

CHAP. but in consequence of this error, it was deemed necessary to  
 XV. divide the army, and this led to serious evils. General Hope,  
 1808. with the artillery, cavalry, and four regiments of foot, was to go  
 by the Madrid road; General Paget, with two brigades, by  
 Elvas and Alcantara. The rest of the army moved through  
 Almeida; two brigades, under General Beresford, by way of  
 Coimbra; three, under General Fraser, by Abrantes, crossing  
 the Tagus there, and recrossing at Villa Velha, . . . a point which,  
 in former wars, has been considered the key to Lisbon. These  
 were to unite at Salamanca, and General Hope and Sir David  
 Baird to join them either there or at Valladolid.

*Former  
 services of  
 Sir John  
 Moore.*

If the people of England had been required to name the  
 general who should be employed on this important occasion, Sir  
 John Moore would certainly have been their choice, so generally  
 was he respected as an officer and as a man. He was born at  
 Glasgow in 1760. From the eighteenth to the twenty-third year  
 of his age he was on the continent with his father, (a physician  
 and a distinguished man of letters, then travelling with the young  
 Duke of Hamilton,) and soon afterwards rose to the rank of Lieu-  
 tenant-Colonel in the army. He served with distinction in Cor-  
 sica, the West Indies, the Helder expedition, and in Egypt; had  
 often been wounded, and given proofs of professional skill as  
 well as of personal gallantry, for he was fond of his profession,  
 and had studied it well. But the constitution of his mind led  
 him to look at the dark rather than the hopeful aspect of things;  
 and it was his farther misfortune to have imbibed that exag-  
 gerated opinion of the French as a military people, the ability  
 of their Generals, and the consummate wisdom of their Emperor,  
 which the enemies of government in England were always la-  
 bouring to produce, for the purpose of humbling the spirit of  
 their country.

*His care to  
 maintain  
 discipline.*

Before the troops began their march Sir John Moore warned  
 them in his general orders that the Spaniards were a grave,

orderly people, extremely sober, but generous, and easily offended by any insult or disrespect; he exhorted them to accommodate themselves to these manners, to meet with equal kindness the cordiality wherewith they would be received, and not shock by their intemperance a people worthy of their attachment, whose efforts they were come to support in the most glorious cause. His resolution to maintain order and proper discipline was farther evinced by punishing a marauder upon the march with death: the offender was one whose character gave no hope of amendment, and the General took that opportunity of declaring his determination to show no mercy to plunderers or marauders, in other words, to thieves and villains. Farther to gratify the Spaniards, the army, upon entering Spain, were ordered to wear the red cockade in addition to their own.

On Nov. 13 Sir John arrived with his advanced guard at Salamanca. Before he entered the city, he learnt the defeat of the Extremaduran army at Burgos, and on the second night after his arrival, was awakened by an express, with news that the French had possession of Valladolid, . . . twenty leagues distant. He had only three brigades of infantry with him, and not a single gun. His first thought was to fall back upon Ciudad Rodrigo; but he soon learnt that the French had retired to Palencia, and that none of their infantry had advanced beyond Burgos: he therefore sent orders to Generals Baird and Hope, to concentrate their divisions, and join him with all speed. Every day now brought with it intelligence of new disasters. Blake's army was dispersed, and Buonaparte might either turn his force against Castaños, or march against the English, to prevent their junction. He, meantime, placed nearly in the centre, between two divisions of his army, which were approaching from different points, was compelled to remain inactive. Perceiving what he thought the supineness of the Spanish government, and indignant

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*Ill prospect  
of affairs  
when he ar-  
rives at Sa-  
lamanc*

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at discovering the weakness of the Spaniards, he began to despair of their cause. He saw nothing around him but an inactivity, which he mistook for torpor and indifference. They had not, he said, shown themselves a wise or a provident people; their wisdom was not a wisdom of action. Yet still he felt that they were a fine people; that they had a character of their own, quite distinct from that of any other nation; and much, he thought, might have been done with them. He erred in thinking that they would not do much for themselves.

*Sir David  
Baird ar-  
rives at  
Astorga.*

Sir David Baird had formed a like opinion. The expedition under his command reached Coruña on the 13th of October; and such were the idle forms and the negligence of the Spanish authorities, that the troops were kept on ship-board till an order for their landing could be received from the Central Junta. This General had been accustomed to an Indian army, with its train of slaves and sutlers, elephants and palanquins; . . he had now to march through a country where it is not without difficulty that a party of travellers can obtain food, and which had already been drained by its own troops; and his commissaries were not only inexperienced in the business of their department, but ignorant of the language of the people. Dividing his army into small detachments, which followed each other at considerable distance, he arrived at Astorga, Nov. 19th, and there learning the defeat of Blake's army, and anticipating that of Castaños's, he consulted with his general officers, and informed Sir John Moore of their unanimous opinion, that he ought not to advance till his whole force was assembled there, which would not be before the 4th of December. Sir John Moore's opinion of the hopelessness of affairs was thus confirmed by Sir David Baird. "I see my situation," he said in his journal, "as clearly as any one, that nothing can be worse; yet I am determined to form the junction of the army, and to try our fortune. We have no business here

as things are ; but, being here, it would never do to abandon the Spaniards without a struggle."

It was not long before intelligence arrived that Castaños was defeated, and his army dispersed. This event the British Commander had expected ; it had always been his opinion that the south of Spain ought to have been the scene of action ; that Cadiz, not Coruña, should have been chosen for the disembarkation of the English army, and Seville or Cordoba the place of their junction. He now determined to retreat upon Portugal. . . " Thus," he said, in a letter to the English ambassador, Mr. Frere, " he should fall back upon his resources, cover a country where there was a British interest, act as a diversion in favour of Spain, if the French detached a force against him, and be ready to return to the assistance of the Spaniards, should circumstances again render it eligible. That such circumstances would occur he had no expectation. The French, he thought, would have little more to do to subdue the country than to march over it, though, after the conquest, they might have troublesome subjects." And, in his letter to Sir David Baird, ordering him to fall back upon Coruña, and sail from thence for the Tagus, he directed him to write immediately to England, and order that transports might be sent to Lisbon ; " they will be wanted," said he ; " for when the French have Spain, Portugal cannot be defended." He had written a few days before this to Lord Castlereagh, saying, that he had ordered a depôt of provisions, for a short consumption, to be formed at Almeida, and perhaps the same should be done at Elvas : in that case, the progress of the enemy might be checked, while the stores were embarking at Lisbon, and arrangements made for taking off the army. Beyond this, the defence of Lisbon or of Portugal should not be thought of. In communicating his resolution of retiring to the British government, he wrote in the same spirit of utter despondency.

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*Sir John Moore resolves to retreat upon Portugal, and embark from Lisbon.*  
Nov. 28.

CHAP. “ If the French,” said he, “ succeed in Spain, it will be vain to  
 XV. attempt to resist them in Portugal. Portugal could not be de-  
 1808. fended against a superior enemy: the Spaniards, however, might  
 rally in the south, and the English might still be of use, if they  
 were landed at Cadiz. But it was impossible to be very sanguine  
 on this subject, after what had been seen.”

*He asks the  
 opinion of  
 the British  
 Ambassa-  
 dor.*

When this intention of retreating was made known to the army at Salamanca, murmurs against it were heard in every quarter, and from men of all ranks. Even the staff officers lamented the resolution of their Commander. In his letter to Mr. Frere, written before the defeat of Castaños was known, Sir John Moore had proposed as a question, what the British army should do, in case of that event; whether he should retreat upon Portugal, or march upon Madrid, and throw himself into the heart of Spain, thus to run all risks, and share the fortunes of the Spanish nation? “ This movement,” he said, “ would be one of great hazard, as his retreat to Cadiz or Gibraltar must be very uncertain, and he should be entirely in the power of the Spaniards; but perhaps it was worthy of risk, if the government and people of Spain were thought to have still sufficient energy, and the means to recover from their defeats. The question,” said Sir John Moore to Mr. Frere, “ is not purely a military one. It belongs at least as much to you as to me to decide upon it. Your communications with the Spanish government, and the opportunities you have had of judging of the general state of the country, enable you to form as just an estimate of the resistance that is likely to be offered. You are perhaps better acquainted with the views of the British cabinet; and the question is, what would that cabinet direct, were they upon the spot to determine? It is of much importance that this should be thoroughly considered; it is comparatively of very little, on whom shall rest the greatest share of responsibility. I

am willing to take the whole, or a part; but I am very anxious to know your opinion." Mr. Frere knew that what the Spanish government most deprecated was, a retreat of the English upon Lisbon. It would sink the hearts of the whole country, and would make them believe that England, after an ineffectual effort, had relapsed into the old limited system of protecting Portugal. If, therefore, a retreat were determined upon, as absolutely necessary, he thought the army should fall back upon Galicia, and the strong country about Astorga. But he said, in his reply to the General, that Leon and the two Castilles (with the exception of La Mancha and the city of Madrid) were the provinces least distinguished for a military, patriotic, or provincial spirit in all Spain: the people had been passive during the late events, and had seen their country successively occupied by the strongest party. It was difficult to blame them: living in open villages, in vast plains, without arms and without horses, they had neither the means of defence or escape. That country must necessarily belong to the party which was superior in cavalry; . . . yet even there there was no want of a right feeling; the towns were abandoned at the approach of the enemy; not a single magistrate had been brought over to take the oath of allegiance to the Intruder, nor had the French been able to enlist a single soldier. The other provinces were possessed by the most ardent and determined spirit. There was no doubt of the people. The government was new, and had hitherto been too numerous to be very active; but there was hope that that inconvenience would soon be remedied. "They are resolute," said Mr. Frere, "and I believe every man of them determined to perish with the country. They will not at least set the example, which the ruling powers and higher orders of other countries have exhibited, of weakness and timidity."

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*Mr. Frere  
wishes him  
to advance  
for the de-  
fence of  
Madrid.*

Great advantages, the ambassador thought, would result from advancing speedily to cover Madrid. It was a point of great moment for effect in Spain, and still more in France, and in the west of Europe. The people of the town were full of resolution, and determined to defend it, in spite of its situation; and nothing could be more unfavourable to the claim of the Intruder than a siege of the capital. The first object of the English, therefore, he thought, should be to march there, and collect a force capable of resisting the French, before farther reinforcements arrived from France. There were reports that the resistance to the conscription had been much more obstinate than usual, and a pastoral letter of the Bishop of Carcassone seemed to prove that these reports were not wholly without foundation. An advantage obtained over the French now would be doubly valuable, inasmuch as it would render a conscription, for a third attempt upon Spain, infinitely difficult, if not impracticable. But if, with their present forces, they were allowed to retain their present advantages, and to wait the completion of the conscription, they would pour in forces, which would give them immediate possession of the capital and central provinces, and the war would then be reduced to an absolute competition between the two countries, which could stand out longest against the waste of population.

If, however, Mr. Frere said, this view of the subject should not appear sufficiently clear or conclusive to the Commander-in-chief, to induce him to take this step, which he, the Ambassador, was well convinced would meet with the approbation of his Majesty's government, he would venture to recommend retaining the position of Astorga. A retreat from thence to Coruña (as far, said he, as an unmilitary man may be allowed to judge of a country which he has travelled over) would be less difficult than

through Portugal to Lisbon; and we ought in that position to wait for the reinforcements of cavalry from England: the army would thus be enabled to act in the flat country, which opens immediately from that point, and extends through the whole of Leon and Old Castille . . . Before this letter arrived, the General's resolution had been taken, in consequence of the news of Castanos's defeat. It was not shaken by the reasoning of the Ambassador, whose opinion he had asked, and he waited only for the junction of General Hope, to commence his retreat on Portugal.

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The Junta had wished it had been possible for Sir John Moore to have conferred personally with them at Aranjuez, or with the military council at Madrid, and he himself had formed the same wish, believing that unless prompt and efficacious measures were taken, the defeat of the Spanish armies and the ruin of their cause were inevitable. But as this could not be, the Captain-General of Granada, with another officer, selected for his reputation and military experience, were deputed to consult with him at Salamanca. These Generals, in representing the resources of the Spaniards, enumerated the force under San Juan, and relied upon the pass of Somosierra; but Colonel Graham had just arrived before them with news that the pass had been won; and Sir John considered them personally as weak old men, and officially as having no information upon which any plan could be concerted. Mistaking, as he did, the spirit of the nation, and undervaluing its strength, he gave no ear to their urgent desire that he would form a junction with Romana, and thereby draw off the enemy from Madrid, nor to their declaration that his retreat, if he persisted in that intention, would immediately occasion the destruction of Spain.

*Two Spanish  
Generals  
sent to con-  
fer with  
Sir John  
Moore.*

On the 5th of December, a dispatch arrived from Castelfranco and Morla, informing him that about 25,000 men, of the

*Morla and  
the Mili-  
tary Junta  
urge him to  
advance.*



CHAP. central army, were falling back on Madrid; that 10,000 from  
XV. Somosierra were coming thither; and that nearly 40,000 would  
1808. join them. With that number of troops, the French army,  
December. which had presented itself, was not to be feared. But the Junta, apprehending an increase of the hostile forces, hoped he would be able to unite with their army, or fall on the rear of the enemy; and they did not doubt that the rapidity of his movements would be such as the interests of both countries required. This letter was written on the second, and the men who signed it had then determined to betray their country, ..but though they might have wished and designed to draw on the British army to its destruction, the proposal that it should advance came not from them alone, but from the civil and military Junta also, and was such as true Spaniards would have given. While Sir John was considering this letter, Colonel Charmilly, a French emigrant in the British service, and denized in England, arrived, with dispatches from Mr. Frere. Colonel Charmilly was in Madrid on the night of the first, when the inhabitants were working by torch-light at the trenches, breaking up the streets, and barricading the houses. He had seen the Duque del Infantado, who told him there were provisions and ammunition in Madrid; that more than 30,000 men had that day enlisted themselves as volunteers; and that it was of material importance to the common cause that the British commander should make a diversion, which would compel the French to divide their forces, and thus afford some relief to Madrid. This he requested Charmilly to communicate to Sir John Moore, as he himself had been an eye-witness of the spirit of the people, and the preparations which they were making for resistance. By another Grandee he was requested to say to Sir John Moore, that he must make use of this moment to save Spain, by making conditions with the Junta for a better government; but especially that he should require