

running parallel to the Madrid road, enclose, on one side, the vale of Plasencia. The extreme left took post upon a bold height in the direction of Alataza de Segusella, protected in front by a ravine, and flanked by a deep valley, on the opposite side of which the mountains rose again in increased altitude, and swept away in one uniform line. The Spanish troops, on the other hand, were arranged among some olive groves, and along a road, the embankment of which supplied them with an excellent parapet, and rested their left upon a little hill distant about two miles from Talavera. A portion of their cavalry was stationed here, so as to support their left; and Zara's van kept possession of the rising ground.

Upon that height our right likewise leaned. A strong redoubt had been begun, for the purpose of increasing its defensibility; but it was not yet sufficiently advanced to add much to the security of the troops who happened to be in position there. These consisted of the fourth division under General Campbell, next to whom came the guards; which, again, were succeeded in the alignment by General Cameron's brigade and the Germans, as these were by General Mackenzie's and General Hill's. The last-named division held the extreme left of all. Posted on a sharp rising but commanding eminence, two brigades of British cavalry, one heavy and one light, were in the valley

on the left of this height: one brigade, under General Cotton, took post on the right, in rear of Campbell's division; and the Duke of Albuquerque, with a cloud of Spanish horse, supported our cavalry on the left. Such was the general arrangement for the occupation of the defensive position, which the allied armies were commanded to take up; and at an early hour on the morning of the 27th, they began to move into it.

The greater part of the movements had been made without annoyance, and all appeared to be going on as we could have wished, when about noon General Mackenzie's division was suddenly attacked at the convent and wood on the right bank of the Alberche, by two strong columns of the enemy. They came on so suddenly, and with such impetuosity, as to throw the 87th and 88th regiments into some confusion; and when Sir Arthur Wellesley reached the ground, they had succeeded, to a certain extent, in penetrating between the two brigades of which Mackenzie's division was composed. The consequence was, that, for some little time, we were unable to discover the position which one of these brigades had taken up, and it required great exertion, on the part of every officer present, to restore order. At last, however, the 31st and 45th, supported by the 60th regiment, were got in hand, and they covered the falling back of the other regiments in

fine style, from the wood into the plain. Here the cavalry were in readiness to support them; and from that moment a regular and well-conducted retreat began, which was continued, leisurely and orderly along the heights, towards the left of the position which the army had been directed to seize.

The enemy, nothing daunted by the steadiness of our people, continued to press on; and a partial action ensued along the whole front of the line. Towards evening it became more serious. The enemy appearing then to observe the great importance of the height upon which the left of our army rested, made a desperate effort to possess himself of it. He formed his infantry into close columns of battalions, and, covered by a tremendous cannonade, advanced at double quick pace to the assault. General Mackenzie's division having been withdrawn somewhat to the rear, and forming at this moment in the second line, the attack was met by part only of General Hill's division; but they proved themselves quite adequate to the task. The 48th, the 1st battalion of detachments, and the 29th pouring in a volley, rushed forward with the bayonet; and three companies of the latter gallant corps drove the enemy from the very ridge to which they had attained. It was a splendid charge; and it was one, upon the issues of which much might have

hung; for had the height in question been carried, the strength of our position became at once exposed. It was not, however, made without a heavy loss to the brave troops engaged; for the enemy fought nobly; and we had to lament, when darkness put an end to the contest, about eight hundred in killed and wounded, among whom were several very valuable officers.

We lay all night upon our arms in momentary expectation of an attack, the cavalry resting beside their horses, and the infantry on the ground which they had occupied during the day; but no attack was made. No great while elapsed, however, after the dawn appeared, ere the enemy once more put themselves in motion. The height upon our left was still the grand object of their desire; and that they prepared to storm with all the force which they found it practicable to bring against it.

At five o'clock on the morning of the 28th, two strong columns of chosen troops, the grenadiers of Lapisse's division, were formed in front of the height in question. The formation was marked by a furious cannonade, under cover of which the columns pressed forward; and desperate and numerous were the efforts which they made to render themselves masters of the summit. But nothing could exceed the gallantry and steadiness of the brave men who opposed them. The brigades of General Tilson and R. Stewart were here; they

permitted the enemy, again and again, to arrive within a few paces of the ridge, and they drove them back in admirable style with the bayonet, till, disheartened by so many repulses, they at last retreated altogether, leaving the ground covered with their dead. Had our cavalry been at this moment sufficiently forward in the plain and valley, they might have produced a terrible impression upon these fugitives; for the enemy retired in great confusion; and opportunities of making charges occurred, such as could not have been by any possibility overlooked; but, unfortunately, they were too far in the rear. The broken masses were thus enabled to reform themselves, and to withdraw, in something like order, within their lines.

The fighting had been maintained, without any intermission, from five in the morning till half-past eight, and the slaughter on both sides was terrible; but the enemy's loss in killed and wounded exceeded ours greatly; and, which was not less in our favour, his troops appeared dispirited and dismayed. They made no further movement during the next three hours, and the sound of firing ceased to be heard throughout the field. At this juncture it was a question with us whether we should advance, and in our turn become the assailants, or remain quietly where we were, and await the result of the enemy's deliberations. It was a fortu-

nate circumstance that Sir Arthur Wellesley determined on following the latter of these courses, for about half-past eleven several heavy clouds of dust were discerned, announcing the approach of the French army to a renewed attack upon different points in our line. They had now fully ascertained the exact station which the English army occupied, and rightly judging, that if it were shaken, the Spaniards would fall an easy prey, they made ready to bear down upon us with the whole weight of their force. Four distinct columns, each strongly supported by artillery and cavalry, came on; the first against that part of the line where the British and Spanish troops joined; the second against the guards and Cameron's brigade; the third against the Germans and Mackenzie's division; whilst the fourth, escorted by a mass of cavalry, moved up the valley on the left of General Hill's station. It may be necessary to observe here, that General Hill, having received a severe wound in the early part of the morning, quitted the field; and that the command of the troops which occupied the often-contested height, had devolved, in consequence, upon General Tilson.

The advance of French columns is invariably announced by a general fire of artillery throughout the whole extent of their position; and the ordinary custom was not omitted on the present occasion. A murderous cannonade spread havoc

among our ranks, whilst the attacking parties, covered as usual by clouds of tirailleurs, pressed forward with the greatest firmness and regularity. Our people had received instructions to reserve their fire till the enemy should have arrived within a few yards of them, and giving it with effect, to bring the bayonet immediately into play. They obeyed these orders to the letter. The heads of the enemy's columns were close upon our line before a musket was discharged, and then one volley was given with a degree of precision which must have astonished those against whom it was directed. A conflict now ensued, more desperate, because more completely hand to hand, than possibly the annals of modern warfare ever recorded. General Campbell's division, on the right, not only repelled the attacking column, but rushing on them when broken by its fire, drove them before it in gallant style ; and charging a battery, from which it suffered severely, took, at the point of the bayonet, thirteen pieces of cannon. The enemy, however, were veteran troops, accustomed to be broken, and to recover their ranks again ; and as our soldiers could not venture very far in pursuit, lest by so doing they should expose their comrades, the fugitives were enabled to rally, and to resume the offensive. What might have been the consequence of a renewed assault, it were a hard matter to say. The captured guns, at all

events, would have been probably recovered ; but just as the French were preparing to rush forward, they were taken in flank by a regiment of Spanish cavalry, and again overthrown.

In the mean while, the second and third of the French columns, reckoning from their left, bore their full weight upon our centre, and made a desperate effort to pierce it. They were met and beaten back with the same gallantry which marked the opposition of General Campbell's corps ; but the guards, eager to emulate the example of the 7th and 53rd regiments, pushed on, unfortunately somewhat too far, in pursuit. The enemy were not slow to take advantage of this. Observing a chasm in our line, they threw in a tremendous and most galling fire upon the Germans, who, for an instant, were in confusion. Here the battle was, for some minutes, most obstinate, and victory doubtful ; for the enemy's right column had withstood and repulsed a charge from Anson's light brigade of cavalry ; and had he promptly availed himself of the advantage thereby obtained, a different result might, perhaps, have occurred from that which crowned the operations of this glorious day. But Sir Arthur Wellesley, who was everywhere, saw how matters stood. He ordered up the 48th, which had been in reserve, to support the broken Germans, and to cover the retrograde movement of the guards ; and that regi-

ment, by its steadiness and good conduct, retrieved the disorder in this part of the line. The Germans were speedily brought back to their standards; General Sherbrooke succeeded in reforming the guards; and the French were beaten back, with terrible slaughter, from every point which they had assailed.

At this moment our troops were successful in all parts of the field, and it needed but a forward movement on the part of the Spaniards, to render the victory of Talavera as decisive as any upon record. Had it been possible to bring them up from the right of their line, so as to have gained, by a rapid march upon the Alberche, the enemy's flanks, one-half of the French army must have been sacrificed. But unfortunately this could not be done. The Spaniards, miserably disciplined, and totally unaccustomed to change their formation in the face of an enemy, were quite immovable; there they stood, as they had been originally drawn up; and to attempt any manoeuvre, however simple, would have served only to throw them into confusion, without being productive of any good effect. The consequence was, that the enemy were enabled to commence and to continue their retreat in excellent order, carrying off with them much of their artillery, the whole of their wounded, and the greater part of their materiel. We could not venture to follow far, because even

yet they more than doubled us in numbers; and they escaped in better plight than usually attends an army which has suffered a repulse so decided and so bloody.

The loss of the British army in this action was very severe, and it was occasioned chiefly by the murderous and overwhelming fire of the French artillery. From that, several regiments, which can hardly be said to have been personally engaged at all, suffered nearly as much as others which bore the brunt of the contest. Out of nineteen thousand men, which formed the whole of our effective force when the battle began, upwards of four thousand were either killed or wounded; and among them were many officers, whose services, at a juncture like the present, could ill be spared. Generals Mackenzie, Hill, and R. Campbell, were wounded, and placed hors de combat. Brigade-major Beckett, an excellent officer, attached to the guards, together with Majors For-dyce and Gardiner, were among the killed. With respect to the enemy, it was not easy to form an accurate notion, but their loss must have exceeded ours by at least one third. Many rated it higher; but none below this amount. The Spaniards suffered but little, as few of their corps chanced to be engaged; but it is no more than justice to state, that the little which they had to perform here, they performed well. Some artillery, which they

had upon our left, was excellently served ; and their cavalry regiment, called the King's, charged gallantly. It is likewise but fair to record, that they were in raptures with us and our behaviour ; and that they declared, with all the clamorous eloquence of their country, that those who spoke of the British as less capable of fighting by land than at sea, lied in their throats!!!

We bivouacked that night upon the field of battle, having removed our wounded into Talavera, and established there an extensive hospital ; and, on the following morning, we were joined by General Crawford's brigade from Lisbon, consisting of the 43rd, 52nd, and 95th regiments. Had it arrived only a few hours earlier, more might perhaps have been done ; but it came in at a moment when our successes were not sufficient to reconcile us to our position ; for we were in a state bordering on want. Nothing had been done, and nothing seemed about to be done, by Cuesta or the Spanish government, to afford us supplies : our bread was all expended ; and cattle, which hitherto had been found in abundance, were now become scarce. Add to this, that the enemy still showed troops upon the left of the Alberche ; and that the Spaniards, afraid to approach them unless we were at their side, crowded still upon us, and drained the country of everything. Nor was this all. Whilst it was yet doubtful whether Venegas

had reached Aranjuez, a corps of French troops was reported to have advanced from Alba de Tormes as far as the pass of Banios, on the road to Plasencia, with the design of cutting us off from our communications with Portugal. Sir Robert Wilson, also, had fallen back from Escalona, and was close upon our left. In a word, though we had won a great victory, our situation was only so far improved, that we were for the moment free from an overwhelming force in our front ; but we were in the midst of difficulties, nevertheless, from which nothing but some prompt and vigorous movement would deliver us. The mind of our General was, however, as we well knew, full of resources ; and though most of us saw our embarrassments clearly enough, there was not an individual in the army who entertained a doubt, that his talent and decision would, in due time, overcome and disperse them.

During the 30th and 31st, all things remained as they had done, except that the enemy disappeared entirely from before us, and our wants became every day more and more urgent. The utmost exertions of our commissariat were unable to procure even a moderate supply of bread, and the meat was hardly in greater abundance. Rumours, likewise, of Soult's approach from the north, became every hour more and more frequent ; nor could all the hopes which we persisted in cherish-

ing, that Venegas must have got well round to the right of Madrid, suffice to allay entirely the apprehensions which that reported movement created. At last, on the 1st and 2nd of August, authentic intelligence reached us, that from Venegas we had nothing to expect; for that Soult, having carried the pass of Banios, which a corps of Spaniards under the Marquis del Reyno had been appointed to keep, but which they had deserted almost without striking a blow, was already in Plasencia. He entered that town, in fact, on the 1st; and having been reinforced from Salamanca, or during his march from the northward, and supplied with artillery and stores from Madrid, he appeared there at the head of fourteen thousand men, inferior, in point of equipment, to no portion of the French army. This was a startling piece of news, and required that some measure should, on our parts, be promptly devised; and Sir Arthur Wellesley lost no time in seeking a conference with Cuesta, for the purpose of determining of what nature that measure ought to be.

On the present occasion, Cuesta suggested that the British army should be divided; that one-half should proceed with a portion of his troops against Soult; and the other half, with the remainder of the Spaniards, go forward in pursuit of Victor. To this proposition Sir Arthur Wellesley would on no account agree, declaring that all idea of di-

viding the British force was preposterous ; but he proposed, in his turn, to march with the entire British army against Soult, provided Cuesta would remain at Talavera, and secure his rear. Cuesta consented to that arrangement ; and our troops, in consequence, marched back upon the 3rd from Talavera to Oropesa. But we had hardly taken our ground, when advices arrived from Cuesta, to state that he had intercepted a friar who was carrying despatches both from Marshal Jourdan and King Joseph, addressed to Soult. In the former, an exceedingly accurate and precise detail was given, not only of our force, but of all our previous intentions up to the 28th ; a species of knowledge which could have been obtained only by treachery in some quarter or another ; whilst a narrative of the late battle was added, which, for the story of a Frenchman, exhibited wonderfully few deviations from the truth. The latter contained orders to Marshal Soult, to press forward with all diligence upon us, assuring him that his movement must cause a separation of the British from the Spanish forces ; that he would be supported by Marshal Ney, who had been directed to pursue his line of march from Castile ; and that, whilst they marched upon our flank, Joseph would again act on the offensive, and threaten our front. It was added that Joseph had, in the mean while, placed his force in a central situation about Barga, near

Torrejos, so as at once to keep Venegas in check, and to arrest any advance which we might endeavour to make immediately from Talavera.

From the tenor of these letters, it was easy to perceive that what had formerly been surmised respecting Venegas was correct, and that, instead of pushing briskly, as he had been directed to do, upon Fuente-Duena and Arganda, he had become alarmed for the safety of Seville, and had moved towards Toledo and Aranjuez. By this injudicious movement, he enabled the enemy, with their forces united, to keep both Spanish corps in check. Cuesta was dreadfully alarmed at the information. He gave orders for the immediate evacuation of Talavera, and made ready to follow our march to Oropesa without a moment's delay, though aware that he must thereby sacrifice the whole of our wounded, and that too when no enemy was in sight. This was a most galling arrangement to us, and it cut us the more deeply, that the old Spaniard, though literally encumbered with cars and waggons, refused to spare us more than seven for the transportation of the brave men who had fought and bled for his country. The abandonment of the town was, as may be imagined, a most heart-rending scene. Such of our poor soldiers as were in a condition to move at all, crawled after us, some still bleeding, and many more with their wounds open and undressed; whilst those whose

hurts were too severe to permit of this, lay upon their pallets, and implored their comrades not to desert them. By indefatigable exertions, and by sacrificing a great quantity of baggage, Sir Arthur Wellesley got together forty cars, which enabled us to bring forward in all about two thousand men ; but there were still some hundreds left behind, all of whom, had Cuesta acted with humanity or honour, might have been preserved. The reader will easily believe that such a scene, added to the extreme distress which scarcity of provisions occasioned, cast a damp upon our spirits which we had not anticipated, and which certainly ought not to have been the consequence of a victory hardly won indeed, but singularly splendid.

As soon as Sir Arthur Wellesley was made acquainted with Cuesta's determinations, he remonstrated in strong terms against the impolicy and cruelty of the measure ; but his remonstrances were disregarded. During the night of the 3rd, the Spaniards came pouring in upon us like a flock of sheep ; and a scene of noise and confusion ensued, of which no words could convey an adequate conception. At the same moment intelligence arrived, that Soult had passed the Teitar, and that his advanced-guard was already entering Naval Moral. The bridge of Almaraz must, therefore, be either destroyed by the Spanish peasants, or in the hands of the enemy ; and hence

we were reduced to the alternative, either of fighting our way through Soult's corps, or of returning over the bridge of Arzobispo, and taking up the line of the Tagus. Sir Arthur Wellesley gave to each aspect of affairs a due portion of consideration. He felt, that should he determine to advance against Soult, he might, from the nature of the country, and the facilities which the line of the Teitar afforded to an army on the defensive, be kept, in spite of his utmost exertions, in play, till Ney had arrived with his corps, and Joseph and Victor were again able to come on. Nor was this the only risk which he ran. Should he not succeed in forcing his way to Plasencia, his circumstances would become desperate indeed; for the destruction of the bridge at Almaraz, which was now fully ascertained to have taken place, deprived him of all means of crossing the Tagus; and a retreat, in case of disaster, became, in consequence, extremely precarious. These were contingencies of grave and serious aspect; but they were not the only considerations which served to guide him. By subsequent accounts, it appeared that the enemy were pushing by La Calzada upon the Arzobispo bridge; there was, therefore, no room left for hesitation, nor a moment to spare in maturing and acting upon some decision.

The greater part of the Spanish army arrived at

Oropesa during the night of the 3rd ; but it was the morning of the 4th before Cuesta himself came in. Sir Arthur Wellesley instantly waited upon him, for the purpose of stating his views as to the line of conduct which it behoved us to pursue. He represented to him, that situated as the allies now were, with a French force hurrying forward to surround them on every side, and destitute of all means of subsistence, except the little which, from day to day, might be collected in an exhausted country, the only step which they could venture, in common prudence, to take, was to assume the line of the Tagus, and to remain there in a defensive position, till stores could be collected, and some prospect of acting on the offensive, more attractive than was now before them, could be discovered. Cuesta, however, whose fears had driven him to evacuate Talavera, to sacrifice our wounded, and to leave the way open for Victor's army, was now stoutly opposed to every proposal which had a retreat for its object. He was satisfied that a second battle would end quite as advantageously for us as the first ; and he gave his voice decidedly for risking it. It was useless to remind him that the physical strength of men, to whom no provisions could be supplied, would not suffice to carry them through the toils of a long action ; and that, if we did fight, we should fight under all the disadvantages of a state

of utter and deplorable exhaustion. He would listen to no arguments of the kind, till at last, perceiving that argument was thrown away, Sir Arthur Wellesley assumed a higher tone. He told him plainly, that whatever the Spaniards might resolve upon doing, he would not sacrifice the army of which he was in command; and he left him, to issue orders for an immediate march towards Arzobispo. The orders were promptly obeyed; and we passed the bridge just as the enemy's patrols began to appear in sight.

The path which leads from Arzobispo, through the pass of Mesa d'Ibor, into the great road from Almaraz to Truxillo, Merida, and Badajoz, had been represented to us as wholly impassable for artillery. We found it extremely bad, no doubt; but we nevertheless contrived to drag our guns along, and by dint of extraordinary exertions, reached Toralida among the mountains, on the 5th. We remained there only during the night, and resting at Mesa d'Ibor on the 6th, we came in, on the 7th, to Deleitosa. Here a halt took place during two days, of which the troops stood greatly in need; for though our journeys had not been remarkable for their length, they had been accomplished in the face of numerous and severe difficulties. In the first place, no bread had been issued out from the commencement to the close of our march, and the men had tasted none for three

whole days. This, of itself, was sufficient to wear out their strength ; but, besides suffering from hunger, they had a rough, and often precipitous track to follow ; and they travelled through a district everywhere laid waste, and deficient in all the necessary articles, either for shelter or support. The season of the year was, indeed, in our favour, the weather happening to be remarkably temperate ; and it was well that the case proved so ; for had winter overtaken us, circumstanced as we then were, it would have been a hard task to foretell the probable consequences. As if fortune, too, had determined to try our patience in every possible way, we were scarcely settled in Deleitosa, when intelligence of the overthrow of Austria reached us. It was communicated from Seville, through our ambassador Lord Wellesley, and no doubts could be entertained as to its authenticity. The reader will readily believe that news so afflicting came with double weight upon men already beginning to lose heart in consequence of their own sufferings and reverses ; and that not a few of the most desponding amongst us looked upon affairs as desperate, and all chance of successful resistance to French power as absolutely taken away.

No such sentiments, however, found a home in the breast of Sir Arthur Wellesley. He saw and felt the difficulties of his situation keenly enough ;

perplexed as he was by being kept a good deal in the dark as to the steps which the enemy were preparing to take, and harassed and annoyed by the continued supineness of the Spanish authorities ; but he was far from regarding the game as lost. On the contrary, he spoke and acted on all public occasions as if events were taking the very course which he had expected them to take ; and he satisfied every one, either that he had provided, or that he was perfectly competent to provide, against any accident or contingency which might chance to occur. Our principal danger arose from the side of Plasencia. Were Soult, whose force was now ascertained to fall little short of twenty-five or thirty thousand men, and who was well known to hold the Spaniards in sovereign contempt, to push upon Portugal, by way of Coria, and the other towns which we had passed in our advance, then should we be thrown into circumstances of great embarrassment ; for his line of march would, in this case, be shorter than any which we could take, and he might reach Lisbon before us. But we entertained sanguine hopes that Marshal Beresford, of whose junction with the Duke de la Parque from Ciudad Rodrigo we were informed, must, by this time, be sufficiently advanced to intercept the movement ; and Sir Arthur invariably caused it to appear, that for such hopes there were ample grounds. Nevertheless, it

was generally felt, that if he intended to look exclusively to the defence of Portugal, the sooner he took up a line for that purpose the better. On Cuesta and the Spaniards, it was evident enough that no further reliance could be placed; there were around us, at present, no means of subsistence; our communications from every quarter were either entirely interrupted, or at best very uncertain; and, above all, sickness raged amongst us. Our effective strength, including General Crawford's division, was reduced at this period to seventeen thousand men. Where so many reasons existed for the adoption of a defensive system, there was little doubt that it would be adopted by him, who was so competent to judge of its fitness; and they who entertained this expectation were not disappointed.

I have alluded above to the supineness of the Spanish authorities, and the unsatisfactory relations in which our intercourse with the civil government at Seville stood, amply exemplified as it was by the arduous task which Lord Wellesley had to perform in the position in which he was placed, and fully borne out by the voluminous and constant correspondence that was kept up at this time between the two brothers. It is not my province, however, to enter further into those circumstances than to state that our chief was not only called upon to consider every military point

as connected with his army, but that every civil arrangement in the Peninsula was submitted to him; and hence he commenced that early practice of universality of reflection and decision, to which, for reasons in the hands of Providence, he seems especially to have been designed.

CHAPTER XVII.

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Defeat of Cuesta's army at the bridge of Arzobispo—Victor enters Talavera—Sir Robert Wilson's corps worsted at the Puerto de Banios—Sir Arthur Wellesley takes up the line of the Tagus—Cuesta is superseded, and General Eguia succeeds to the command of the Spanish army—Distresses of the British army, and extraordinary conduct of Eguia and the Spanish government—Sir Arthur Wellesley retires upon the Guadiana—General Arrezaga defeated at Ocana, and the Duke del Parque at Pamarue—Successes of the French in Andalusia—Fall of Gerona and Astorga—Massena assumes the command in the Peninsula—The British army moves towards Almeida, leaving General Hill's corps at Abrantes—Comparative strength of the opposing armies, and mutual preparations for the campaign.

WE resumed our march on the morning of the 11th, and arrived that day at Jaraicejo, a place distant about three leagues from the former position. Here we paused for some time, sending the cavalry as far to the rear as Truxillo, and occupying Almaraz and the Puerto de Miravete with

two divisions ; but the head-quarters were established in Jaraicejo, and the main body of the army cantoned in the villages round. To ourselves nothing occurred, whilst we remained here, deserving of particular notice ; but a variety of events, more or less important, were going on elsewhere ; and of these, as they were reported to us, and, generally speaking, truly reported, it may not be amiss if I subjoin a brief outline.

The first rumour which reached us, was of a defeat which the Spanish army had sustained, on the 8th, at the bridge of Arzobispo. It appeared that Cuesta, having fortified the bridge, and leaving two divisions of infantry, with one of cavalry, under the Duke of Albuquerque, to defend it, returned, in the night of the 7th, to Paraleda de Garben, where better facilities for housing and covering his troops existed. He had scarcely departed, when the enemy appeared in force upon the opposite bank, and employed themselves, totally disregarded by the garrison of Arzobispo, in searching for a ford. This they succeeded in discovering, about two or three hundred yards above the barricade, and they sent over a column of cavalry, supported by infantry, which, falling upon the Spaniards during the heat of the day, took them wholly by surprise. They were put to the rout in a moment, with the loss of twelve pieces of cannon ; and had the French followed

with the vigour which usually characterised them, the Spanish army must have been entirely dispersed. Cuesta, however, finding that he was not pursued, succeeded in rallying his men, and then retreated into the pass of the Mesa d'Ibor, where, upon ground partaking as much of the nature of impregnability as it is easy to conceive, he took up a position.

With respect to the enemy, again, it was understood that Victor had entered Talavera, where he behaved with the utmost humanity and kindness to our wounded; whilst the armies from the north were surmised, rather than accurately known, to have retrograded upon Plasencia. Of the exact posture of the latter we were, however, ignorant. We knew only that they had not appeared, at least in force, in the vicinity of Coria, though several plundering and foraging parties had arrived there; whilst a corps of five or six thousand men was fully ascertained to keep its station still in Plasencia. But we ascertained, at the same time, that a division had moved back as far as the Puerto de Banios, with a view to intercept Sir Robert Wilson. This officer, it may be necessary to state, had fallen in from Escalona, some time ago, upon our left. When we began our retreat towards Arzobispo, there were no opportunities of communicating with him, or drawing him off at the instant; and he had now penetrated in pursuit

of us, to the Puerto de Banios, whither the French corps hastened to attack him. Sir Robert Wilson could neither decline the battle, nor very successfully maintain it. In artillery he was quite deficient, the whole of his guns having accompanied our train, and his men were considerably harassed by repeated marches; but they offered a stout resistance, and when at length they were forced to yield, made good their retreat upon Ciudad Rodrigo. This they did, not as armies usually retreat, in compact bodies, and covered by their skirmishers, but by utterly dispersing, and again uniting at the particular point of rendezvous which, previous to their rout, had been determined upon.

In the mean while Marshal Beresford, with his Portuguese army, was in position at Zarza, whither General Crawford, at the head of four British regiments, hastened from Castello Branco to join him. The Marshal was confident that he was capable of arresting upon the frontier any French corps which might attempt to penetrate into Portugal; and that he could easily contrive to keep it in play till we should be able to arrive, by way of Abrantes, to his assistance. This assurance, together with the absence of all immediate manifestations on the part of the enemy of a design to advance beyond Plasencia, induced Sir Arthur Wellesley not to relinquish with precipitation his defensive line of the Tagus, but to remain quietly

in his present attitude, until the progress of things in other parts of the country should furnish him with better reasons, either to advance or retire. By acting thus, we still retained command of the great road to Seville ; and by keeping the enemy in doubt touching our future intentions, we hindered him from directing his undivided attention to other points ; whilst, at the same time, our retreat was secure, and an escape to the Spaniards as far as Monasterio, was by no means impracticable.

Matters were thus circumstanced, when the recall of Cuesta from the command of his army was announced. Notwithstanding the general confidence which appeared to be entertained in his honest integrity, and devotion to the cause of his country, he had exhibited, of late, too many proofs of incapacity to direct a campaign, to be permitted any longer to fill his high situation. He was superseded—though not with any marks of ignominy ; and the guidance of the troops devolved, as a matter of course, on General Eguia, the next senior in rank. An idea had prevailed amongst us, sometimes, that the command would be conferred on Albuquerque ; at other times, that it would be offered to Sir Arthur Wellesley ; but the surprise of the former at Arzobispo was supposed to have stood in the way of one of these arrangements ; and to the other, the national

pride of the Spaniards opposed insuperable obstacles. Had the case not been so, and had such an offer been actually made, Sir Arthur Wellesley must have experienced considerable embarrassment either in accepting or declining it: it was probably quite as advantageous to the general cause, as it was certainly much more agreeable to the private feelings of our leader, that no such difficulty of choice was submitted to him.

During the first few days of our sojourn at Jarraicejo, we were tolerably well supplied with bread; and cattle being plenty, we had no cause to complain; but as no regular system of furnishing the army had been entered into with the Spaniards, this state of comparative abundance was not of long continuance. The country immediately round, from which all our necessities were drawn, soon became exhausted, and we were again reduced to subsist upon a very scanty and uncertain allowance. The forage for the horses, likewise, became scarce, and many of them died in consequence. In the means of transport, too, for our sick, our wounded, and even for our ammunition, we were deficient. No horses, mules, or cars, were sent to us, notwithstanding repeated and earnest requisitions, till it became, at last, a question, whether, in the event of a compulsory movement, we should not be under the necessity of abandoning all to the enemy. Our sickness, moreover, was not di-