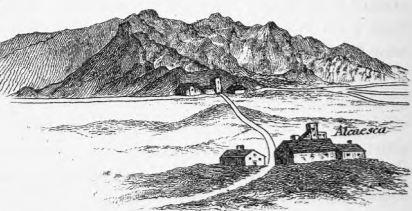
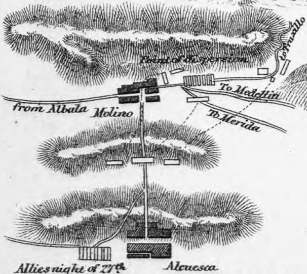
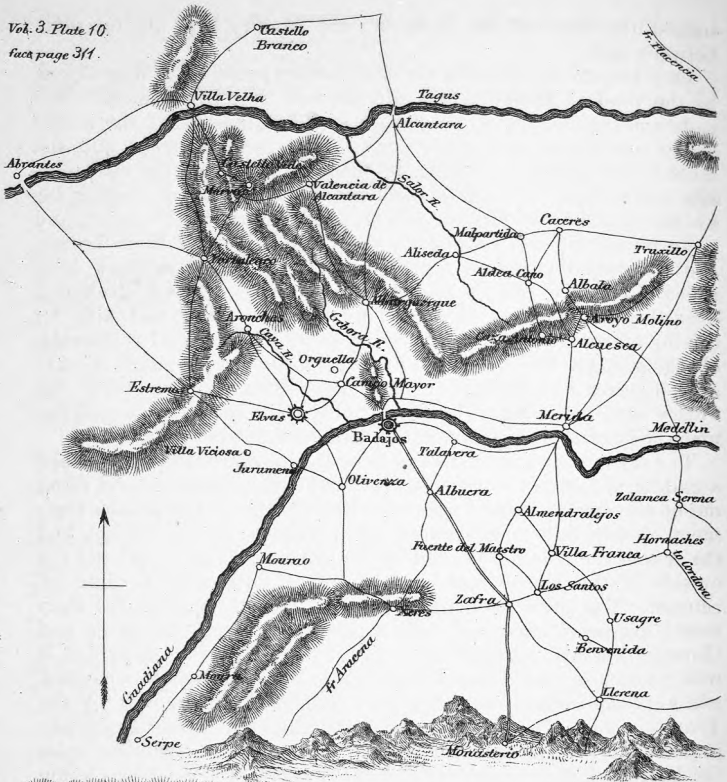


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**GENL HILL'S OPERATIONS.**

1811.

Drawn by Genl Napier.

turned the horn of the crescent; the cavalry kept its due place between both.

One brigade of Girard's division, having marched at four o'clock by the road of Medellin, was already safe, but Dombrowski's brigade and the cavalry of Briche were still in the place; the horses of the rear-guard, unbridled, were tied to the olive-trees, and the infantry were only gathering to form on the Medellin road outside the village. Girard himself was in his quarters, waiting for his horse, when two British officers galloped down the street, and in an instant all was confusion; the cavalry bridled their horses, and the infantry ran to their alarm posts. But a thick mist rolled down the craggy mountain, a terrifying shout, drowning even the clatter of the elements, arose on the blast, and with the driving storm came the seventy-first and ninety-second regiments, charging down the street. Then the French rear-guard of cavalry, fighting and struggling hard, were driven to the end of the village, and the infantry, hastily forming their squares, covered the main body of the horsemen which gathered on their left.

The seventy-first immediately lined the garden-walls, and opened a galling fire on the nearest square, while the ninety-second filing out of the streets formed upon the French right; the fiftieth regiment closely following, secured the prisoners in the village, and the rest of the column, headed by the Spanish cavalry, skirted the outside of the houses, and endeavored to intercept the line of retreat. The guns soon opened on the French squares, the thirteenth dragoons captured their artillery, the ninth dragoons and German hussars charged their cavalry and entirely dispersed it with great loss; but Girard, an intrepid officer, although wounded, still kept his infantry together, and continued his retreat by the Truxillo road. The right column of the allies was however already in possession of that line, the cavalry and artillery were close upon the French flank, and the left column, having re-formed, was again coming up fast; Girard's men were falling by fifties, and his situation was desperate, yet he would not surrender, but giving the word to disperse, endeavored to escape by scaling the almost inaccessible rocks of the sierra. His pursuers, not less obstinate, immediately divided. The Spaniards ascended the hills at an easier part beyond his left, the thirty-ninth regiment and Ashworth's Portuguese turned the mountain by the Truxillo road; the twenty-eighth and thirty-fourth, led by General Howard, followed him step by step up the rocks, and prisoners were taken every moment, until the pursuers, heavily loaded, were unable to continue the trial of speed with men who had thrown away their arms and packs. Girard, Dombrowski, and Briche, escaped at first

to San Hernando, and Zorita, in the Guadalupe mountains, after which, crossing the Guadiana at Orellano on the 9th of November, they rejoined Drouet with about six hundred men, the remains of three thousand. They were said to be the finest troops then in Spain, and indeed their resolution not to surrender in such an appalling situation was no mean proof of their excellence.

The trophies of this action were the capture of twelve or thirteen hundred prisoners, including General Bron, and the Prince of Aremberg; all the French artillery, baggage, and commissariat, together with a contribution just raised, and during the fight, a Portuguese brigade, being united to Penne Villamur's cavalry was sent to Merida, where some stores were found. The loss of the allies was not more than seventy killed and wounded; but one officer, Lieutenant Stenowitz, was taken. He was distinguished by his courage and successful enterprise, but he was an Austrian, who, having abandoned the French army in Spain to join Julian Sanchez' partida, was liable to death by the laws of war; having been, however, originally forced into the French service, he was, in reality, no deserter. General Hill, anxious to save him, applied frankly to General Drouet, and such was the latter's good temper, that, while smarting under this disaster, he released his prisoner.

Girard was only deprived of his division, which was given to General Barois, yet in a military point of view, his offence was unpardonable. He knew two or three days before, that General Hill was near him; he knew that there was a good road from Malpartida to Alcuesca, because he had himself passed it coming from Caceres; and yet he halted at Aroyo de Molino without necessity, and without sending out even a patrol upon his flank, thus sacrificing two thousand brave men. Napoleon's clemency was therefore great, and yet not misplaced; for Girard afterwards repaid it by his devotion at the battle of Lutzen, when the Emperor's star was on the wane. On the other hand, General Hill neglected no precaution, let no advantage escape; and, to good arrangements, added celerity of movement with the utmost firmness and vigor of execution. His troops seconded him as he merited, and here was made manifest the advantage of possessing the friendship of a people so strongly influenced by the instincts of revenge as the Peninsulars; for, during the night of the 27th, every Spaniard in Aroyo, as well as in Alcuesca, knew that the allies were at hand, and not one was found so base or so indiscreet as to betray the fact.

This blow being struck, Hill returned to his old quarters, and the Spanish troops fell back behind the Salor; but the report of Girard's disaster set all the French corps in motion. Drouet re-

occupied Caeres with a thousand men; Foy passed the Tagus at Almaraz on the 15th of November, and moved to Truxillo; a convoy entered Badajos from Zafra on the 12th, a second on the 20th; and Soult, while collecting troops in Seville, directed Phillipson to plant all the ground under the guns at Badajos with potatoes and corn. Everything seemed to indicate a powerful attack upon Hill, when a serious disturbance among the Polish troops at Ronquillo obliged Soult to detach men from Seville to quell it. When that was effected, a division of four thousand entered Estremadura, and Drouet, whose corps was thus raised to fourteen thousand infantry and three thousand cavalry, on the 5th of December, advanced to Almendralejos, and the 18th, his advanced guard occupied Merida.\* At the same time, Marmont concentrated part of his army at Toledo, from whence Montbrun, as we have seen, was directed to aid Suchet at Valencia; and Soult, with the same view, sent ten thousand men to Despeños Perros.

Drouet's movements were, however, again stopped by some insubordination in the fifth corps. And as it was now known that Soult's principal object was to destroy Ballesteros, and take Tarifa, Hill again advanced, partly to protect Morillo from Drouet, partly to save the resources of Estremadura, partly to make a diversion in favor of Ballesteros and Tarifa, and in some sort also for Valencia. With this view he entered Estremadura by Albuquerque on the 27th of December, and having received information that the French, untaught by their former misfortunes, were not vigilant, he made a forced march in hopes to surprise them. On the 28th he passed Villar del Rey and San Vincente and reached Nava de Membriillos, where he fell in with three hundred French infantry, and a few hussars, part of a foraging party, the remainder of which was at a village two leagues distant. A patrol gave an alarm, the French retreated towards Merida, and were closely followed by four hundred of the allied cavalry, who had orders to make every effort to stop their march; but, to use the words of General Hill, "The intrepid and admirable manner in which the enemy retreated, the infantry formed in square, and favored as he was by the nature of the country of which he knew how to take the fullest advantage, prevented the cavalry alone from effecting anything against him." Captain Neveux, the able officer who commanded on this occasion, reached Merida with a loss of only forty men, all killed or wounded by the fire of the artillery; but the French at Merida immediately abandoned their unfinished works, and evacuated that town in the night, leaving behind some bread and a quantity of wheat.

From Merida, Hill, intending to fight Drouet, marched on the

\* Mr. Stuart's Papers, MS.

1st of January to Almendralejos, where he captured another field store; but the French General, whose troops were scattered, fell back towards Zafra; the weather was so bad, and the roads so deep, that General Hill with the main body halted while Colonel Abercrombie with a detachment of Portuguese and German cavalry followed the enemy's rear-guard. Meanwhile, Phillipon, who never lost an advantage, sent either the detachment which had escorted the convoy to Badajos, or some Polish troops with whom he was discontented, down the Portuguese frontier on the right of the Guadiana, by Moura, Mourao, and Serpe, with orders to drive the herds of cattle from those places into the Sierra Morena.

Abercrombie reached Fuente del Maestro on the evening of the 3d, where, meeting with a stout squadron of the enemy, a stiff charge took place, and the French, outnumbered and flanked on both sides, were overthrown with a loss of thirty men. But Drouet was now in full retreat for Monasterio, and Morillo, moving upon Medellin, took post at San Benito. Thus the allies remained masters of Estremadura until the 13th of January, when Marmont's divisions moved by the valley of the Tagus towards the eastern frontier of Portugal; Hill then returned to Portalegre and sent a division over the Tagus to Castello Branco. Drouet immediately returned to Llerena, and his cavalry supported by a detachment of infantry marched against Morillo, but that general, instead of falling back when Hill did, had made a sudden incursion to La Mancha, and was then attacking the castle of Almagro. There, however, he was so completely defeated by General Treillard, that, flying to Horcajo in the Guadaloupe mountains, although he reached it on the 18th, his fugitives were still coming in on the 21st, and his army remained for a long time in the greatest disorder.

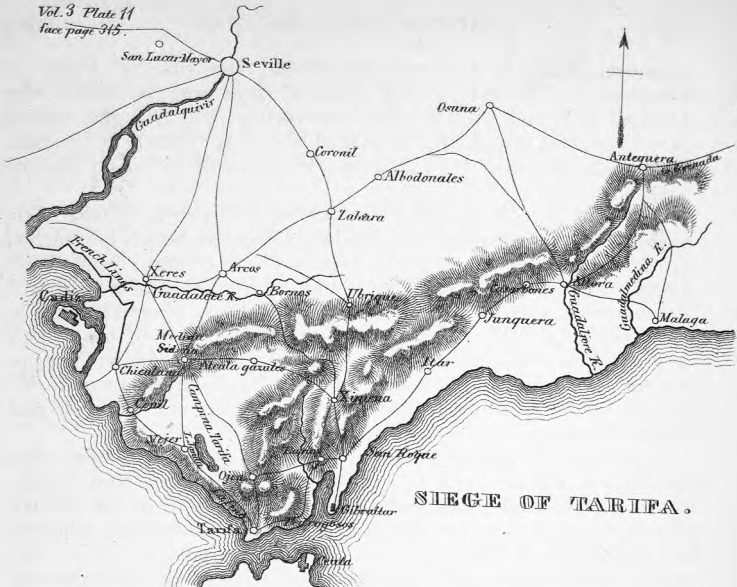
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## CHAPTER V.

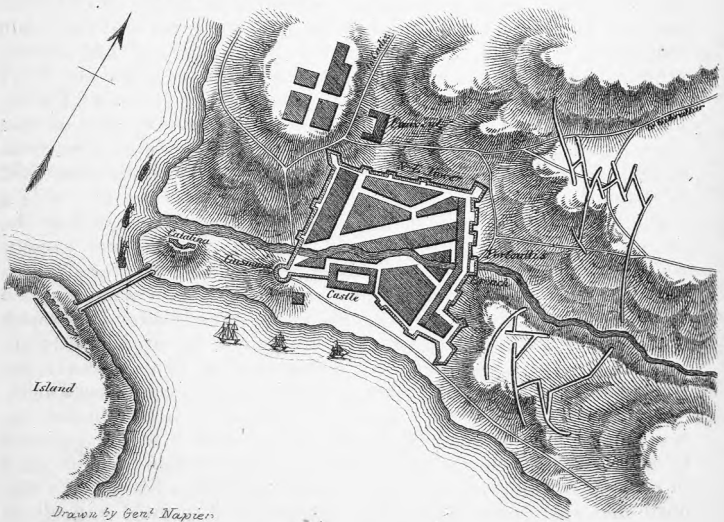
Soult resolves to besiege Tarifa—Ballesteros is driven a second time under the guns of Gibraltar—Laval invests Tarifa—Siege of Tarifa—The assault repulsed—Siege is raised—The true history of this siege exposed—Colonel Skerrett not the author of the success.

WHILE the events, recorded in the foregoing chapter, were passing in Estremadura, the south of Andalusia was the scene of more important operations. Soult, persisting in his design against Tarifa, had given orders to assemble a battering train, and directed General Laval with a strong division of the 4th corps to move from Antequera upon San Roque. Skerrett was then menacing the





**SIEGE OF TARIFA.**



*Drawn by Genl Napier*



communications of General Sémélé on the side of Vejer de Frontera, and Ballesteros had obtained some success against that General at Bornos on the 5th of November; but Skerrett, finding that Copons instead of four thousand had only brought seven hundred men, returned to Tarifa on the approach of some French from Conil.

Sémélé, being thus reinforced, obliged Ballesteros, on the 27th, again to take refuge under the walls of Gibraltar, which he reached just in time to avoid a collision with Laval's column from Antequera. Sémélé's troops did not follow very close, and a combined attack upon Laval by the divisions of Ballesteros, Skerrett, and Copons, was projected. The two latter, with a part of the troops under Ballesteros, were actually embarked on the 29th of November for the purpose of landing at Manilba, in pursuance of this scheme, when Sémélé's column came in sight, and Skerrett and Copons instantly returned to Tarifa.

Ballesteros remained at Gibraltar, a heavy burthen upon that fortress, and his own troops without shelter from the winter rain, wherefore General Campbell proposed to send them, in British vessels, to renew the attempt against Malaga, which had formerly failed under Lord Blayney. On the 12th of January, at the very moment of embarking, the French retired from before Gibraltar, by the Puerto de Ojen, a grand pass connecting the plains of Gibraltar and the valleys of the Guadارانque with the great and rich plain called the Campiña de Tarifa, and with the gorge of Los Pedragos, which is the eastern entrance to the pastures called the Vega de Tarifa. This movement was preparatory to the siege of Tarifa; and as the battering train was already within five leagues of that place, Skerrett proposed to seize it by a combined operation from Cadiz, Tarifa, Gibraltar, and Los Barrios, where Ballesteros had now taken post. This combination was however on too wide a scale to be adopted in all its parts; Ballesteros, indeed, fell on the enemy by surprise at the pass of Ojen, and Skerrett and Copons received orders from General Campbell to take advantage of this diversion; but the former, seeing that his own plan was not adopted to its full extent, would not stir, and the Spaniards, after a skirmish of six hours, retired. Laval then left fifteen hundred men to observe Ballesteros, and placing a detachment at Vejes to cover his right flank, threaded Los Pedragos and advanced against Tarifa.

This town was scarcely expected by the French to make any resistance. It was encircled with towers, which were connected by an ancient archery wall, irregular in form, without a ditch, and so thin as to offer no resistance even to field artillery. To the north and east some high ridges flanked, and seemed entirely to

command the weak rampart; but the English engineer had observed that the nearest ridges formed, at half pistol-shot, a natural glacis, the plane of which, one point excepted, intersected the crest of the parapet with great nicety; and to this advantage was added a greater number of towers, better flanks, and more powerful resources for an interior defence. He judged, therefore, that the seemingly favorable nature of the ridges, combined with other circumstances, would scarcely fail to tempt the enemy to commence their trenches on that side. With a view to render the delusion unavoidable, he strengthened the western front of the place, rendered the access to it uneasy by demolishing the main walls, and removing the flooring of an isolated suburb on the north-west, and an out-work of a convent which was situated about a hundred yards from that place, and to the east of the suburb. This done, he prepared an internal defence, which rendered the storming of the breach the smallest difficulty to be encountered; but to appreciate his design, the local peculiarities must be described.

Tarifa was cloven in two by the bed of a periodical torrent which, entering at the east, passed out at the opposite point. This stream was barred at its entrance by a tower with a portcullis, in front of which palisades were planted across the bed of the water. The houses within the walls were strongly built, and occupied inclined planes rising from each side of the torrent, and at the exit of the latter there were two massive structures, forming part of the walls, called the tower and castle of the Gusmans, both of which looked up the hollow formed by the meeting of the inclined planes at the stream. From these structures, first a sandy neck of land, and then a causeway, the whole being about six hundred yards long, joined the town to an island, or rather promontory, about two thousand yards in circumference, with perpendicular sides, which forbade any entrance save by the causeway; and at the island end of the latter there was an unfinished intrenchment and battery.

On the connecting neck of land were some sand-hills, the highest of which, called the Catalina, was scarped and crowned with a slight field work, containing a twelve-pounder. This hill covered the causeway, and in conjunction with the tower of the Gusmans, which was armed with a ship eighteen-pounder, flanked the western front, and commanded all the ground between the walls and the island. The gun in the tower of the Gusmans also shot clear over the town on to the slope where the French batteries were expected to be raised; and in addition to these posts, the Stately ship of the line, the Druid frigate, and several gun and mortar-boats were anchored in the most favorable situation for flanking the enemy's approaches.

Reverting then to the head of the defence, it will be seen, that while the ridges on the eastern fronts, and the hollow bed of the torrent, which offered cover for troops moving to the assault, deceitfully tempted the enemy to that side, the flanking fire of the convent, the ruins of the suburb, the hill of the Catalina, and the appearance of the shipping deterred them even from examining the western side, and, as it were, forcibly urged them towards the eastern ridge where the English engineer wished to find them. There he had even marked their ground, and indicated the situation of the breach; that is to say, close to the entrance of the torrent, where the hollow meeting of the inclined planes rendered the inner depth of the walls far greater than the outer depth, where he had loop-holed the houses, opened communications to the rear, barricaded the streets, and accumulated obstacles. The enemy, after forcing the breach, would thus have been confined between the houses on the inclined planes, exposed on each side to the musketry from the loop-holes and windows, and in front to the fire of the tower of the Gusmans, which looked up the bed of the torrent. Thus disputing every inch of ground, the garrison could at worst have reached the castle and tower of the Gusmans, which, being high and massive, were fitted for rear-guards to cover the evacuation of the place, and were provided with ladders for the troops to descend and retreat to the island under cover of the Catalina.

The artillery available for the defence appeared very powerful, for besides that of the shipping, and the guns in the Catalina, there were in the island twelve pieces comprising four twenty-four pounders, and two ten-inch mortars; and in the town there were six field pieces and four coehorns on the east front. An eighteen-pounder was on the Gusmans, a howitzer on the portecullis tower, and two field-pieces were kept behind the town in reserve for sallies; but most of the artillery in the island was mounted after the investment, so that two twenty-four pounders and two mortars only could take part in the defence of the town; and as the walls and towers of the latter were too weak and narrow to sustain heavy guns, only three field-pieces and the coehorns did in fact reply to the enemy's fire.

#### SIEGE OF TARIFA.

The garrison, including six hundred Spanish infantry and one hundred horse of that nation, amounted to two thousand five hundred men, and was posted in the following manner. Seven hundred were in the island, one hundred in the Catalina, two hundred in the convent, and fifteen hundred in the town.

On the 19th of December the enemy, having driven in the ad-

vanced posts, were encountered with a sharp skirmish, and designedly led towards the eastern front.

The 20th, the place was invested, but on the 21st, a piquet of French troops having incautiously advanced towards the western front, Captain Wren of the eleventh suddenly descended from the Catalina, and carried them off. In the night the enemy approached close to the walls, but the next morning Captain Wren again came down from the Catalina, and at the same time the troops sallied from the convent, with a view to discover the position of the French advanced posts. So daring was this sally that Mr. Welstead of the eighty-second actually pushed into one of their camps and captured a field-piece there; and although he was unable to bring it off in face of the French reserves, the latter were drawn by the skirmish under the fire of the ships of the island, and of the town, whereby they suffered severely, and could with difficulty recover the captured piece of artillery from under the guns of the north-east tower.

In the night of the 22d, the anticipations of the British engineer were realized. The enemy broke ground in two places, five hundred yards from the eastern front, and assiduously pushed forward their approaches until the 26th; but always under a destructive fire, to which they replied with musketry, and with their wall-pieces, which killed several men, and would have been very dangerous, but for the sand-bags which Captain Nicolas, the chief engineer at Cadiz, had copiously supplied. This advantage was however counterbalanced by the absence of the ships, which were all driven away in a gale on the 23d.

On the 27th the French battering train arrived, and on the 29th the sixteen-pounders opened against the town, and the howitzers against the island. These last did little damage beyond dismounting the gun in the tower of the Gusmans, which was however quickly re-established; but the sixteen-pounders brought the old wall down in such flakes, that in a few hours a wide breach was effected, a little to the left of the portcullis tower, looking from the camp.\*

The place was now exposed both to assault and escalade, but behind the breach the depth to the street was above fourteen feet, the space below was covered with iron window-gratings, having every second bar turned up, the houses there and behind all points liable to escalade were completely prepared and garrisoned, and the troops were dispersed all round the ramparts, each regiment having its own quarter assigned. The Spanish and forty-seventh British regiment guarded the breach, and on their right some riflemen prolonged the line. The eighty-seventh regiment occupied the portcullis tower, and extended along the rampart to the left.

\* Appendix 10, § 5.

In the night of the 29th, the enemy fired salvos of grape on the breach, but the besieged cleared the foot of it between the discharges.

The 30th, the breaching fire was renewed, the wall was broken for sixty feet, and the whole breach offered an easy ascent; yet the besieged again cleared away the rubbish, and in the night were fast augmenting the defences behind, when a heavy rain filled the bed of the river, and the torrent bringing down from the French camp planks, fascines, gabions, and dead bodies, broke the palisades with a shock, bent the portcullis backward, and with the surge of the waters even injured the defences behind the breach; a new passage was thus opened in the wall, yet such was the vigor of the besieged that the damage was repaired before the morning, and the troops calmly and confidently awaited

#### THE ASSAULT.

The waters subsided in the night as quickly as they had risen, but at daylight a living stream of French grenadiers glided swiftly down the bed of the river, and, as if assured of victory, arrived without shout or tumult within a few yards of the walls, where, instead of quitting the hollow to reach the breach, they, like the torrent of the night, continued their rapid course and dashed against the portcullis. The British soldiers, who had hitherto been silent and observant, as if at a spectacle which they were expected to applaud, now arose, and with a crashing volley smote the head of the French column! The leading officer, covered with wounds, fell against the portcullis and gave up his sword through the bars to Colonel Gough; the French drummer, a gallant boy, who was beating the charge, dropped lifeless by his officer's side, and the dead and wounded filled the hollow. The remainder of the assailants then breaking out to the right and left, spread along the slopes of ground under the ramparts and opened a quick irregular musketry. At the same time, a number of men coming out of the trenches, leaped into pits dugged in front, and shot fast at the garrison, but no escalade or diversion at the other points was made, and the storming column was dreadfully shattered. For the ramparts streamed forth fire, and from the north-eastern tower a field-piece, held in reserve expressly for the occasion, sent at pistol-shot distance a tempest of grape whistling through the French masses, which were swept away in such a dreadful manner, that they could no longer endure the destruction, but plunging once more into the hollow returned to their camp, while a shout of victory mingled with the sound of musical instruments passed round the wall of the town.

In this combat the allies lost five officers and thirty-one men, but the French dead covered all the slopes in front of the rampart, and choked the bed of the river, and ten wounded officers, of whom only one survived, were brought in by the breach. Skerrett, compassionating their sufferings and admiring their bravery, permitted Laval to fetch off the remainder; and the operations of the siege were then suspended, for both sides suffered severely from the weather. The rain partially ruined the French batteries, interrupted their communications, and stopped their supplies; on the other hand the torrent, again swelling, broke the stockades of the allies and injured their intrenchments, and some vessels, coming from Gibraltar with ammunition, were wrecked on the coast. Nevertheless a fresh assault was hourly expected until the night of the 4th, when, several cannon-shots being heard in the French camp, without any bullets reaching the town, it was judged that the enemy were destroying the guns previous to retreating. Soon afterwards large fires were observed, and at daylight the troops, issuing out of the convent, drove the enemy from the batteries, and commenced a skirmish with the rear-guard; but a heavy storm impeded the action; the French conducted their retreat skilfully, and the British, after making a few prisoners, relinquished the pursuit. Nevertheless Laval's misfortunes did not end here. The privations his troops had endured in the trenches produced sickness; many men deserted, and it was computed, at the time, that the expedition cost the French not less than a thousand men, while the whole loss of the allies did not exceed one hundred and fifty.\*

Such is the simple tale of Tarifa, but the true history of its defence cannot there be found. To hide the errors of the dead is not always a virtue, and when it involves injustice to the living it becomes a crime. Colonel Skerrett has obtained the credit, but he was not the author of the success at Tarifa. He, and Lord Proby, the second in command, were from the first impressed with a notion that the place could not be defended and ought to be abandoned; all their proceedings tended to that end, and they would even have abandoned the island. At Colonel Skerrett's express desire General Cooke had recalled him on the 18th, that is to say, the day before the siege commenced; and during its progress he neither evinced hopes of final success, nor made exertions to obtain it; in some instances he even took measures tending directly towards failure.† To whom then was England indebted for this splendid achievement? The merit of the conception is undoubtedly due to General Campbell, the lieutenant-governor of Gibraltar. He first occupied Tarifa, and he also engaged the Spaniards to

\* General Campbell's Correspondence, MS.

† Appendix 10, § 3.

admit an English garrison into Ceuta, that the navigation of the straits and the coasting trade might be secured; for he was the only authority in the south of the Peninsula who appeared to understand the true value of those points. Finally, it was his imperious and even menacing orders, which prevented Colonel Skerrett from abandoning Tarifa before the siege commenced.

General Campbell's resolution is the more to be admired, because Tarifa was, strictly speaking, not within his command, which did not extend beyond the walls of his own fortress; and he had also to contend against General Cooke, who claimed the control of a garrison which was chiefly composed of troops from Cadiz. He acted also contrary to the opinion of Lord Wellington, who, always averse to any serious co-operation with the Spaniards, as well knowing the latter would inevitably fail, and throw the burthen on the British in the hour of need, was in this instance more strongly influenced, because the reports of General Cooke, founded on Colonel Skerrett's and Lord Proby's representations, reprobated the defence of Tarifa. Thus misinformed of the real resources, and having no local knowledge of the place, Lord Wellington judged that the island only could be held—that Skerrett's detachment was not wanting for that purpose—and that without the island the enemy could not keep possession of Tarifa. Were they even to take both, he thought they could not retain them, while Ballesteros was in strength and succored from Gibraltar, unless they also kept a strong force in those parts; finally, that the defence of the island was the least costly and the most certain. However, with that prudence, which always marked his proceedings, although he gave his opinion, he would not interfere from a distance, in a matter which could only be accurately judged of on the spot.\*

But the island had not a single house, and was defenceless; the rain alone, without reckoning the effects of the enemy's shells, would have gone near to force the troops away; and as the shipping could not always remain in the roadstead, the building of case mates and barracks, and storehouses for provisions and ammunition, would have been more expensive than the defence of the town. Tarifa was therefore an out-work to the island, and one so capable of a good defence that a much more powerful attack had been expected, and a more powerful resistance prepared by the English engineer; a defence not resting on the valor of the troops alone, but upon a skilful calculation of all the real resources, and all the chances.

That the value of the object was worth the risk may be gathered from this, that Soult, three months after the siege, thus expressed himself: "The taking of Tarifa will be more hurtful to the English

\* Appendix 10, § 5.

and to the defenders of Cadiz, than the taking of Alicant or even Badajos, where I cannot go without first securing my left and taking Tarifa.\* And, besides the advantages already noticed as belonging to the possession of this place, it was close to Ceuta, where there were a few British soldiers, but many French prisoners, and above two thousand discontented Spanish troops and galley-slaves; Ceuta, which was so neglected by the Spanish Regency, that a French general, a prisoner, did not hesitate to propose to the governor to give it up to Soult as his only means of avoiding starvation.† Neither would Soult have failed to strengthen himself at Tarifa in despite of Ballesteros, were it only to command the supplies of the Campiña, and those from Barbary which could but be brought to that port or to Conil;‡ the latter was however seldom frequented by the Moors, because the run was long and precarious, whereas a favorable current always brought their craft well to Tarifa. Swarms of the French gun-boats would therefore soon have given Soult the command of the coasting trade, if not of the entire straits.

Tarifa then was worth the efforts made for its defence; and setting aside the courage and devotion of the troops, without which nothing could have been effected, the merit chiefly appertains to Sir Charles Smith, the captain of engineers. That officer's vigor and capacity overmatched the enemy's strength without, and the weakness and cajolment of those who did not wish to defend it within. Skerrett could not measure a talent above his own mark, and though he yielded to Smith's energy, he did so with avowed reluctance, and dashed it with some wild actions, for which it is difficult to assign a motive; because he was not a dull man, and he was a brave man, as his death at Bergem-op-Zoon proved. But his military capacity was naught, and his mind did not easily catch another's enthusiasm. Tarifa was the commentary upon Tarragona.

During the siege, the engineer's works in front were constantly impeded by Colonel Skerrett; he would call off the laborers to prepare posts of retreat, and Smith's desire to open the north gate, (which had been built up,) that the troops might have egress in case of escalade, was opposed by him, although there was no other point for the garrison to sally, save by the sea-gate which was near the castle. On the 29th of December a shell, fired from the eighteen-pounder in the tower of the Gusmans, having burst too soon, killed or wounded one of the inhabitants, and a deputation of the citizens came to complain of the accident; Colonel Skerrett, although the breach was then open, immediately ordered that gun, and a thirty-two-pound carronade, which at four hundred yards

\* Intercepted despatches, 17th April, 1812.

† General Campbell's papers, MS.

‡ Appendix 10.



looked into the French batteries, to be dismantled and spiked! and it was done! To crown this absurd conduct, he assigned the charge of the breach entirely to the Spanish troops, and if Smith had not insisted upon posting the forty-seventh British regiment alongside of them, this alone would have ruined the defence; because hunger, nakedness, and neglect had broken the spirit of these poor men, and during the combat General Copons alone displayed the qualities of a gallant soldier.\*

To the British engineer, therefore, the praise of this splendid action is chiefly due; because he saw from the first all the resources of the place, and with equal firmness and talent developed them, notwithstanding the opposition of his superiors; because at the same time he, by skilful impositions, induced the enemy (whose attack should have embraced the suburbs and the north-west salient angle of the place) to open his trenches on the east, where the besieged, under the appearance of weakness, had concentrated all their strength; finally, because he repressed despondency where he failed to infuse confidence. The second in merit was Captain Mitchell, of the artillery; because, in the management of that arm for the defence of the town, his talent and enterprise were conspicuous, especially during the assault; nor can the result of this last event be taken as the just measure of either officer's merits, seeing that a prolonged siege and a more skilful and powerful attack was expected. In the enemy's camp was found the French engineer's sketch for a renewed operation, by a cautious and extensive system of mines and breaches; but nothing was there laid down that had not been already anticipated and provided against by his British opponents. If then the defence of Tarifa was a great and splendid exploit, and none can doubt that it was, those who conceived, planned, and executed it should have all the glory. Amongst those persons Colonel Skerrett has no right to be placed; yet, such are the errors of power, that he was highly applauded for what he did not do, and General Campbell was severely rebuked by Lord Liverpool for having risked his Majesty's troops!

The French displayed courage, but no skill. For two days their heavy howitzers had been directed vaguely against the interior of the town, and the distant island, whither the unfortunate people fled from their shattered and burning houses. A portion of the shells thus thrown away in cruelty would have levelled the north-east tower with the ground, and the French were aware of its importance; but throughout the siege their operations were mastered by the superior ability of the engineer and artillery officers opposed to them.

In the expectation that a more powerful attack would be made

\* Appendix 10, § 3.

in the spring, General Campbell directed casemates and splinter proofs to be made in the island; but Skerrett's troops were recalled to Cadiz, which now contained nearly eight thousand British, exclusive of fifteen hundred of these destined for Carthagená and Alicante. This arrangement was, however, soon changed, because the events of the war put Carthagená out of the French line of operations, and the pestilence there caused the removal of the British troops. Neither was Tarifa again attacked; Lord Wellington had predicted that it would not, and on sure grounds; for he was then contemplating a series of operations which were calculated to change the state of the war, and which shall be set forth in the next book.

# BOOK XVI.



## CHAPTER I.

Political situation of King Joseph—Political state of Spain—Political state of Portugal—Military operations—Julian Sanchez captures the governor of Ciudad Rodrigo—General Thiebault introduces a convoy and a new governor into that fortress—Difficulty of military operations on the Agueda—The allied army, being pressed for provisions, takes wide cantonments, and preparations are secretly made for the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo.

UP to this period, the invasion, although diversified by occasional disasters on the part of the invaders, had been progressive. The tide, sometimes flowing, sometimes ebbing, had still gained upon the land; and wherever the Spaniards had arrested its progress, it was England that urged their labor and renovated their tired strength; no firm barrier, no solid dike, had been opposed to its ravages, save by the British General in Portugal; and even there, the foundation of his work, sapped by the trickling waters of folly and intrigue, was sliding away. By what a surprising effort of courage and judgment he secured it, shall now be shown; and as the field operations, in this war, were always influenced more by political considerations than by military principles, it will be necessary first to place the General's situation with respect to the former in its true light.

*Political situation of King Joseph.*—France, abounding in riches and power, was absolute mistress of Europe from the Pyrenees to the Vistula; but Napoleon, resolute to perfect his continental system for the exclusion of British goods, now found himself, in the pursuit of that object, hastening rapidly to a new war, and one so vast, that even his force was strained to meet it. The Peninsula already felt relief from this cause. The dread of his arrival ceased to influence the operations of the allied army in Portugal, many able French officers were recalled, and, as it was known that the imperial guards and the Polish troops were to withdraw from Spain, the scale of offensive projects was necessarily contracted. Conscripts and young soldiers, instead of veterans, and in diminished

numbers, were now to be expected; and in the French army there was a general and oppressive sense of the enormous exertion which would be required to bring two such mighty wars to a happy conclusion. On the other hand, the Peninsulars were cheered by seeing so powerful a monarch as the Czar rise in opposition to Napoleon, and the English General found the principal basis of his calculations realized by this diversion. He had never yet been strong enough to meet eighty thousand French troops in battle, even under a common general; but his hopes rose when he saw the great warrior of the age, not only turning himself from the contest, but withdrawing from it a reserve of four hundred thousand veterans, whose might the whole world seemed hardly able to withstand.

The most immediate effect, however, which the approaching contest with Russia produced in the Peninsula, was the necessity of restoring Joseph to his former power over the French armies. While the Emperor was absent from Paris, the supreme control of the operations could only be placed in the hands of the monarch of Spain; yet this was only to reproduce there, and with greater virulence, the former jealousies and disputes. Joseph's Spanish policy remained unchanged; the pride of the French generals was at least equal to his; pretexts for disputes were never wanting on either side, and the mischievous nature of those disputes may be gathered from one example. In November the King, being pressed for money, sold the magazines of corn collected near Toledo for the army of Portugal, and without which the latter could not exist; Marmont, regardless of the political scandal, immediately sent troops to recover the magazines by force, and desired the purchasers to reclaim their money from the monarch.

*Political state of Spain.*—All the intrigues, and corruptions, and conflicting interests before described had increased in violence. The negotiations for the mediation of England with the colonies were not ended; Carlotta still pressed her claims; and the division between the liberals and serviles, as they were called, became daily wider. Cadiz was in 1811 the very focus of all disorder. The government was alike weak and dishonest, and used many pitiful arts to extract money from England. No subterfuge was too mean. When Blake was going with the fourth army to Estremadura, previous to the battle of Albuera, the minister Bardaxi entreated the British envoy to grant a loan or a gift, without which, he asserted, Blake could not move. Mr. Wellesley refused, because a large debt was already due to the legation; and the next morning a Spanish ship of war from America landed a million and a half of dollars!

In July, notwithstanding the victory of Albuera, the Regency was

held in universal contempt; both it and the Cortes were without influence, and their conduct merited it. For although vast sums were continually received, and every service was furnished, the treasury was declared empty, and there was no probability of any further remittances from America. The temper of the public was soured towards England, the press openly assailed the British character, and all things so evidently tended towards anarchy, that Mr. Wellesley declared "Spanish affairs to be then worse than they had been at any previous period of the war."

The Cortes, at first swayed by priests and lawyers who cherished the Inquisition, and were opposed to all free institutions, was now chiefly led by a liberal, or rather democratic party, averse to the British influence; hence, in August a new constitution, quite opposed to the aristocratic principle, was promulgated. With the excellences and defects of that instrument the present history has indeed little concern; but the results were not in accord with the spirit of the contrivance, and the evils affecting the war were rather increased by it; the democratic basis of the new constitution excited many and bitter enemies, and the time and attention which should have been bestowed upon the amelioration of the soldiers' condition, was occupied in factious disputes and corrupt intrigues.

That many sound abstract principles of government were clearly and vigorously laid down in the scheme of this constitution, cannot be denied; the complicated oppressions of the feudal system were swept away with a bold and just hand; but of what avail, as regarded the war, was the enunciation of principles which were never attempted to be reduced to practice? What encouragement was it to the soldier, to be told he was a free man, fighting for a constitution as well as for national independence, when he saw the authors of that constitution corruptly revelling in the wealth which should have clothed, and armed, and fed him? What was nominal equality to him, when he saw incapacity rewarded, crimes and treachery unpunished in the rich, the poor and patriotic oppressed? He laughed to scorn those who could find time to form the constitution of a great empire, but could not find time or honesty to feed, or clothe, or arm the men who were to defend it!\*

The enemies of democracy soon spread many grievous reports of misfortunes and treachery, some true, some false; and, at the most critical period of the war in Valencia, they endeavored to raise a popular commotion to sweep away the Cortes. The monks and friars, furious at the suppression of the Inquisition, were the chief plotters everywhere; and the proceedings of Palacios, in concert with them, were only part of a church project, commenced all over Spain to resist the Cortes. In October, Lardizabal, the

\* Appendix 4.

other deposed regent, published at Alicant a manifesto, in which he accused the Cortes and the Cadiz writers of jacobinism, maintained the doctrine of passive obedience, and asserted that the regents only took the oath to the Cortes, because they could not count on the army or the people at Cadiz; otherwise they would cause the King's authority to be respected in their persons, as his only legitimate representatives. This manifesto was declared treasonable, and a vessel was despatched to bring the offender to Cadiz; but the following day it was discovered that the old Council of Castile had also drawn up a manifesto similar in principle; and the persons sent by the Cortes to seize the paper were told that it was destroyed. The protest of three members against it was however found, and five lawyers were selected from the Cortes to try the guilty councillors and Lardizabal.

In November the public cry for a new regency became general, and it was backed by the English plenipotentiary. Nevertheless the matter was deferred upon divers pretexts, and meanwhile the democratic party gained strength in the Cortes, and the anti-British feeling appeared more widely diffused than it really was; because some time elapsed before the church and aristocratic party discovered that the secret policy of England was the same as their own. It was so, however, even to the upholding of the Inquisition, which it was ridiculously asserted had become objectionable only in name; as if, while the framework of tyranny existed, there could ever be wanting the will to fill it up. Necessity alone induced the British Cabinet to put on a smooth countenance towards the Cortes. In this state of affairs, the negotiation for the colonial mediation was used by the Spaniards merely as a ground for demanding loans, subsidies, and succors in kind, which they used in fitting out new expeditions against the revolted colonists; the complaints of the British legation on this point were quite disregarded. At this time also Lapeña was acquitted of misconduct at Barosa, and would have been immediately re-employed, if the English minister had not threatened to quit Cadiz, and advised General Cooke to do the same.

Mr. Wellesley, seeing the most fatal consequences to the war must ensue, if a stop was not put to the misconduct of the Regency, had sent Mr. Vaughan, the secretary of legation, to acquaint the British Cabinet with the facts, and to solicit a more firm and decided course of policy. Above all things he desired to have the subsidies settled by treaty, that the people of Spain might really know what England had done and was still doing for them; for on every occasion, arms, clothing, ammunition, loans, provisions, guns, stores, and even workmen and funds, to form foundries, were demanded

and obtained by the Spanish government, and then wasted or embezzled, without the people benefiting, or even knowing of the generosity, or rather extravagance, with which they were supplied, while the receivers and wasters were heaping calumnies on the donors.

The regency question was at last seriously discussed in the Cortes, and the deputy Capmany, who, if we may believe the partisans of Joseph, was anti-English in his heart, argued the necessity of this change on the ground of pleasing the British.\* This excited great discontent, as he probably intended, and many deputies declared at first that they would not be dictated to by any foreign power; but the departure of Mr. Vaughan alarmed them, and a commission, formed to improve the mode of governing, was hastening the decision of the question, when Blake's disaster at Valencia completed the work. Carlotta's agent was active in her behalf, but the eloquent and honest Arguelles was opposed to him; and the Cortes, although they recognized her claim to the succession, denied her the regency, because of a previous decree, which excluded all royal personages from that office.

On the 21st of January, 1812, after a secret discussion of twenty-four hours, a new regency, to consist of five members, of which two were Americans, was proclaimed. The men chosen were the Duke of Infantado, then in England, Henry O'Donnell, Admiral Villarvicencio, Joachim de Mosquera, and Ignacios de Ribas; and each was to have the presidency by rotation for six months.

They commenced beneficially. O'Donnell was friendly to the British alliance, and proposed a military feast, to restore harmony between the English and Spanish officers; he made many changes in the department of war and finances; consulted the British generals, and disbanding several bad regiments, incorporated the men with other battalions; he also reduced many inefficient and malignant colonels, and striking off from the pay lists all unemployed and absent officers, it was found that they were five thousand in number! Ballesteros was appointed Captain-General of Andalusia, and received the command of the fourth army, whose headquarters were prudently removed to Algeziras; the troops were there increased, by drafts from Cadiz, to ten or twelve thousand men, and a new army was set on foot in Murcia. Finally, to check trading with the French, a general blockade of all the coast in their possession, from Rosas to St. Sebastian, was declared.

But it was soon discovered that the secret object was to obtain a loan from England, and as this did not succeed, and nothing good was ever permanent in Spanish affairs, the old disputes again

\* Joseph's papers, captured at Vittoria.

broke out. The democratic spirit gained strength in the Cortes; the anti-English party augmented; the press abounded in libels impugning the good faith of the British nation, especially with respect to Ceuta; for which, however, there was some plausible ground of suspicion, because the acquisition of that fortress had actually been proposed to Lord Liverpool. The new Regency, also as violent as their predecessors with respect to America, disregarded the mediation, and having secretly organized in Galicia an expedition against the colonies, supplied it with artillery furnished from England for the French war, and then, under another pretence, demanded money of the British minister to forward this iniquitous folly.

*Political state of Portugal.*—In October all the evils before described still existed, and were aggravated. The old disputes remained unsettled, the return of the royal family was put off, and the reforms in the military system, which Beresford had repaired to Lisbon to effect, were either thwarted or retarded by the Regency. Mr. Stuart indeed forced the government to repair the bridges and roads in Beira, to throw some provisions into the fortresses; and in despite of Redondo, the Minister of Finance, who for the first time now opposed the British influence, he made the Regency substitute a military chest and commissariat, instead of the "Junta de Viveres." But Forjas and Redondo then disputed for the custody of the new chest; and when Mr. Stuart explained to the one that, as the intent was to separate the money of the army from that of the civil departments, his claims were incompatible with such an object; and to the other that the conduct of his own department was already more than he could manage, both were offended; and this new source of disorder was only partially closed by withholding the subsidy until they yielded.

Great malversations in the revenue were also discovered; and a plan to enforce an impartial exaction of the "decima," which was drawn up by Nogueira, at the desire of Wellington, was so ill received by those whose illegal exemptions it attacked, that the Souzas immediately placed themselves at the head of the objectors out of doors. Nogueira then modified it, but the Souzas still opposed, and as Wellington, judging the modification to be an evasion of the principle, would not recede from the first plan, a permanent dispute and a permanent evil were thus established by that pernicious faction. In fine, not the Souzas only, but the whole Regency in their folly now imagined that the war was virtually decided in their favor, and were intent upon driving the British away by disgusting the General.

A new quarrel also arose in the Brazils. Lord Wellington had



been created Conde de Vimiero, Beresford Conde de Trancoso, Silveira Conde d'Amurante; and other minor rewards, of a like nature, had been conferred on subordinate officers. These honors had however been delayed in a marked manner, and Lord Strangford, who appears to have been ruled entirely by the Souza faction, and was therefore opposed to Forjas, charged, or as he termed it, reported a charge, made against the latter, at the Brazils, for having culpably delayed the official return of the officers who were thus to be rewarded. Against this accusation, which had no foundation in fact, seeing that the report had been made, and that Forjas was not the person to whose department it belonged, Lord Wellington and Mr. Stuart protested, because of the injustice; and because it was made in pursuance of a design to remove Forjas from the government. The English General was however thus placed in a strange position, for while his letters to Forjas were menacing rebukes to him, and his coadjutors, for their neglect of public affairs, and while his formal complaints of the conduct of the Regency were transmitted to the Brazils, he was also obliged to send other letters in support of the very persons whom he was justly rebuking for misconduct.

In the midst of these embarrassments, an accidental event was like to have brought the question of the British remaining in Portugal to a very sudden decision. While Massena was before the lines, one d'Amblemont had appeared in North America, and given to Onis, the Spanish minister a plan for burning the British fleet in the Tagus, which he pretended to have received orders from the French government to execute. This plan being transmitted to the Brazils, many persons named by d'Amblemont as implicated were, in consequence, arrested at Lisbon and sent to Rio Janeiro, although Mr. Stuart had ascertained the whole affair to be a forgery. The attention paid to this man by Onis and by the court of Rio Janeiro, induced him to make further trial of their credulity, and he then brought forward a correspondence between the principal authorities of Mexico and the French government; he even produced letters from the French ministers, directing intrigues to be commenced at Lisbon, and the French interest there to be placed in the hands of the Portuguese Intendant of Police.

Mr. Stuart, lamenting the ruin of many innocent persons whom this forging villain was thus dooming, prayed Lord Wellesley to interfere; but meanwhile the court of Rio Janeiro, falling headlong into the snare, sent orders to arrest more victims; and, amongst others, without assigning any cause, and without any communication with the English General, the Regency seized one Borel, a clerk in the department of the British Paymaster-General. This act, being at

once contrary to treaty, hostile to the alliance, and insulting in manner, raised Lord Wellington's indignation to such a pitch, that he formally notified to the Portuguese government his resolution, unless good reasons were assigned and satisfaction made for the outrage, to order all persons attached to the British to place themselves in security under the protection of the army, as if in a hostile country, until the further pleasure of the British Prince Regent should be made known.

The political storm which had been so long gathering then seemed ready to break; but suddenly the horizon cleared. Lord Wellington's letter to the Prince, backed up by Lord Wellesley's vigorous diplomacy, had at last alarmed the court of Rio Janeiro, and in the very crisis of Borel's case came letters, in which the Prince Regent admitted and approved of all the ameliorations and changes proposed by the English General; and the contradiction given by Mr. Stuart to the calumnies of the Souza faction, was taken as the ground for a complete and formal retraction by Linhares of his former insinuations, and insulting note relative to that gentleman's conduct. Principal Souza was however not dismissed, nor was Forjas' resignation noticed; but the Prince declared that he would overlook that minister's disobedience, and retain him in office; thus proving that fear, not conviction or justice, for Forjas had not been disobedient, was the true cause of this seeming return to friendly relations with the British.

Mr. Stuart, considering the submission of the Prince to be a mere nominal concession of power which was yet to be ripened into real authority, looked for further difficulties, and he was not mistaken; meanwhile he made it a point of honor to defend Forjas and Nogueira from the secret vengeance of the opposite faction. The present submission of the court, however, gave the British an imposing influence, which rendered the Souzas' opposition nugatory for the moment. Borel was released, and excuses were made for his arrest; the formation of a military chest was pushed with vigor; the paper money was raised in value; the revenue was somewhat increased, and Beresford was enabled to make progress in the restoration of the army. The Prince had however directed the Regency to revive his claim to Olivenza immediately; and it was with difficulty that Lord Wellington could stifle this absurd proceeding; neither did the forced harmony last, for the old abuses affecting the civil administration of the army rather increased, as will be shown in the narration of military operations which are now to be treated of.

It will be remembered that, after the action of El Bodon, the allied army was extensively cantoned on both sides of the Coa

Ciudad Rodrigo was distantly observed by the British, and so closely by Julian Sanchez, that on the 15th he carried off more than two hundred oxen from under the guns of the place, and at the same time captured General Renaud, the governor, who had imprudently ventured out with a weak escort. At this time Marmont had one division in Placentia, and the rest of his infantry between that place and Madrid; but his cavalry was at Peneranda, on the Salamanca side of the mountains, and his line of communication was organized on the old Roman road of the Puerto de Pico, which had been repaired after the battle of Talavera. The army of the north stretched from the Tormes to Astorga, the walls of which place, as well as those of Zamora, and other towns in Leon, were being restored, that the flat country might be held with a few troops against the Gallician army. It was this scattering of the enemy which had enabled Lord Wellington to send Hill against Girard at Aroyo de Molino; but when the reinforcements from France reached the army of Portugal, the army of the north was again concentrated, and would have invaded Galicia while Bonnet attacked the Asturias, if Julian Sanchez's exploit had not rendered it necessary first to revictual Ciudad Rodrigo.

With this view a large convoy was collected at Salamanca in October, by General Thiebault, who spread a report that a force was to assemble towards Tamames, and that the convoy was for its support. This report did not deceive Lord Wellington; but he believed that the whole army of the north and one division of the army of Portugal would be employed in the operation, and therefore made arrangements to pass the Agueda and attack them on the march. The heavy rains, however, rendered the fords of that river impracticable; Thiebault seized the occasion, introduced the convoy, and, leaving a new governor, returned on the 2d of November, before the waters had subsided. One brigade of the light division was at this time on the Vadillo, but it was too weak to meddle with the French, and it was impossible to reinforce it while the Agueda was overflowed; for such is the nature of that river, that all military operations on its banks are uncertain. It is very difficult for an army to pass it at any time in winter, because of the narrow roads, the depth of the fords, and the ruggedness of the banks: it will suddenly rise from rains falling on the hills, without any previous indication in the plains, and then the violence and depth of its stream will sweep away any temporary bridge, and render it impossible to pass, except by the stone bridge of Ciudad Rodrigo, which was at this time in the enemy's possession.

Early in November, Bonnet having reoccupied the Asturias, Dorsenne marched a body of troops towards the hills above Ciudad, as

if to conduct another convoy ; but the allied troops, being immediately concentrated, passed the Agueda at the ford of Zamara ; whereupon the French retired, and their rear was harassed by Carlos d'España and Julian Sanchez, who captured some provisions and money contributions they had raised. But now the provisions in the country between the Coa and the Agueda were all consumed, and the continued negligence of the Portuguese government, with respect to the means of transport, rendered it impossible to bring up the field magazines from the points of water-carriage to the army. Lord Wellington was therefore, contrary to all military rules, obliged to separate his divisions in face of the enemy, and to spread the troops, especially the cavalry, even to the Mondego and the valley of the Douro, or see them starved.

To cover this dangerous proceeding he kept a considerable body of men beyond the Coa, and the state of all the rivers and roads at that season, together with the distance of the enemy, in some measure protected him ; General Hill's second expedition into Estremadura was then also drawing the attention of the French towards that quarter ; finally, Marmont, being about to detach Montbrun towards Valencia, had withdrawn Foy's division from Placentia, and concentrated the greatest part of his army at Toledo ; all which rendered the scattering of the allies less dangerous, and in fact no evil consequences ensued. This war of positions had therefore turned entirely to the advantage of the allies. Lord Wellington, by taking post near Ciudad Rodrigo while Hill moved round Badajos, had in a manner paralyzed three powerful armies. For Soult, harassed by Hill in Estremadura, and by Ballesteros and Skerrett in Andalusia, failed in both quarters ; and although Marmont, in conjunction with Dorsenne, had succored Ciudad Rodrigo, the latter General's invasion of Galicia had been stopped short, and his enterprises confined to the reoccupation of the Asturias.

Meanwhile the works of Almeida were so far restored as to secure it from a sudden attack, and in November, when the army by crossing the Agueda had occupied the attention of the French, the battering train and siege stores were brought to that fortress, without exciting the enemy's attention, because they appeared to be only the armament for the new works ; a trestle bridge to throw over the Agueda was also secretly prepared in the arsenal of Almeida by Major Sturgeon of the staff corps, an officer whose brilliant talents, scientific resources, and unmitigated activity continually attracted the attention of the whole army. Thus the preparation for the attack of Ciudad advanced while the English General seemed to be only intent upon defending his own position.

## CHAPTER II.

Review of the different changes of the war—Enormous efforts of Napoleon—Lord Wellington's situation described—His great plans explained—His firmness and resolution under difficulties—Distressed state of his army—The prudence and ability of Lord Fitzroy Somerset—Dissemination of the French army—Lord Wellington seizes the opportunity to besiege Ciudad Rodrigo.

HAVING now brought the story of the war to that period when, after many changes of fortune, the chances had become more equal, and the fate of the Peninsula, thrown as it were between the contending powers, became a prize for the readiest and boldest warrior, I would, ere it is shown how Wellington seized it, recall to the reader's recollection the previous vicissitudes of the contest. I would have him remember how, when the first or insurrectional epoch of the war had terminated successfully for the Spaniards, Napoleon vehemently broke and dispersed their armies, and drove the British auxiliaries to embark at Coruña. How the war with Austria, and the inactivity of Joseph, rendered the Emperor's victories unavailing, and revived the confidence of the Spaniards. How Sir Arthur Wellesley, victorious on the Douro, then marched into Spain, and although the concentrated forces of the enemy, and the ill conduct of the Spanish government, forced him to retreat again to Portugal as Sir John Moore, from the same causes, had been obliged to retreat to the ocean, he had by his advance relieved Galicia, as Moore had by a like operation before saved Andalusia, which concluded the third epoch.

How the Peninsulars, owing to the exertions of their allies, still possessed a country extending from the Asturias, through Galicia, Portugal, Andalusia, Murcia, Valencia, and Catalonia, and including every important harbor and fortress except Santander, Santona, Barcelona, and St. Sebastian. How Wellington, appreciating the advantages which an invaded people possess in their numerous lines of operation, then counselled the Spaniards and forced the Portuguese to adopt a defensive war; and with the more reason that England, abounding beyond all nations in military resources, and invincible as a naval power, could form with her ships a secure exterior floating base or line of dépôts round the Peninsula, and was ready to employ her armies as well as her squadrons in the struggle. How the Spaniards, unheeding these admonitions, sought great battles, and in a few months lost the Asturias, Andalusia,

Estremadura, Aragon, and the best fortresses of Catalonia, and were again laid prostrate and helpless before the enemy.

How the victorious French armies then moved onwards in swelling pride, until, dashed against the rocks of Lisbon, they receded, broken and refluent, and the English General once more stood a conqueror on the frontier of Spain; and had he then retaken Badajos and Rodrigo he would have gloriously finished the fourth or defensive epoch of the war. But being baffled partly by skill, partly by fortune, factiously opposed by the Portuguese Regency, thwarted by the Spanish government, only half supported by his own Cabinet, and pestered by the follies of all three, he was reduced to a seeming inactivity; and meanwhile the French added Tarragona and the rich kingdom of Valencia to their conquests.

These things I would have the reader reflect upon, because they are the proofs of what it is the main object of this history to inculcate, namely, that English steel, English gold, English genius, English influence fought and won the battle of Spanish independence; and this not as a matter of boast, although it was very glorious! but as a useful lesson of experience. On the other hand also we must wonder at the prodigious strength of France under Napoleon, that strength which could at once fight England and Austria, aim at the conquest of the Peninsula and the reduction of Russia at the same moment of time, and all with good hope of success.

Let it not be said that the Emperor's efforts in the war of Spain were feeble, for if the insurrectional epoch, which was unexpected and accidental, be set aside, the grandeur of his efforts will be found answerable to his gigantic reputation. In 1809 the French army was indeed gradually decreased by losses and drafts for the Austrian war, from three hundred and thirty-five thousand, which Napoleon had led into the country, to two hundred and twenty-six thousand. But in 1810 it was again raised to three hundred and sixty-nine thousand, and fluctuated between that number and three hundred and thirty thousand until August, 1811, when it was again raised to three hundred and seventy-two thousand men with fifty-two thousand horses.\* And yet there are writers who assert that Napoleon neglected the war in Spain! But so great is the natural strength of that country, that had the firmness of the nation in battle and its wisdom in council been commensurate with its constancy in resistance, even this power, backed by the four hundred thousand men who marched to Russia, would scarcely have been sufficient to subdue it; whereas, weak in fight and steeped in folly, the Spaniards must have been trampled in the dust, but for the man whose great combinations I am now about to relate.

The nicety, the quickness, the prudence, and the audacity of

\* Appendix 13, § 8.

Wellington's operations, cannot however be justly estimated without an exact knowledge of his political, local, and moral position. His political difficulties have been already described, and his moral situation was simply that of a man who felt that all depended upon himself; that he must by some rapid and unexpected stroke effect in the field what his brother could not effect in the cabinet, while the power of the Perceval faction was prevalent in England. But to understand his local or military position, the conformation of the country and the lines of communication must be carefully considered.

The principal French magazines were at Valladolid, and their advanced troops were on the Tormes, from whence to the Agueda, where they held the important point of Ciudad Rodrigo, was four long marches through a wild forest country.

The allies' line of communication from the Agueda to Lisbon was supplied by water to Raiva on the Mondego, after which the land carriage was at least a hundred miles, through wild mountains, or devastated valleys; it required fifteen days to bring up a convoy from Lisbon to the army.

The line of communication with Oporto, on the left flank, run through eighty miles of very rugged country, before it reached the first point of water carriage on the Douro.

The line of communication with Hill's army, on the right flank, running also through a country full of strong passes and natural obstacles, offered no resources for an army, save what were furnished by the allies' field magazines, which were supplied from Abrantes, the first navigable point on the Tagus. On this line the boat-bridge of Villa Velha was a remarkable feature, as furnishing the only military passage over the Tagus between Abrantes and Almaraz.

The country between the Coa and the Agueda could not supply the troops who occupied it; and the nature of the last river, and the want of a covering position beyond, rendered it a matter of the utmost danger and difficulty to besiege or even invest Ciudad Rodrigo. The disadvantage which the French suffered in being so distant from that fortress was thus balanced.

These considerations had prevented the English General from attacking Ciudad Rodrigo in May; he had then no battering train, and Almeida and her guns were rendered a heap of ruins by the exploit of Brenier. Badajos was at that period his object, because Beresford was actually besieging it, and the recent battle of Fuentes Onoro, the disputes of the French generals, the disorganization of Massena's army, and, as proved by that battle, the inefficiency of the army of the north, rendered it improbable that a

serious invasion of Portugal would be resumed on that side. And as the lines of communication with the Mondego and the Douro were not then completely re-established, and the intermediate magazines small, no incursion of the enemy could have done much mischief; and Spencer's corps was sufficiently strong to cover the line to Villa Velha.

Affairs, however, soon changed. The skill of Phillipon, the diligence of Marmont, and the generalship of Soult, in remaining at Llerena after his repulse at Albuera, had rescued Badajos. Lord Wellington's boldness in remaining on the Caya prevented further mischief, but the conduct of the Portuguese government, combined with the position which Napoleon had caused Marmont to take in the valley of the Tagus, effectually precluded a renewal of that siege; and then the fallacious hope of finding Ciudad unprovided, brought Lord Wellington back to the Coa. This baffled the enemy's projects, yet the position of the army of the north, and that of Portugal, the one in front, the other on the flank, prevented the English General from undertaking any important operations in the field. For if he had advanced on Salamanca, besides the natural difficulties of the country, his communication with Hill, and even with Abrantes and Lisbon, would have been cut by Marmont; and if he turned against Marmont on the Tagus, Soult and Dorsenne would have closed upon his flanks.

This state of affairs not being well considered, had induced some able officers, at the time of the Elbodon operation, to censure the line of retreat to Sabugal, because it uncovered the line of Celerico, and exposed to capture the battering train then at Villa Ponte; but war is always a choice of difficulties, and it was better to risk guns, of whose vicinity the enemy was not aware, than to give up the communication with Hill, which was threatened by the advance of Foy's two divisions on Zarza Maior.

As the French armies were reinforced after the allies came to Beira, Dorsenne and Marmont became each equal to Wellington in the field, and, together, infinitely too strong. Soult was then master of Andalusia, and had a movable reserve of twenty thousand men; the army of Suchet daily gained ground in Valencia, the Asturias were re-occupied by Bonnet, and the army of the centre was reorganized. Hence, to commence the siege of either Ciudad or Badajos, in form, was hopeless, and when the rumor of Napoleon's arrival became rife, the English General, whose embarrassments were hourly increasing, looked more to the lines of Torres Vedras as a refuge. But when the certainty of the Russian war removed this fear, the aspect of affairs again changed, and the capture of Ciudad Rodrigo became possible. For, first, there was