

the first adjutant of the staff, Major-General Wall, as far as the Fuente del Hierro, where these two parties separated, Aymerich taking the direct line for Veger, Wall going to the right across the lake of La Janda and the river Barbate, to cut off the retreat of the enemy by the roads to Medina and Chiclana. It was hardly probable that he should succeed in this attempt, for the way was not only circuitous and full of difficulties, but there was also another road, that of Conil, by which they might make their retreat, and which lay so wide of the others, that it could not be occupied: Wall's movement, however, covered Aymerich's, and facilitated his operations. The Barbate is navigable as far as Veger bridge, where it touches the foot of the high hill upon which Veger stands. At this bridge Aymerich arrived in the morning; it was fortified, and the French, under every advantage of situation, were preparing to defend it, when Wall's cavalry appeared on the other side; upon this they retired by the Conil road fast enough to effect their retreat. Three of their gun-boats and three pieces of cannon were taken here; the enemy suffered no other loss, but the chief object in view was accomplished, for the possession of this post secured the flank of the allies.

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Meantime the main body advanced against Casas Viejas: the distance being twelve miles, Lapeña supposed, from the information of his guides, that he should arrive some hours before daybreak. But there were so many streams to cross, and so many intervening marshes, that notwithstanding the hard labour of the pioneers, and the utmost exertions of the artillery officers, these twelve miles were a journey of twelve painful hours, so that he did not arrive in time to reconnoitre the fort before it was broad day. The enemy having fired a few shot, took post upon a hill behind the fort, on the Medina road. The German hussars in the British service, and the Spanish carbineers under

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General Whittingham, were ordered to wheel round upon the enemy's right, and surround them in that direction, while Baron Carondelet, with another squadron of cavalry, forded the Barbate, and crossing a flooded marsh, where the water was up to their saddle-girths, advanced to charge them. Two battalions of infantry, the one Spanish, the other English, crossed at the same time to support him; and the enemy presently gave way, leaving about thirty killed and wounded, thirty-three prisoners, two pieces of cannon, and all their stores.

*Junction of
the troops
from St.
Roques.*

The troops from St. Roques joined this day, marching by way of Las Casas de Castaño, and leaving a small detachment in Alcala de los Gazules. This division, consisting of 1600 men, was added to the centre, whose force now amounted to 6000; that of the vanguard was 2100, that of the rear 5100, 4300 being British and Portugueze, the rest Spaniards. The cavalry were in a separate body under Whittingham. The whole force, when thus united, consisted of 11,200 foot, 800 horse*. They had twenty-four pieces of cannon. Lapeña's plan was now to march by Veger, upon the Santi Petri, and attack the intrenchments there which formed the left of the enemy's lines. Thus the pass of the river would be laid open, and a communication established with the Isle of Leon, from whence the army might receive provisions, which it now began to want, and might be reinforced with artillery, foot, and horse: thus too they might combine their operations with those which would be made from the Spanish line of defence, and from the bay, in such manner, that while the

* Marshal Victor, in his official account, affirmed, as positively as falsely, that there were 22,000 men, among whom were at least 8000 of the best English troops; thus, according to the system of his government, doubling the number of his opponents.

success appeared almost certain, the risk even in case of defeat would be avoided, which must be incurred upon any other plan from the nature of the ground and the want of stores. Victor did not suspect that any difficulties upon this head could influence the movements of the allies, and he seems to have expected that his position would be attacked in a more vital part. He reinforced with a battalion of voltigeurs, General Cassagne, who occupied Medina Sidonia with three battalions and a regiment of chasseurs; and he took a position himself with ten battalions at the Cortijo de Guerra, the intermediate point between Medina and Chiclana, from whence he could bear upon the allies in case they should advance upon either. General Lapeña, however, had no thought of moving upon Medina: "it was strong by nature," he said, "fortified with seven pieces of cannon, besides some in its castle, and distant only two leagues from the Cortijo."

Camp-Marshal D. Jose de Zayas, who commanded in the Isle of Leon, meantime had well performed his part of the concerted operations. He pushed a body of troops over the Santi Petri, near the coast, on the first, threw a pontoon bridge across, and formed a tete-du-pont the following evening. The French general Villatte was immediately ordered to attack this point during the night, and, in French customary phrase, to drive the Spaniards into the sea. About midnight the enemy made their attack with three regiments, and by dint of superior numbers, forced their way into the works at various points. Zayas speedily reinforced the post, and drove them out with the bayonet: it was wholly an affair of the bayonet, for the troops were too much intermingled to permit of firing. Some of the French had reached the middle of the bridge, others crossed it, probably as the best means of saving themselves when they

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*The French
attack
Zayas, and
are repulsed.*

CHAP. found that they had pushed on too far; they fell in with the
 XXXVI. Spaniards who were hastening to assist their comrades, and in
 1811. this manner effected their escape.

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Passage of
the lake
of Janda.

Having failed in this attempt, Victor marched towards Chiclana, and ordered Cassagne to join him from the Cortijo, rightly concluding that Lapeña meant to attack the French lines at Santi Petri, which, should he succeed, would enable him to receive reinforcements from the Isle, and then he would march upon Chiclana. The Spanish general thought to deceive him into a belief that the attack would be made by Medina, and for this purpose left a party at Casas Viejas to mount guard, and keep up fires, as if the whole force was there, while on the third they proceeded to Veger. An excess of caution seems to have been Lapeña's failing; lest the enemy from Medina, which was about ten miles from the beaten road, should think of attacking him upon his march, he chose a by-road on the left of the Barbate, unfrequented, because there is the lake of Janda to be crossed on the way. This lake is a considerable piece of water, between the two roads from Tarifa to Medina Sidonia and to Chiclana. The bottom consists of mud; but to render it fordable, a stone causey had been built, rather under than in the water, about six feet wide, and some 500 yards in length, bushes and poles being fixed at intervals to mark its edge, and prevent the traveller from stepping into the mud. At this time the water upon the causey was in some places more than mid-deep. The Spaniards were some hours in passing, Lapeña exhorting them from his horse; and many of the officers made the men carry them across, while our officers were encouraging their soldiers by example, and General Graham was in the water on foot. On the evening of the 4th, they advanced from Veger, by way of Conil, towards Santi Petri. This place La-

peña hoped to reach by daybreak ; but upon entering a wood about ten miles from the village, and about as much in extent, his advanced guard was suddenly attacked by some cavalry who sallied from the cover. The enemy were repelled, but the column halted while the wood was explored ; and this, with the doubt and hesitation of the guides, heightened by the fears and feelings which night excited, and the local circumstances of a country where carriages seldom or never passed, caused a delay of two hours, so that they did not get out of the wood till it was broad day ; and the hope which Lapeña had with little reason indulged, of surprising his vigilant enemy, was destroyed. The three divisions therefore advanced in as many columns ; their movements could not possibly be concealed ; the enemy did not appear to molest them, but an officer of the French staff was seen singly reconnoitring them. The operation was to commence from a height called the Cabeza del Puerco : they halted here to refresh themselves, and Lapeña harangued the van which was destined to make the attack.

The lines which were to be attacked formed the left of the French works. They were supported by the sea on one side, on the other by the channel of Alcornocal, and the fortified mill of Almansa. Villatte had about 4000 men to defend this position, but his force had been considerably weakened in his unsuccessful attempt upon the tete-du-pont. He had, however, very considerable advantage in the nature of the broken ground, a thick wood through which the assailant must advance, and the perfect knowledge, which, in the course of twelve months' undisturbed possession, he had acquired of every path and every inequality of surface. This wood so covered the enemy, that only four of their battalions in the first line were visible ; they had their right supported by the Torre Bermeja, and three guns

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*March.**Position of
the enemy.*

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*Communi-
cation with
the Isle of
Leon.*

in their centre. Lardizabal, reinforced by part of the second division, advanced to attack them: the remainder of the troops held a position upon the Cabeza del Puerco, or hill of Barrosa, the cavalry being in advance upon the right.

Villatte anticipated their movements, and fell upon both flanks of Lardizabal's advance at the same time; at first he had the advantage, . . . but the regiment of Murcia, under its Colonel D. Juan Maria Muñoz, checked his progress, Lardizabal with a battalion of the Canaries attacked his right, and the Spanish guards, and the regiment of Africa under Brigadier D. Raymundo Ferrer, and Colonel D. Tomas Retortillo, charged with the bayonet. The enemy were routed, and the communication with the Isle of Leon was thus opened by this well-conducted and successful attack. Two battalions of the French escaped and carried off their field-pieces, the nature of the ground saving them. Lapeña's first object was thus accomplished, and in order to maintain the important position that he had gained, which had in its front a thick pine forest, extending to Chiclana, and which he apprehended the enemy would use their utmost efforts to recover, he directed, in concert with General Graham, that the British troops should move down from Barrosa towards the Torre de Bermeja, leaving some Spanish regiments under Brigadier Begines upon the heights. The position which it was intended to occupy is formed by a narrow woody ridge, the right on the sea cliff, the left falling down to the creek of Almansa, on the edge of a marsh. From the position of Barrosa to that of Bermeja, the communication is easy, along a hard sandy beach upon the west. General Graham's division had halted on the eastern slope, his road therefore lay through the wood, and having sent cavalry patrols toward Chiclana, who saw nothing of the enemy, he began his march about noon.

General Lacy, the chief of the Spanish staff, was sent forward by Lapeña to maintain the heights of Bermeja; here it was that the danger was apprehended; and the firing had recommenced in that direction. The nature of the ground was such, that what was passing at Barrosa could not be seen at Bermeja; perhaps there was a deficiency in those arrangements, by which, in a well-organized army, information of what is passing in one part is rapidly conveyed to another; and there was certainly the want of a good intelligence between General Graham and the Spanish commander under whom he had consented to act. The British troops had proceeded about half way, and were in the middle of the wood, when they were informed that the enemy was appearing in force upon the plain, and advancing towards the heights of Barrosa. That position General Graham considered as the key to that of Santi Petri, and immediately countermarched in order to support the troops who had been left for its defence.

The heights of Barrosa extend to the shore on one side, and slope down to the plain on the other towards a lake called the Laguna del Puerco: the ridge itself was called Cabeza del Puerco by the Spaniards, but it will retain the better name which was this day acquired for it. Victor with 8000 men advanced against this point. The troops which had been left there were the regiments of Sigüenza and Cantabria, a battalion of Ciudad Real, another of the Walloon guards, and a battalion of the King's German legion. Ignorant of Graham's movements, and knowing themselves unable to maintain the post against such very superior numbers, they thought it best to form a junction with the British, whose rear they should by this means cover, and be themselves covered on the way by the pine forest through which they were to pass. Accordingly they made this movement with perfect coolness, and in perfect order, General

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*March.**Heights of
Barrosa.*

CHAP. Whittingham covering one flank, Brigadier D. Juan de la Cruz
 XXXVI. Mourgeon the other ; for on both sides the enemy endeavoured
 1811. to envelope them.

March.
 General
 Graham
 marches
 back to the
 heights.

Graham, meantime, was marching rapidly back, but at a distance from the shore ; whereas these troops kept near it, apparently to lessen the danger of being turned on that side by the enemy's light infantry. In such intricate and difficult circumstances it was impossible to preserve order in the columns ; and before the troops were quite disentangled from the wood, they saw that the detachment which they were hastening to support had left the heights ; that the left wing of the French were rapidly ascending there, and their right stood upon the plain, on the edge of the wood within cannon shot. General Graham's object in countermarching had been to support the troops in maintaining the heights ; " but a retreat," he says, " in the face of such an enemy (already within reach of the easy communication by the sea beach) must have involved the whole allied army in all the danger of being attacked during the unavoidable confusion of the different corps arriving on the narrow ridge of Bermeja nearly at the same time." Trusting, therefore, to the courage of his men, and regardless of the numbers and position of the enemy, he resolved immediately to attack them.

*Battle of
 Barrosa.*

Marshal Victor commanded the French ; General Ruffin, whose name was well known in the history of this wicked war, commanded the left upon the hill ; General Leval the right. Graham formed his troops as rapidly as the circumstances required ; there was no time to restore order in his columns, which had unavoidably been broken in marching through the wood. The brigade of guards, Lieutenant-Colonel Browne's flank battalion of the 28th, Lieutenant-Colonel Norcott's two companies of the 2d rifle corps, and Major Acheson, with a part of the 57th (separated from the regiment in the wood), formed

on the right under Brigadier-General Dilkes. Colonel Wheatley's brigade, with three companies of the Coldstream guards, under Lieutenant-Colonel Jackson, (separated likewise from his battalion in the wood,) and Lieutenant-Colonel Barnard's flank battalion, formed on the left; Major Duncan, opening a powerful battery of ten guns in the centre, protected the formation of the infantry; and as soon as they were thus hastily got together, the guns were advanced to a more favourable position, and kept up a most destructive fire.

Leval's division, notwithstanding the havoc which this battery made, continued to advance in imposing masses, opening its fire of musketry. The British left wing advanced against it, firing. The three companies of guards, and the 87th, supported by the remainder of the wing, charged them with right British bravery; Colonel Bilson with the 28th, and Lieutenant-Colonel Prevost with part of the 67th, zealously supported their attack, which was decisive in this part of the field. An eagle, the first which the British had won, was taken. It belonged to the 8th regiment of light infantry, and bore a gold collar round its neck, because that regiment had so distinguished itself as to have received the thanks of Buonaparte in person. The enemy were closely pursued across a narrow valley, and a reserve, which they had formed beyond it, was charged in like manner, and in like manner put to the rout. General Dilkes was equally successful on his side. Ruffin, confident in his numbers and in his position, met him on the ascent. A bloody contest ensued, but of no long duration, for the best troops of France have never been able to stand against the British bayonet. Ruffin was wounded and taken, and the enemy driven from the heights in confusion. In less than an hour and half they were in full retreat, and in that short time more than 4000 men had fallen, . . . for the British loss in killed and wounded amounted to 1243;

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