, to make the most prominent use which
 the rules of the service would permit. Sir Hew embarked at Gibralt-
 ar on the 13th; and learnt that night from Lord Collingwood,
 who was off Cadiz, that Sir Arthur's corps had either landed, or

* General Thiebault, who was present at this council, represents the force against them, independent of Lisbon, of 30,000 British, and 17,000 Spaniards, at more than 80,000 men, *auxquels rien ne manquoit!* In reality, every man in Portugal was their enemy; but except animosity and individual courage, the Portugueze at that time wanted every thing.

was about to land, in Mondego Bay. Arriving off the Tagus on the 19th, he was informed by Sir Charles Cotton, that Sir Arthur was proceeding along the coast. It was not Sir Hew's wish to supersede that General in a detached command for which he had been particularly chosen, especially when he was now completely engaged in an enterprise from which it was impossible to recede, and which required all his ability to accomplish. Under these feelings, therefore, the Commander-in-Chief resolved to proceed to Mondego Bay, and there join the expected reinforcements when they should land, leaving Sir Arthur meantime to pursue and complete his own plan. Seeing, however, on the way a number of ships under the land, and receiving a vague account of the action at Roliça from a sloop of war, he sent an aide-de-camp on shore for intelligence, ordering him to inform Sir Arthur, if he chanced to see him, that he was proceeding to fall in with Sir Harry Burrard and the main body, and that though he wished to be informed of his proceedings, he did not mean to interfere with his command. This was on the evening of the 21st; about midnight the boat returned, bringing intelligence of the battle, and that Sir Harry Burrard was in command. There was now no room for that delicacy toward Sir Arthur, as honourable as it was judicious, which he had resolved to observe. His determination was immediately taken, and in the morning the frigate stood in for the shore.

CHAP.
XI.
1808.
August.

None of the official accounts which Sir Arthur had addressed to him had been received; he landed therefore with no other information than what had been thus gathered upon the way, and entirely unacquainted with the actual state of the French army. When he reached the beach they were embarking the wounded for Porto: during the whole night the sailors had been thus employed, wading nearly up to the middle in the sea, and displaying as much humanity as skill. Arriving at Vimeiro, he

*He orders
the army to
advance.
Aug. 22.*

CHAP. found the army on the ground which it had occupied the day
 XI. before, the dead lying on the field, and the carts still busy in
 1808. removing the wounded. That ground had not been chosen as a
 August. military position, but merely as a halting-place, and it was now
 necessary to remove from it, because of the late action. Sir Hew
 therefore gave orders for marching the next morning at day-
 break toward Lisbon by way of Mafra. Like his predecessor,
 he thought that Sir Arthur had entered upon a hazardous ope-
 ration, which, unless it obtained complete success, must end in
 complete ruin, the British having no prospect of support, nor
 any thing upon which to fall back in case of disaster, so that on
 their part the battle would be fought for existence, while the
 enemy, in case of defeat, would lose only what were killed or
 taken. But he differed from Sir Harry Burrard in this, that he
 deemed it imprudent to wait for Sir John Moore's division, the
 arrival of which was extremely uncertain, and that he saw the
 necessity of pursuing active measures. The French, he knew,
 must either give him battle, for the sake of defending Lisbon, (a
 chance which he was willing to take, though they were superior
 in cavalry, and, as he thought, in numbers, and though they
 would have the great advantage of choosing their ground;) or
 they would cross the Tagus.

*Kellermann
 arrives to
 propose an
 armistice.*

Soon after mid-day an alarm was given that the enemy
 were advancing to renew the attack; the position was taken
 as on the preceding morning. It proved to be a body of ca-
 valry with a flag of truce; and General Kellermann alighting
 at head-quarters, proposed an armistice, for the purpose of con-
 cluding a treaty for the evacuation of Portugal by the French.
 Sir Hew immediately called for his two predecessors. He him-
 self had no means of knowing, but from them, what the con-
 sequences of yesterday's battle really had been; the responsi-
 bility was his, but for the information upon which the agreement

was to be founded, he trusted to them, and more especially to Sir Arthur. That General's plans had been completely defeated by the refusal to follow up the victory, and by the change which Sir Harry Burrard, before he landed, had made in the intended destination of Sir John Moore's corps. Considering, therefore, that in consequence of these errors the enemy had been allowed leisure to resume a formidable position between the British army and Lisbon, and could not now by any increase of the British numbers be prevented from crossing the Tagus, and occupying in strength the strong place of Elvas, with its stronger fort La Lippe, and Almeida; that the Tagus would not for some time longer be open to the fleet, the army meantime depending upon the ships for supplies, and that its communication with them by the coast must at that season be most precarious: considering also how important it was that the troops should not be delayed by regular sieges in Portugal, but march as soon as possible into Spain, he thought it expedient that the French should be allowed to evacuate Portugal with their arms and baggage, and that every facility for this purpose should be afforded them. They occupied at that time, in a military point of view, he thought, the whole of Portugal, having every strong hold in their hands: their present situation enabled them still to avail themselves of those possessions, and to strengthen them as they might think proper; and he was of opinion that an army which had its retreat open, and possessed such advantages, had a fair claim to be allowed such terms. He wished, however, to limit the suspension of arms to eight-and-forty hours. Sir Hew preferred that it should be unlimited, as it had been proposed; in this he had a view to the disembarkation of Sir John Moore's corps, which was not forbidden by the agreement.

An armistice accordingly for the purpose of negotiating a

CHAP.
XI.
1808.
August.

*Terms of
the armi-
stice.*