

cause the truth must come out ; but I will endeavour not to bring others (viz. Sir Harry Burrard) into a scrape, not only out of regard to him, but because I think it fatal to the public service to expose officers to the treatment which I have received, and to punishment for acting upon their own military opinions, which opinions they may fairly entertain. I have also determined to stand singly. There is nothing in common between Sir Hugh Dalrymple and me, or between the Government and me, if the Government are supposed to be involved in the question, and I shall act accordingly.

“ I now enclose your Lordship the copy of a letter, &c.”

Meanwhile, not less thoughtful of others than of himself, he waited upon Lord Castlereagh, and informed him, both as to the feelings of Sir John Moore and the estimation in which that officer was held by the army in Portugal. The following letter to Sir John sufficiently explains the result of the interview :—

*To Lieut.-General Sir John Moore, K.B.*

“ London, 8th Oct., 1808.

“ MY DEAR GENERAL,

“ I arrived in London on Thursday, and I yesterday took an opportunity of mentioning to Lord Castlereagh what I told you I should, notwithstanding that I found, upon my arrival in England, that the object I had in view in conversing with you upon this subject at all had been accomplished by your appointment to command the army. I told Lord Castlereagh that you thought that Government had not treated you well, and that you had considered it incumbent upon you to express your sentiments upon that treatment ; but that after you had done so, you had thought no more of the matter, and that it would be found that you would serve as cordially and as zealously in any situation in which you might be employed as if nothing of the kind had ever passed.

“ Lord Castlereagh said that he had never entertained any doubt upon this subject ; and that after he had commu-

nicated to you the sentiments of the King's Government upon what had passed, his only wish respecting you had been to employ you in the manner in which you were most likely to be useful to the country.

"I find that by the distribution I am placed under your command, than which nothing can be more satisfactory to me. I will go to Coruña immediately, where I hope to find you.

"You'll have seen by the newspapers that the late transactions in Portugal have made a stronger sensation here than it was imagined they would, and I have had what I think more than my share of the blame. I suppose that there must be an inquiry into the transactions; and till that takes place, I shall leave the public to find out the truth in the best way they can, and shall not adopt any illegitimate mode of setting them right. In the mean time the abuse of the news-writers of London will not deprive me of my temper or my spirits, or of the zeal with which I will forward every wish of yours.

"Ever, &c.,

"ARTHUR WELLESLEY.

"Since writing the above I find that it will be necessary that I should wait in England till Sir Hugh Dalrymple will return, and it will be known at what time the inquiry will be made into the late transactions in Portugal on which I am to be examined. I will join you, however, the moment I am set at liberty, for which I long most anxiously.

"I send a duplicate of this letter to Coruña."

It appears from this letter that Sir Arthur had accepted a command in the army to the head of which Sir John Moore was to be elevated. The following shows that he had not forgotten another officer, to whose merits he more than once testified. It conveys, besides, such a true picture of the entire disinterestedness of the writer, that I cannot refuse to give it a place in these pages.

*To Viscount Castlereagh.*

“ London, 14th Oct., 1808.

“ MY DEAR CASTLEREAGH,

“ After I saw you on Saturday I spoke to Colonel Gordon, and he agreed entirely in opinion with me, that it was expedient to recommend General Spencer to the King at an early period for some mark of his Majesty's favour, and he promised to speak to the Duke of York upon the subject.

“ I have always been of opinion that I should not be able to convince the public of the goodness of my motives for signing the armistice ; and the late discussions in Middlesex and elsewhere, and the paragraphs in the newspapers, which after all rule everything in this country, tend to convince me that it is determined that I shall not have the benefit of an acquittal, and that the news-writers and the orators of the day are determined to listen to nothing in my justification. I am, therefore, quite certain that the Government will not be able to recommend me for any mark of the King's favour to which they might otherwise think me entitled. If this turns out to be true, the Ministers will be obliged to recommend that a mark of the King's favour should be conferred on General Spencer, and not on me, although both were employed on the same service, and this after an inquiry will have been held in which my conduct will have been investigated. They will be obliged to adopt this line, notwithstanding that I hope they will be convinced of the propriety of my conduct, and the goodness of my motives in every instance ; or they must determine not to confer upon General Spencer those marks of the King's favour which his services undoubtedly merit.

“ I have no doubt of the alternative which the Ministers will be inclined to adopt. I am convinced that Spencer himself will urge them not to think of him if the King's favour cannot be extended to me, and thus he will lose what he so well deserves. I am convinced that this will be the result of any further delay.

“ I wish, therefore, that you would immediately recom-

mend Spencer for what you think he ought to have. There can be no doubt of his merit on every ground; and nobody can with reason complain that an injustice is done to me, because even my most sanguine friends cannot think that I am in a situation to receive any mark of his Majesty's favour.

"I wish you would turn this subject over in your mind, and you will discover that great difficulties will be avoided by adopting immediately the measure which I most earnestly recommend.

"Believe me, &c.,

"ARTHUR WELLESLEY.

"P.S. It is said that Spencer would not like to accept any mark of the King's favour at present, but I am convinced that I shall be able to prevail with him."

Having brought his affairs to this point, Sir Arthur departed for Ireland, where, indifferent to the wrong which was done him by the English people, he resumed the course of his civil duties. There he remained till the beginning of November, when the assembling at Chelsea Hospital of the Court to inquire into the circumstances of the late campaign, and of the convention in which it resulted, recalled him to London. In common with Sir Hugh Dalrymple and Sir Harry Burrard, he appeared before the Court, where each gave his own statement, and supported it by his own line of argument. There is no reason now to conceal or disguise the fact, that the conclusions at which the Court arrived were all pretty well arranged beforehand. Sir Arthur, still treating with the utmost possible delicacy of officers who were not by any means so delicate towards him, proved his own case. The Court listened with partial ears to the statements of Sir Hugh and Sir Harry; and the final issue was a declaration, that nobody was to blame; that all which could have been reasonably expected under the circumstances, had been done, so that further proceedings in the case were not necessary. Absurd as the decision was, Sir Arthur made no protest against it; but went back to

Ireland, and busied himself as before in such affairs as came usually under the cognizance of chief secretaries in those days of Protestant ascendancy and government by influence.

Time passed, and early in January, 1809, Parliament met. One of the first acts of both Houses was to pass a vote of thanks to Sir Arthur Wellesley and the army which had served under him; a measure which pleased him, not alone because his own good name was thereby vindicated, but because the impediments were removed which had heretofore stood between his friend General Spencer and the honours for which he had recommended him. But business of a graver nature soon followed. Sir John Moore's campaign had ended unsuccessfully. The Spanish armies, with which he proposed to co-operate, were dispersed, and the battle of Coruña, while it saved the honour of the British arms, cost the life of the brave officer who commanded. The victors reached their ships in safety, and withdrew from the Galician coasts. For a moment a conviction of the hopelessness of the struggle took possession of the English mind. But the heart of the nation was still resolute, and the Cabinet decided to make one effort more for the liberties of Europe in the Spanish Peninsula. It was natural enough that the British Government should make Spain, rather than Portugal, the first object of their care. Spain was the larger and more populous country of the two, and it had been impressed upon their minds by Sir John Moore, and indeed by all whom they had heretofore consulted, that to defend Portugal after Spain should have been overrun was impossible. Lord Castlereagh therefore proposed to the Junta of Seville, which had by this time assumed the functions of Supreme Government, that Cadiz should become the base of operations for a British army; and then, and not till then, he bethought him of consulting Sir Arthur Wellesley. On the 7th of March he received in reply a memorandum, which not only answered every question proposed, but took a view of the case so masterly and comprehensive as to leave no single point connected with it untouched. Sir Arthur begins that remarkable paper in these words. "I have always been of opinion that Portugal might be defended, whatever might

have been the result of the contest in Spain, and that in the mean time the measures adopted for the defence of Portugal would be highly useful to the Spaniards in their contest with the French." He then goes on to justify this assertion, and to explain that in Portugal, with its feeble Government and docile population, a native army could be officered by Englishmen, which being intermixed with English troops, would soon be rendered capable of facing the best of the Continental armies. It was thus that at every new stage in his career the Great Duke was accustomed to turn to account the experience which the past had given him. He had evidently in his mind when he offered this suggestion the native army of India and its capabilities, and often in after-years he used to compare that army with his Portuguese levies, giving however a marked preference to the latter. But he did not, in the memorandum of which I am now speaking, confine himself to matters of detail. He described Napoleon's political system as one of terror, which must crumble to pieces if once effectually checked; and he expressed a belief that in Portugal, if wisely dealt with, the first decided check would be given to that system. Sir Arthur's minute was read in Cabinet, and produced a strong effect, and the refusal of the Spaniards to receive a British garrison into Cadiz arriving not long afterwards, Sir Arthur's views were unanimously adopted. There remained then but one course for the Government to follow. Sir Arthur was requested to assume the command of the army, which it was determined to employ in the Peninsula, and he did so without a moment's hesitation.

Before his own Government arrived at these conclusions, the command of the Portuguese army had been pressed upon Sir Arthur by the Portuguese Government, and declined. He easily prevailed, however, to get that important trust committed to General—afterwards Lord—Viscount Beresford, an officer of whom he entertained a high opinion; and who, on account of his knowledge of the Portuguese language, was well fitted to act with Portuguese troops. But the arrangement interfered in no respect with the larger plan on which the English Government had determined.



England was henceforward to become a principal in the war which impended. She was to take into her pay, to discipline and equip, a certain number of Portuguese troops, and the whole military resources of the kingdom were to be placed in return at the disposal of the English General. Sir Arthur Wellesley had nothing more to desire. He resigned at once and for ever his seat in the House of Commons, and the office which he had so long and usefully held in Ireland, and turned his attention to the great work which was cut out for him. For everything which he considered necessary to the equipment and efficiency of an army in the field he applied in writing. No single article, from a battalion of Infantry to a pair of shoes, was forgotten. Suits of clothing, stands of arms, sets of accoutrements for the Portuguese levies, horses, guns, muskets, ammunition, intrenching tools, horse-shoes, nails, hammers, all were distinctly specified. If either at the outset or at any subsequent stage in the campaign the army of which he was at the head suffered from the lack of anything, the fault never rested with him.

This unceasing attention to details, this care for all possible wants before they occurred, forms one of the most remarkable features in the character of the great Duke of Wellington as a General. Another of his peculiarities as a man deserves notice. He seems never to have been so engrossed by any particular subject, as to be incapacitated from discussing others with as much clearness as if each had touched the very point to which his attention was mainly directed. At this moment, for example, when other minds than his own would have been filled with the coming war and the preparations for it, we find him corresponding in his usual style, now with the Duke of Richmond on Irish affairs, now with inventors on the subject of their inventions, now with the President of the Board of Control upon Indian subjects, and largely with his private friends and acquaintances about the common gossip and business of life. In some of these letters there is an elasticity and even playfulness of tone which shows that, however grave the responsibility which he was about to assume, it by no means weighed him down. And this is the more remarkable that the condition

of Portugal, political as well as military, was at that time as little promising as can well be conceived. The departure of the French had left the country without a Government. Army there was none, in any proper sense of the term; for the few battalions which existed were without discipline, without military spirit, without even arms; and the mobs of Lisbon and Oporto, stirred up by the brothers Souza and the Bishop, clamoured against the English as having betrayed them, and insulted English officers as they walked the streets. There is no knowing to what extent this feeling might have been carried, had not General Cradock, whom Moore had left in command, threatened to withdraw his troops altogether. This brought men a little to their senses; the Regency began to act again, and a levy *en masse* was ordered. Beresford proceeded to place himself at its head, and did his best to introduce discipline into the ranks. It was to a country so circumstanced, and with a force at his disposal of less than 16,000 men on the spot, and promised reinforcements amounting to barely 8000 more, that Sir Arthur Wellesley made ready to proceed; nowise distrustful that, if a little time were afforded him, he should be able to make successful head against the whole strength of the French Empire.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## IN PORTUGAL.

ON the 16th of April, 1809, Sir Arthur Wellesley took ship at Portsmouth, and on the 22nd, after a tempestuous and uncomfortable voyage, he arrived in the Tagus. His reception by the people and authorities of Lisbon was enthusiastic in the extreme. Fear, jealousy, suspicion, ill-will, seemed to disperse before him, and all classes, high and low, crowded to greet and assure him of their confidence. He did not allow the popular enthusiasm to grow cold. With consummate tact he got the Regency together, and prevailed upon them to pass whatever resolutions were proposed, and then he set himself in right good earnest to the task which he had undertaken.

Two French corps at this time threatened Lisbon from opposite sides of the Tagus. Soult, with 20,000 men, or thereabouts, was in Oporto—having his outposts advanced as far as the right bank of the Vouga. Victor, with 28,000, lay at Merida in Estremadura. There was nothing in the field to oppose to either of them, except the remains of certain Spanish armies, every one of which had sustained a defeat, and was therefore demoralized as well as undisciplined. But the practised eye of Sir Arthur was not slow to discover that the distance between these two French corps was too great to enable them mutually to support one another. He resolved, therefore, to strike at them in detail; and after well considering the subject he made up his mind to sacrifice military to political considerations, and to begin with Soult.

The promised reinforcements from England arrived by

degrees, and Sir Arthur at the end of a week was able to bring into line about 35,000 men. Of these 15,000 were Portuguese, of whom 9000 with 13,000 English and 3000 German troops he directed to assemble at Coimbra. The remainder he so posted as that they should be able to impede, if they could not stop, the advance of Victor, in the event of his endeavouring to pass the Tagus. The various brigades and corps followed the routes which were pointed out to them, and on the 2nd of May he himself arrived at Coimbra. On the 3rd he passed his army in review; on the 4th it was distributed into eight brigades of Infantry and one of Cavalry; and on the 6th the advance began. How entirely the French were without partisans at that time in Portugal is shown by the fact that not a rumour of this concentration reached them, though Soult had his outposts within three easy marches of the point where the concentration took place.

It is not my intention to describe in detail the campaign of the Douro, or any other campaign in the famous Peninsular war. My present purpose is rather with the great man who led the allied armies than with the armies themselves; of which therefore I shall endeavour to speak more as of the instruments with which he executed his purposes than as agents in the execution of these purposes. And adhering to this resolve it will content me to state that the Vouga was crossed by the English on the morning of the 10th; that in the course of the same day an affair occurred with the enemy's posts, and that the enemy, leaving three guns behind and a few men killed and wounded, hastily retreated. They crossed the Douro on a bridge of boats which was immediately removed, and so placing a broad river between them and the English, they took shelter in Oporto, and believed themselves safe.

During the progress of this advance, Sir Arthur seemed to do everything and to be everywhere. He personally directed the movements of the columns, regulating the very pace at which men and horse should travel; and gave by these means to all under his orders, from generals of brigade to the members of his personal staff, their first

distinct lesson in the art of war. Once by over-precipitation on the part of the officer who led, his advanced guard failed to surprise a body of French troops which lay carelessly among some villages about eight miles in rear of the Vouga. The circumstance was provoking enough, but Sir Arthur kept his temper. He contented himself with sending for the officer and explaining, "that courage is an admirable quality, but that discretion and judgment are quite as necessary, particularly in the leader of an advanced guard." On the other hand he was always prompt to observe, and to commend military talent and judicious enterprise, by whomsoever exhibited. Take the following as an example.

With a view to cut off the retreat of Soult upon Braga, Sir Arthur had detached General Beresford with his Portuguese towards Lamego, giving him orders to cross the Douro there, and to seize and hold the bridge at Amarante. Beresford was further directed to collect as many boats as he could find, and to send them down the stream for the use of the main army. For it had not escaped the calculations of Sir Arthur that the enemy would certainly remove their pontoon bridge, and that probably nothing available for the transport of men and guns would be found on his side of the water. And so it fell out. When the leading corps of the British army arrived in sight of Oporto, the last link of the bridge was swinging round, and neither skiff nor boat of any kind could be seen, except drawn up and made fast along the far-off bank of the river.

The left bank of the Douro consists of a series of heights, with one called the Serra dominating over all the rest. Opposite to the Serra on the other side was a large building, called the Seminary, which with its gardens and outbuildings Sir Arthur was well pleased to find that the French had not taken the trouble to occupy. It was exactly the sort of place in which to make an effective lodgment, and he looked at it with longing eyes. But no boats appeared descending the stream, and though he ran up 20 guns and planted them so as to command the Seminary and its approaches, he could attempt nothing further. He placed his men, therefore, under cover, and sat down to chat, as was his custom,

with the gentlemen of his staff. There was one among these, Captain Waters, whose readiness of resource, often tested afterwards, found there for the first time a field on which to work. Waters suddenly darted off from the throng, and for half an hour or more nothing was seen of him. But presently the tall reeds which overshadow the margin of the Douro, and, where the banks are low, run a good way inland, began to shake, and by and by a little skiff with six men on board, shot out into the deep. One of these men was Waters. He had observed the skiff concealed among the reeds and stuck fast in the mud, and after vainly struggling single-handed to set it free, had run off in search of help. By great good luck a sturdy Ecclesiastic, the prior of the Convent of Amarante, met him, and he, entering heartily into the design, was not slow in finding four peasants to co-operate with them. They all returned to the place where the skiff lay, and the oars happening to be on board, they soon got her afloat and pushed off. "By G—," exclaimed Sir Arthur, "Waters has done the job." And so he had. While the General and those about him watched the result with great eagerness, Waters and his crew struck out like men. They made for a point where, just above the Seminary, three barges lay; and undoing the lashings they made them fast to their own boat, and pulled across again. The results are well known. A handful of men passed the river in these barges—the Seminary was occupied before the alarm was given, and when the enemy endeavoured to retake it, the fire from the guns on the opposite bank swept them away. The inhabitants of Oporto threw themselves into the game, and scores of boats shot across the river and were at once laden. Sir Arthur never forgot the services of Waters on that day. He obtained for him deserved promotion, and employed him afterwards in many a perilous and important service, out of which he always came triumphant.

The passage of the Douro was one of those brilliant affairs which only men of genius, as well as hardihood, think of attempting. It succeeded mainly because success was believed to be impossible. It led to the expulsion of the

enemy from the city, and their painful flight across the mountains of *Tras os Montes* in Galicia, with the loss of all their guns and baggage, and of 6000 men killed, wounded, and taken. The pursuit, which had been vigorously pressed till fatigue and privation began to tell upon the pursuers, was at length abandoned. "If an army," wrote Sir Arthur to Lord Castlereagh describing the operation, "throws away all its cannon, equipments, and baggage, and everything which can strengthen it and enable it to act as a body, and abandons all those who are entitled to its protection, but add to its weight and impede its progress, it must be able to march through roads by which it cannot be followed with any prospect of being overtaken by an army which has not made the same sacrifices." This is true—and it was only by making these enormous sacrifices that Soult and his army escaped. Yet Sir Arthur did not come off scatheless. Not more than 300 English soldiers fell by sword and bullet in the course of the campaign; but when he returned on the 21st to Oporto, Sir Arthur found that 4000 were down from sickness, and that among such as still kept their places in the ranks, many were shoeless, and not a few in rags. So severe is the strain of even a successful operation, if it be conducted rapidly, on the morale and equipment of an army.

Having thus cleared Portugal on one side, Sir Arthur turned his attention to the dangers which threatened elsewhere, and made such preparations as he could for marching against Victor. His idea was to strike first at a French division which lay at Alcantara, higher up the Douro. But General Lepice, who commanded in that quarter, prudently retreated, and a mixed English and Portuguese force was sent to guard the bridge which there spans the river. Back, therefore, in the direction of Coimbra and Abrantes, Sir Arthur moved. His movements, however, were not as they had been in advancing, rapid and continuous. Means of transport failed him. The Portuguese Government was supine in supplying them, and the support which he received from England came in slowly and by driblets. He was thus constrained to halt at Abrantes many precious days. These were not days of idleness or rest to him. His cor-

respondence had become enormous. It was carried on with Ministers of State, with the Governors of provinces ; with his own and the general officers of the Spanish and Portuguese armies ; with commissaries, doctors, purveyors, and private friends ; and it embraced every topic connected with the history of the times, from the policy of great empires down to the feeding of private sentinels. Those portions of it which have been considered worthy of publication fill, for this single year, three large and closely printed octavo volumes ; so untiring was that great man's industry, so well regulated his disposition of time.

## CHAPTER IX.

## MOVES TOWARDS CUESTA—BATTLE OF TALAVERA.

THERE were at this time in the Spanish Peninsula 250,000 French troops; all admirably equipped, in the highest state of discipline, and commanded by the foremost of Napoleon's Generals. They were, of course, a good deal scattered, for the area was wide, and the insurrection threatened everywhere. But within a radius of 100 miles, taking Madrid as a centre, 100,000 at least lay, by divisions, each within reasonable distance from all the rest. Joseph himself was in Madrid with 6000 or 8000. Sebastiani was at Toledo with 12,000; Mortier, with 18,000, lay at Villa Castin; Victor was at Cassares with 28,000. Meanwhile Soult, having refitted at Lugo, was as far in advance again as Salamanca, where the coming in of Ney's corps raised his effectives to upwards of 30,000. On the other side, if we except the English army now reduced to 20,000 fit for duty, and to a certain extent the Portuguese, of whom about 17,000 had profited by English instruction, there was nothing to oppose to this well-disciplined array save bodies of half-armed and untrained Spaniards, under the command of officers ignorant of the first principles of the art of war. Sir Arthur was in Abrantes with 18,000 excellent troops, General Mackenzie held Alcantara with 8000, of whom 2000 only were English. Marshal Beresford was at Almeida with 15,000 Portuguese. There were assembled in the hill country of Estremadura about 4000 Partisans under Sir Robert Wilson; 12,000 Spaniards under the Duke del

Parque lay in and about Ciudad Rodrigo, 26,000 were with Venegas among the mountains of Toledo, and 40,000, with old General Cuesta at their head, occupied a position half way between Medellin and Cassares. Sir Robert Wilson's Partisans consisted chiefly of Portuguese smugglers, individually brave and hardy but lawless and without discipline, while the Spanish armies of Cuesta, Venegas, and del Parque were but the remains of those levies which Napoleon and his generals had defeated, reinforced by peasants untrained, and many of them without arms.

Sir Arthur had not yet come into personal contact with Spanish armies and their leaders. He had heard enough of their proceedings during the campaign of 1808, to prevent his counting much upon them, but he could not believe that they were so utterly worthless as experience proved them to be. He entered, therefore, readily into negotiations with Cuesta, and arranged with him a plan of which the following are the outlines. While Sir Arthur and Cuesta, uniting their forces, were to advance by Almaraz and Placentia upon Madrid, Venegas, pushing forward from La Manca towards Aranjuez, was to interpose between Victor and Sebastiani. Meanwhile Sir Robert Wilson was to seize the Escorial, threatening thereby Joseph's communications with the North. At the same time Beresford and the Duke del Parque were to occupy the attention of the French corps which lay at Salamanca; and finally, the valley of the Tagus was to be rendered safe by detaching two Spanish brigades from Cuesta's army to the passes of Baños and Porales, in support of which, without interfering with their proper objects, both Beresford and Wilson could manœuvre.

Nothing could be more perfect than this plan. It was approved in all its details by General Cuesta, who urged Sir Arthur to immediate action, and assured him of ample supplies as well as of abundant means of transport, as soon as the English should enter Spain. The English did enter Spain, and there their difficulties began. There were no supplies for them, no means of transport, scarcely the pretence of friendly feeling among the inhabitants. More than



once indeed Sir Arthur hesitated whether he should not abandon the enterprise, so disgusted was he with the culpable negligence of his colleague, and so indignant with the indifference of the Spanish nation to the sufferings of his troops. It was not, however, in his nature to break an engagement once contracted. He pushed on, therefore, and on the 20th of July found himself at Oropesa in personal communication with Cuesta. Then the illusion, if any had hitherto rested upon his mind, vanished altogether. The Spanish army was drawn up that he might see it, and the review took place partly by torch-light; it satisfied Sir Arthur, that however good the materials might be, they were as yet a mere shapeless mass. "I am sure I don't know what we are to do with these people," was his remark to Colonel Murray, as they rode back to their own lines; "put them behind stone walls, and I daresay they would defend them, but to manœuvre with such a rabble under fire, is impossible. I am afraid we shall find them an encumbrance rather than otherwise."

If Sir Arthur was disgusted with the temper of the Spanish people, and with the military appearance of the Spanish troops, he found little to console him under the disappointment in the mental, and even the physical, qualities of the Spanish generals. Some, like Cuesta, were old men, so decrepit in person as to be incapable without assistance of getting upon horseback. Others, like Venegas, had received no early training in the profession of arms, and all, without exception, were proud, boastful, slow, without forethought, and apparently ignorant of the value of time. There is good reason to believe that Sir Arthur, if he could have done so without compromising his own and his country's honour, would have abandoned all thought of co-operating with allies so little to be depended upon. Not feeling himself justified in taking this decided step, he made up his mind to go forward cautiously, and to avoid being drawn by Spanish presumption into scrapes from which Spanish valour would certainly not deliver him.

The arrival of the English army at Oropesa gave the signal to Victor to retire. He fell back through Traxillo

upon Almaraz, crossed the Tagus there, and made no halt till he reached a somewhat indifferent position, about two miles on the further side of Talavera de la Reyna. Sir Arthur and General Cuesta followed, and passed the night of the 22nd of July in Talavera itself. They had thus achieved the main purpose of their junction, for the enemy was before them inferior in point of numbers, and so near as to leave to them the option of a battle. But no argument could prevail with Cuesta to make this option. Without assigning any reason, he refused to co-operate with Sir Arthur in attacking Victor on the 23rd, and on the morning of the 24th the French were gone. Now then the Spanish General was seized with an irrepressible desire to act. He urged an immediate pursuit, and when Sir Arthur quietly observed that no good could arise, because the opportunity of striking an effective blow had passed from them, his indignation boiled over. He would go forward alone; he would himself overwhelm the fugitives and deliver Madrid; and forward alone he went. Sir Arthur, finding remonstrance useless, threw two divisions of infantry and some cavalry across the Alberche in order to keep open Cuesta's communications with himself, and then sat down to wait the event of which he seems never for a moment to have been doubtful.

While these things were going on, Venegas, instead of pushing, as he ought to have done, upon Aranjuez, loitered at La Manca, and the two Spanish brigades which were due in the passes of Baños and Porales, never made their appearance. The former of these blunders enabled Joseph and Sebastiani to unite their forces with those of Victor. The latter exposed the position at Talavera to be turned in the rear. Of both mishaps Sir Arthur remained for two days ignorant, but on the 26th the sudden appearance of Cuesta's people, running and riding in hot haste towards the Alberche, warned him that evil had befallen. Cuesta, it appeared, marching straight to Alcabon, was there turned upon and defeated by Victor; and now brought intelligence that at least 50,000 French troops might be expected at any moment to fall upon the allies.

Sir Arthur's plan of campaign was completely defeated.

He had counted much more than he ever did at any subsequent period on Spanish co-operation, and it failed him. Had he been free to consult his own judgment as a soldier, he would have doubtless separated the English army from that of Cuesta, and fallen back the same day, without risking a battle, into Portugal. But it was necessary to prove to the Spanish nation that England was in earnest, and to satisfy the English people that their allies had not been abandoned in the hour of need. Nothing doubting therefore that his rear at all events was safe, and confident in the stubborn courage of his own men, he determined to accept a battle on the ground where he stood. And it was, in a military point of view, very defensible. It extended for about two miles across a plain, having the town of Talavera on one flank, and the mountain-ranges which close in the valley of the Tagus on the other. And it embraced here and there a knoll, or eminence, and a good deal of wood with banks and hollow roads and walled gardens, especially in the direction of Talavera. Sir Arthur so arranged his troops that the English held the centre and left where the ground was the most open, and the Spaniards, of whom Cuesta in his humiliation entreated him to take the command, were massed among the gardens and enclosures in front of the town. A little way in advance of Talavera, not far from the river Alberche, stands the Casa de Selinas, a fine old château surrounded by extensive woods. Through these woods several roads passed, and among them Sir Arthur left an English division in observation, with about 10,000 Spaniards spread along the margin of the stream.

Anticipating the approach of the enemy, and desirous of observing the order of their march, Sir Arthur proceeded on the 27th to the Casa. He was accompanied by the officers of his staff and a few orderlies only; and all, except the orderlies, dismounting in the court yard, left their horses there, and ascended to the roof. It was not long before the French made their appearance advancing in magnificent array, and by and by the heads of columns began to disappear among the woods. But the woods being filled with Spanish soldiers, no danger was apprehended; especially as