

for several days remained at Bermeja, anxious, as he declared, to follow up the victory which British blood and British courage had alone achieved. Yet, with a force under his own immediate command, of fifteen thousand men, he refused to advance against the enemy, without the aid and presence of those troops, which in the moment of peril he had betrayed.

 1811.
 March.

During this period several landings were effected by marines and sailors of the squadron, at different points of the harbour, who succeeded in dismantling all the sea defences of the enemy, from Rota to Sta. Maria, with the exception of Catalina. Victor, alarmed at his situation, hastened to Seville to demand reinforcements, concentrating nearly his whole force at Xeres, a small guard only being left for the protection of the principal works before Cadiz. Even under circumstances so favourable, however, La Pena remained pertinaciously inactive. At length the French, who at first were panic-stricken by the defeat they had encountered, emboldened by the timidity of their opponents, made an offensive movement. This operated as the signal of retreat. La Pena immediately withdrew his troops into the Isla de Leon, and

CHAP. III. destroyed the communication across the Santi
1811. Petri.

Such was the lame and impotent conclusion of an expedition, which in all its operations had been crowned with greater success than could reasonably have been anticipated from the circumstances under which it was undertaken. We say this, because from the very moment when preparations commenced, the enemy must have been aware of the object for which they were intended. They commanded a view of the whole harbour; they saw in fact the whole progress of embarkation; the fleet steering for the Straits was clearly discernible from the coast; and opportunity was thus given to Marshal Victor of calculating the movements and counteracting the object of the expedition.

In truth, however, Victor had long been aware of the measure which the Spanish government was busied in arranging. He accordingly wrote to Sebastiani at Seville, entreating him to unite his army with that before Cadiz, or at least to embarrass the allied force by manœuvring on its flank and rear. Had Sebastiani acceded to the desire of Victor, the situation of Graham and La Pena would have been one of the greatest

danger, since it would have been impossible for an army, so discordant in materials as that which they commanded, to oppose the combined forces of their opponents, with any prospect of success. CHAP. III.
1811.

That such a junction did not take place was owing solely to the jealousy of the French commanders. Sebastiani, intrusted with a sphere of independent command, did not choose to place himself under the orders of Victor; and the opportunity afforded of overwhelming the allied army was thus suffered to escape. But such expectations could form no part of the calculations on which the enterprise was undertaken. The allied leaders were not entitled to calculate on the occurrence of such a contingency, when they knew the enemy had full notice of the intended attack.

In this view we conceive the project, acted on by the allies, to have been radically faulty. In other respects it seems to have been concerted with skill and prudence; and had the element of secrecy been added to its other features, we should hold it to have been altogether unexceptionable.

The indignation excited by the conduct of La Pena, was not confined to the British army and



CHAP. III. people. His own countrymen joined in censur-
 1811. ing the apathy or ignorance, by which all the
 beneficial consequences that might have resulted
 from the expedition had been sacrificed. The
 Cortes addressed the Regency, and demanded a
 complete investigation of the circumstances to
 which a failure so disgraceful was to be attri-
 buted. A Court of Inquiry was accordingly ap-
 pointed, which exonerated La Pena from the
 charge of cowardice, but not from the stigma of
 incapacity and want of enterprise.

March. In the Alentejo a considerable corps of the
 allies, commanded by Marshal Beresford, was
 advancing to check the French in their career of
 conquest. He was directed to invest Badajos,
 if possible, before the garrison should have time
 to repair the defences, and make the necessary
 preparations for standing a siege. The nature
 of the intelligence from Cadiz had induced Soult
 to return to Seville; and Mortier, who succeed-
 ed to the command, fell back on the approach
 of Beresford, leaving a small force under La-
 tour Maubourg, at Campo Mayor, to watch the
 movements of the allies. Shortly afterwards he
 was recalled to France.

Mar. 17. On the seventeenth of March, the troops from

the north of the Tagus crossed the river at Tan-
 cos ; and after a halt of a few days near Por-
 talegre, to recruit their strength, exhausted by
 a long succession of heavy marches, Beresford
 continued his advance on Campo Mayor. He
 reached that place on the twenty-fifth; and
 from a height about a mile distant, the enemy
 were seen running from the town, and hastily
 forming in order of march, while a convoy of
 artillery, ammuniton, and provisions, was ob-
 served to be in motion towards Badajos.

 1811.
 March.

Mar. 25.

The enemy's force consisted of three battalions
 of infantry, a brigade of cavalry, and some horse
 artillery. Brigadier-General Long was directed
 to attack them on the right flank, and a charge
 made by the thirteenth light dragoons, under
 Colonel Head, supported by some squadrons of
 the seventh Portuguese cavalry, drove back the
 enemy's horse in confusion on their infantry,
 which halted, formed square, and in turn forced
 the assailants to retire.

The road from Campo Mayor to Badajos lies
 over a wide unbroken plain, which afforded to
 both parties ample scope for the display of mili-
 tary skill. The charges of the light cavalry
 were uniformly successful, yet productive of no

CHAP. III. important result. At one period a considerable
1811. part of the convoy was in possession of the thir-
March. teenth, but being unsupported, Colonel Head
found it impossible to reap the benefit of his
achievement. The convoy again moved on, and
succeeded in effecting its retreat to Badajos, with
no greater loss than that of a howitzer.

On the part of the allies the chief loss was sus-
tained by the thirteenth light dragoons, which
pursued the enemy to the very walls of Badajos,
and were fired on by the guns of the place. Had
Beresford employed his heavy cavalry to sup-
port the charges of the thirteenth, there can be
little doubt that the whole convoy would have
been taken; but alarmed at the boldness of
Colonel Head's attack, he refused to allow the
heavy cavalry to charge, observing that "the
loss of one regiment of cavalry was enough
for the day." The amount of casualties on the
part of the allies was ninety-four killed and
wounded, and seventy-seven missing. That of
the enemy was considerably greater.

Mar. 26.

On the day following, Beresford moved for-
ward to Elvas, where he halted for several days,
while preparations were in progress for crossing
the Guadiana. The task was one of difficulty.

The current of the river was rapid; and Beresford had brought with him no materials for the construction of a bridge. He depended, therefore, on such supplies as the country could afford; and so inadequate were these, that on the very morning of its completion, a sudden increase of the river entirely demolished the structure which had been laboriously erected. Rafts were then constructed; and on the sixth of April the passage of the troops was effected near Juramenha.

CHAP. III.

1811.

March.

April 6.

Head-quarters were then established at a small village on the left of the Guadiana, in the neighbourhood of which the army halted for several days. During this period of inaction, the enemy were on the alert. An out-piquet, consisting of a squadron of the thirteenth light dragoons, was surprised by a party of the enemy's cavalry in the night; and, with the exception of twenty men, the whole were made prisoners. The French, after this success, pushed forward to the village, from which Marshal Beresford with difficulty effected his escape. The alarm was at length given, but the party succeeded in reaching Olivença, bearing with them the men and horses they had captured, as trophies of success.

CHAP. III. During the progress of these events, the garrison of Badajos was busied in collecting provisions and repairing the works of the place. Mortier, whose force was too small to oppose that of Beresford, fell back to Llerena, leaving a detachment of four hundred men to garrison Olivença. As this body might occasion some annoyance during the progress of the operations against Badajos, Marshal Beresford determined on the immediate reduction of the place. In-
trusting, therefore, the conduct of the siege to General Cole, he placed the remainder of his army in a line of cantonments, extending from Merida to Zafra, in order to cut off the communications of Badajos, and prevent further supplies being thrown into the town. At Los Santos an affair of cavalry took place, in which one hundred and sixty of the enemy were made prisoners.

The siege of Olivença did not long occasion a separation of the army. On the eleventh, General Cole sat down before the place, and on
Apr. 15, the fifteenth, when the breaching battery had been established, he sent a flag of truce into the town, offering terms to the Governor, in case of immediate surrender. To this communication no answer was returned, and the batteries open-

ed fire. A breach was soon effected, when the Governor, apprehensive of assault, made an unconditional surrender of the town; and the garrison, consisting of three hundred and seventy men, were marched out prisoners of war.

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April.

A few days after this event, Lord Wellington arrived. He immediately reconnoitred Badajos, and gave orders for the immediate commencement of active operations. The loss of this important stronghold had been the only blow of the campaign. His anxiety to protect it had induced him to weaken his army to a degree which rendered the successes achieved over Massena less decisive than they would otherwise have been. He now considered its recapture essential to his future operations, since its possession enabled the French to protect their positions in the southern provinces, and placed the most fertile portion of Portugal within their grasp. It was impossible, too, that he could enter Spain with safety, while the enemy held so formidable a post on his flank.

Apr. 20.

While the preparatory arrangements were yet in progress, Lord Wellington was recalled to the north, by the movements of Massena. The want of a bridge across the Gua-

CHAP. III. diana, for the transmission of artillery and stores, had, hitherto, kept the army inactive. Two had been constructed and swept away by the torrents caused by a succession of heavy rains; by great exertions, however, a third was established, and Beresford at length found himself in condition to commence operations against Badajos.

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May.

May 8.

The place was completely invested on the eighth of May, by Major-General Lumley, on the right of the river, and by Major-General William Stewart, on the left. Ground was immediately broken against Fort St. Christoval, and a breaching battery established on the eleventh, notwithstanding a vigorous sortie of the garrison, which, though at first partially successful, was, eventually, repulsed with considerable slaughter. The breaching battery, however, produced little effect. The guns sent from Lisbon being of brass, were soon injured by the frequent firing. The Portuguese gunners were raw and inexperienced, while the fire of the fort was vigorous and well-directed. The consequence was, that, in the course of a few hours, the whole guns in the battery were rendered unserviceable.

Fresh guns were then ordered to be brought

up ; and, on the night of the twelfth, ground was broken against the castle ; when Beresford, hearing that Soult, at the head of a considerable army, was advancing from Seville, relinquished the further prosecution of the siege, and advanced to meet him.

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May.

On the fourteenth, the army was put in motion on Valverde ; and the stores and artillery were removed under escort of General Cole's division. As the rear-guard commenced its march, the enemy made a sortie from the town in force, and a battalion of Portuguese suffered very severely.

May 14.

On receiving intelligence of the successful operations in Portugal, the Regent Blake had left Cadiz in hope of profiting by a conjuncture so favourable. He effected a junction with Castanos, who had been appointed to the command in Estramadura ; and on the fourteenth these leaders had an interview with Marshal Beresford at Valverde. It was then agreed to offer battle to the enemy, and on the day following the British army took post on the heights of Albuera.

May 15.

Before Beresford commenced operations against Badajos, it was deemed of importance to

CHAP. III. push the enemy as far as possible from the scene of action; and a combined movement of Colonel Colburne, Ballasteros, and the Conde de Villemur, commanding the Estramaduran cavalry, induced Latour Maubourg to fall back to Constantino. Soult, however, having by large drafts from the corps of Victor and Sebastiani collected a considerable force at Seville, joined Latour Maubourg, and, with this united army, was advancing to the relief of Badajos.

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May.

May 15. To oppose the progress of this formidable force, Beresford, on the fifteenth, took post on the heights of Albuera. During the night he was joined by the Spaniards under Blake and Castanos, who, with a liberality and self-denial unusual in the Spanish character, insisted that the chief command in the approaching engagement should be vested in Marshal Beresford.

The ground occupied by the allies was a chain of eminences, along the front of which flowed the river Albuera, a narrow stream, and fordable in many places above the position. Towards the left, the great road from Seville leads over it by a bridge, and subsequently divaricates to Badajos and Olivença. On the left of this road, and a short distance from the bridge, stands the vil-

lage of Albuera, containing a church and about an hundred houses, which had been deserted by their inhabitants. Below the bridge the Albuera was unfordable. The western bank occupied by the allies was of considerable altitude, and completely commanded all the ground to the eastward. A little above the bridge, a brook called the Ferdia joins the Albuera, and the banks of those streams, and the ground between them, is thickly covered with wood. The right of the position had no *point d'appui*, the range of heights being prolonged in that direction to an extent it was impossible to occupy.

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On the the fifteenth, the cavalry were driven back from Santa Martha; and in the evening the leading divisions of the French army took post on some wooded ground about a mile distant, which stretched in a simicircular sweep downward to the river. The remainder came up during the night; and Soult, with a force of eighteen thousand infantry, four thousand cavalry, and forty pieces of cannon, found himself in presence of his enemy.

The allied army was somewhat superior in numbers. It consisted of a corps of twelve

CHAP. III. thousand Spaniards, which joined during the
1811. night; of thirteen thousand British and Portu-
May. guese infantry, two thousand cavalry, and thirty-
two guns.

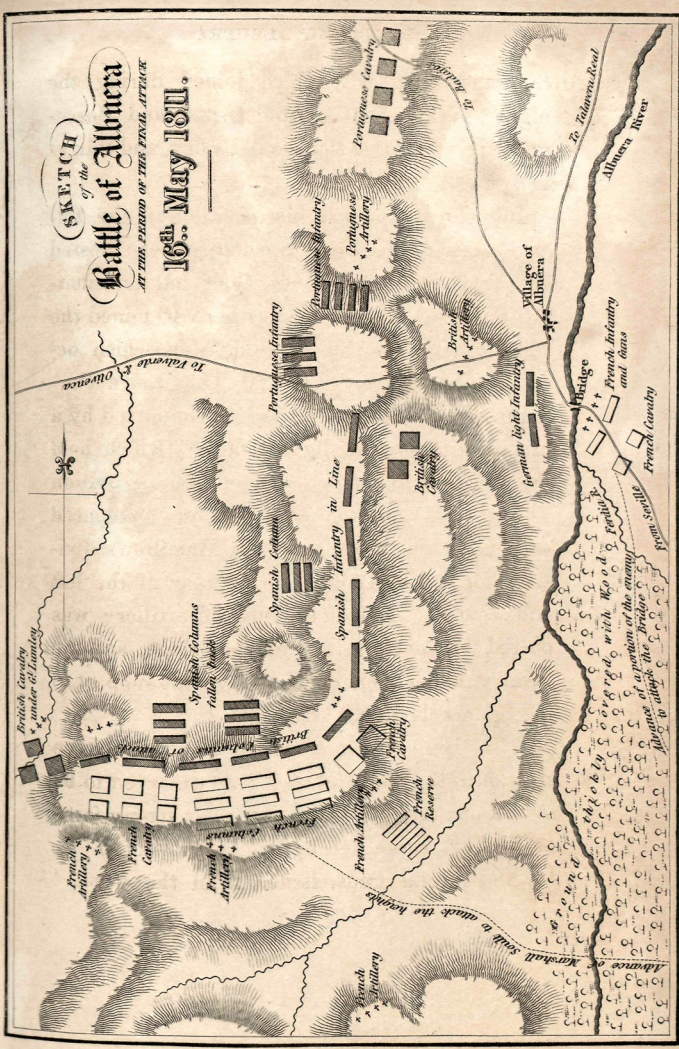
Beresford occupied his position in the following manner:—The Spaniards were posted on the right in two lines, their left terminating on the Valverde road, where it joined the right of General Stewart's division which occupied the centre. General Hamilton's Portuguese division was on the left, supported by a brigade of German light infantry, which held the village of Albuera. General Cole's division—which only came up as the action commenced—and one brigade of General Hamilton's division, formed a second line in rear of the left and centre. A strong body of artillery was posted for the protection of the bridge, and the cavalry, under General Lumley, lent support to the Spaniards on the right.

May 16. About eight o'clock on the morning of the sixteenth, the French army were observed to be in motion; and shortly afterwards a strong force of cavalry, supported by two columns of infantry and several guns, issued from the wooded

SKETCH
of the
Battle of Albuera

AT THE PERIOD OF THE FINAL ATTACK

16th May 1811.





ground between the Ferdia and the Albuera, and directed its march towards the bridge. The artillery immediately opened fire, and a heavy cannonade was kept up on both sides, with great effect on the part of the British, from their advantages of ground. In the meanwhile, Soult, crossing the Albuera, under cover of the wood, above the position, advanced with the main body of his army, and without opposition took possession of the heights on the right flank of the Spaniards. The combat then commenced. The Spanish troops, after a short resistance, were driven from their ground, and Soult then formed his army in a line, extending to the Valverde road, and raking that of the allies.

It became instantly essential to the safety of the army, that the enemy should be driven from the commanding station he had thus assumed. Beresford directed a new alignment: General Cole's division was placed in an oblique line with its right flank thrown back, and an endeavour was made to bring up the Spanish troops to the charge. This failed. A heavy fire was kept up by the French artillery, and a charge

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CHAP. III. of cavalry again forced them to retire in confusion. General Stewart's division, therefore, was brought up, and passing, through the Spaniards, advanced to gain possession of the heights. At this period a storm of rain came on, which completely darkened the atmosphere, and rendered it impossible to discern the movements of the enemy at any distance. The right brigade, under Colonel Colburne, consisting of the Buffs, the sixty-sixth, the second battalion forty-eighth, and the thirty-first, was in the act of deploying,—the two leading battalions alone, having completed the manœuvre,—when a regiment of Polish lancers, which under shelter of the mist had circled their flank, made a furious charge from the rear. The result was, that the whole brigade, with the exception of the thirty-first, which still remained in column, were driven forward into the enemy's line, and made prisoners.

General Latour Maubourg, with the cavalry, then took post beyond the right of the allies, waiting for the first indication of retreat, to execute a grand and decisive charge, and throw confusion into the movement. Their mo-

tions were watched by the heavy brigade, under General Lumley, and the horse artillery did considerable execution in their ranks.

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It was under such circumstances that the brigade of General Houghton was advanced to retrieve, if possible, the fortunes of the day. A contest of the most bloody and pertinacious character ensued. The leading regiment, the twenty-ninth, no sooner reached the summit of the heights, than it was assailed by a fire of musquetry and artillery which spread havoc through the ranks,—and in leading this regiment to the charge, General Houghton fell pierced with wounds. Unfortunately, the intervention of a steep but narrow gully, rendered it impossible to reach the enemy with the bayonet, and the twenty-ninth was directed to halt and open fire. The fifty-seventh and forty-eighth then came up, and assuming their position in line, the struggle was maintained on both sides with desperate courage.

In this state of things, General Cole directed the Fusileer brigade to advance on the enemy's left, and ascend the disputed heights from the valley. In the execution of this movement, General Cole, and almost every individual at-

CHAP. III. tached to his staff, were wounded. The Fusileer brigade, on crowning the ascent, was received with a fire so tremendous, that it at first recoiled, but instantly recovering its ground, displayed, throughout the remainder of this desperate conflict, a degree of steadiness and intrepidity impossible to be surpassed. Colonel Sir William Myers, commanding the brigade, was killed early in the action, and his country was thus deprived of the services of a most gallant and accomplished officer.

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In the meanwhile, General Houghton's brigade had maintained its ground in spite of all the enemy's efforts to dislodge it. Above two-thirds of its number had fallen, yet the remainder continued unbroken, and not one inch of ground had been yielded. At length, the entire exhaustion of ammunition made it necessary to retire, and the retrogressive movement was made by the small number of survivors with the most perfect regularity. A brigade of guns was then advanced to the front, and immediately opened fire. They were charged in flank by the Polish lancers, and for a moment taken; but the Fusileer brigade coming up, the cavalry were driven back, and the guns withdrawn.

At length the French were forced from their position with immense slaughter, and retired across the Albuera. Marshal Beresford, from his great inferiority in cavalry, did not judge it prudent to continue the pursuit; and Soult, alarmed at the extent of his loss, made no effort to regain the post, the pertinacious maintenance of which had involved a sacrifice so prodigious.

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While these events were passing on the right, several attempts were made to gain possession of the bridge and village on the left. Though a great proportion of the troops had been withdrawn from this point, General Alten's light infantry brigade, and General Hamilton's Portuguese division, succeeded in repelling every attack.

About three o'clock, the firing had entirely ceased, and both armies took post on the ground they had occupied in the morning. Thus terminated, perhaps, the most fierce and murderous contest which took place during the war. Out of seven thousand five hundred British, four thousand one hundred and fifty-eight were killed, wounded, or missing. The total loss of the allies in the engagement, a-

CHAP. III. mounted to nearly seven thousand men. Soutl,
1811. in his official despatch, rated the French loss
May. at only two thousand eight hundred; but it
was ascertained, by an intercepted letter from
General Gazan, that upwards of four thousand
wounded, were under charge of that officer.
Taking this fact in conjunction with the number
of killed and wounded left on the field, the loss
of the French army cannot be reasonably calcu-
lated at less than nine thousand men,—an a-
mount of slaughter on both sides, which, in pro-
portion to the numbers engaged, is altogether
enormous.

During the following day, both armies re-
mained in peaceful occupation of their respec-
tive positions. On the morning of the eigh-
teenth, it was ascertained that Marshal Soutl
had withdrawn from his position, and was
retiring on Seville. The cavalry, under Gen-
eral Lumley, were instantly detached to follow
this movement; and at Usagre, a very gallant
affair took place, which, without loss to the
British, cost the enemy about an hundred and
fifty of their number.

Honourable as the battle of Albuera unques-
tionably was to the prowess of British troops, it

did by no means succeed in adding a reputation CHAP. III.
for military talent, to the other accomplish-
ments of Marshal Beresford. The manœuvres
of Soult, before and during the battle, were
bold and masterly. He seized at once on the
vulnerable point of the position, and refused
to relax his grasp while it was possible to
retain it. Had he been opposed by other
than British troops, in all probability Albu-
era would have witnessed a repetition of the
scene of Ocana. Never, in truth, was an army
in more imminent peril than that of the allies.
Soult at one period had not only gained the key
of the position, but had captured a whole brigade
of artillery, above one thousand prisoners, and
six stand of colours. So decided indeed was his
success, that Beresford even talked of retreat,
when retreat could have involved nothing short
of the entire ruin of his army. From the exe-
cution of this purpose he was fortunately dis-
suaded by the earnest remonstrances of General
Stewart; and by the sacrifice of more than half
of his British force, he was enabled to regain
that ground which ought never to have been lost.

In allotting the defence of the most important

CHAP. III. part of the position to the Spaniards, Beresford was guilty of an error of the first magnitude. He evidently expected that the chief efforts of the enemy would be directed against the bridge, but the right was the truly vulnerable point—the point, indeed, so obviously vulnerable, that its selection by Soult, as the chief object of attack, might have been anticipated by any General of ordinary accomplishment in his profession. Had such useful prescience been possessed by Marshal Beresford, he would scarcely have intrusted the key of his position to that portion of his force on which least dependence could be placed; and, by a different disposition of his troops, he would, in all probability, have escaped the peril to which the army was subsequently exposed.

In one respect, at least, Marshal Beresford and the army he commanded were fortunate. General Cole and General Stewart were officers of the highest merit, and exerted themselves throughout the day with a talent, promptitude, and energy, impossible to be surpassed. General Stewart seemed everywhere in the field, animating and directing wherever danger seemed to

lower most darkly; and we believe it was solely from the dictates of his own judgment that General Cole made that decisive movement in advance by which the victory was decided.

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On the whole, the victory of Albuera was utterly barren and unproductive. In raising the siege of Badajos, Beresford at once allowed Soult to gain the great object of his movement; in fact, the only object, which, on the part of the allies, it was worth hazarding a battle to prevent. The armies fought; and Soult returned to Seville, baffled indeed in the field, yet successful in achieving the important purpose for which he had advanced. Beresford, on the other hand, after a successful battle, gained nothing but the boast of victory, earned at a most ruinous price.

CHAPTER IV.

BATTLE OF FUENTES—CAPTURE OF ALMEIDA.

CHAP. IV. ON the twenty-eighth of April, Lord Wellington returned from the Alentejo, and again established his head-quarters at Villa Formosa. Nothing of importance had occurred during his absence. Massena had been employed in re-organizing his army, which the retreat from Portugal had reduced to a miserable condition ; and, having received a reinforcement of fifteen hundred cavalry of the Imperial Guard, he concentrated his divisions in the neighbourhood of Ciudad Rodrigo. His chief object was to introduce supplies into Almeida ; and, on the second of May, the whole French army, consisting of the second, sixth, eighth, and ninth corps, with all the cavalry that could be collected in the provinces of Castile and Leon, crossed the Agueda

and the Azava. Lord Wellington's inferiority CHAP. IV.
 in cavalry did not permit him to oppose their 1811.
 march in a country peculiarly favourable for the May.
 exercise of that arm, and the cavalry and light
 division fell back on their approach to Fuentes
 d'Honore.

The numerical strength of the enemy was considerably greater than that of the allies; it amounted to forty thousand infantry, and five thousand cavalry, while Lord Wellington could only muster an effective force of thirty-six thousand men, of which not more than two thousand were cavalry. Notwithstanding this disparity, he determined to oppose Massena in his attempt to relieve Almeida; and accordingly concentrated his army to give battle.

Almeida stands on the right of the Coa, a river of considerable magnitude, which, from the steepness of its banks, affords few points at which it can be crossed by an army. The bridge immediately in rear of Almeida is within range of the guns of the fortress, and at the period in question was so dilapidated as to be nearly impassable. There is another at Castello Bom, about two leagues above Almeida; but this also was a most difficult communication. A little

CHAP. IV. higher up there is a ford, but between that point
1811. and Sabugal the river cannot be crossed. At
May. the latter place the road from Ciudad Rodrigo
leads across a stone bridge, affording the only
safe and convenient communication in case of
retreat.

Lord Wellington, therefore, was naturally anxious to adopt a position which should enable him at once to protect the approach to Almeida, and cover this important line of communication. He was fully aware, however, that the great extension of front thus rendered necessary, was highly disadvantageous ; and, from the first, he contemplated the probability of being forced by circumstances to relinquish the communication by Sabugal, and concentrate his army in a more confined position, for the protection of Almeida alone.

Between the Duas Casas and the Touron rivers, both of which run nearly parallel to the Coa, is a range of easy heights, along which Lord Wellington formed the centre of his army. In front of these is the village of Fuentes d'Honore, which, though not strictly speaking embraced in the position, was held as an advanced post, and contributed materially to its strength. General