



**NARRATIVE
OF THE
PENINSULAR WAR.**

CHAPTER I.

The English army previous to 1808—Disinclination of the ministry to commit it fairly against the armies of France—Causes which led to a change of policy—State of Europe in consequence of the peace of Tilsit—Abject submission of Spain to the will of Buonaparte, and ruinous consequences of the war with England—The war of 1801 between Spain and Portugal—Terms of peace—Miserable state of the Peninsular nations—Mad attempt of Godoy to excite them against France—Secret treaty of Fontainbleau—Assembly of the corps of observation of the Gironde—Protest of the French and Spanish ministers at the court of Lisbon—They quit Lisbon.

THE memorable struggle in which, during fifteen or sixteen years, England had been engaged, may be said, up to the year 1807, or rather 1808, to have been a mere war of defence. Whilst her

fleets swept the seas in each quarter of the globe, crushing, wherever they came in contact with it, the naval strength of the enemy, her armies either rested idly upon her own shores, or were scattered in detachments among her colonies, or at best found themselves from time to time called upon to bear a part in some petty expedition, the object of which was usually as unprofitable, as the means employed for its attainment were insignificant. If we except the short campaign of Egypt, and the still shorter though hardly less brilliant affair of Maida, the entire period, from 1793 down to the commencement of the Peninsular war, presents us with no single record of deeds performed, worthy of the ancient military renown of Great Britain ; for neither the capture of a few islands in the West Indies, nor the seizure and subsequent abandonment of Toulon, nor the contests in Flanders and at the Texel, nor even the reduction of Copenhagen, can with any justice or propriety be referred to, as adding much to the lasting reputation of this country.

But though the case was so, and government appeared all this while unaccountably anxious to avoid bringing its land forces fairly into contact with those of France, it was by no means indifferent either as to the numerical strength or to the internal discipline and organisation of the army. The threat of an invasion, followed up as it was by