

viduals to seize those rents for themselves which ought to be appropriated for the public service. There was no unity to be found; many of the Junta cared only for the interest of their particular province, as if they were not members of the Spanish monarchy; confirming the appointments of the local juntas, without regard to fitness; and even assigning recompenses to men destitute of military knowledge, who had neither seen service nor performed the duties assigned to them.

“The Junta, divided into sections, undertook to manage affairs in which they were unversed, and which were altogether foreign to their professions. Horses, taken from their owners under pretence of supplying the armies, were left to die of hunger in the sea-marshes. And, finally, many important branches of administration were in the hands of men, suspected, both from their own conduct and from their having been creatures of that infamous favorite who was the author of the general misery.”

It was at this period that the celebrated *partidas* first commenced the *guerilla*, or petty warfare, which has been so lauded, as if that had been the cause of Napoleon's discomfiture. Those bands were infinitely numerous, because every robber that feared a jail, or that could break from one; every smuggler,* whose trade had been interrupted; every friar, disliking the trammels of his convent; and every idler, that wished to avoid the ranks of the regular army, was to be found either as chief or associate in the *partidas*. The French, although harassed by the constant and cruel murders of isolated soldiers, or followers of the army, and sometimes by the loss of convoys, were never thwarted in any great object by these bands; but the necessity of providing subsistence, and attaching his followers to his fortunes, generally obliged the guerilla chief to rob his countrymen; and, indeed, one of the principal causes of the sudden growth of this system was the hope of intercepting the public and private plate, which, under a decree of Joseph, was bringing in from all parts to be coined in Madrid; for that monarch was obliged to have recourse to forced loans, and the property of the proscribed nobles and suppressed convents, to maintain even the appearance of a court.

This description will apply to the mass of the *partidas*; yet there were some actuated by nobler motives—by revenge, by a gallant enterprising spirit, or by an honest ambition, thinking to serve their country better than by joining the regular forces. Among the principal chiefs may be placed Renovales, and the two Minas, in Navarre and Aragon; Porlier, named the *Marquisetto*, and Longa, in the Asturias and Biscay; Juan Martin, or *El Empe*

* The bands formed of smugglers were called *Quadrillas*.

cinado, who vexed the neighborhood of Madrid; Julian Sanchez, in the Gata and Salamanca country; Doctor Rovera, Perena, and some others, in Catalonia; Julian Palarea, or *El Medico*, between the Moreno and Toledo; the curate Merino, *El Principe*, and Saornil, in Castile; the friar Sapia, in Soria, and Juan Abril, near Segovia.

But these men were of very different merit. Renovales, a regular officer, raised the peasantry of the valleys between Pampluna and Zaragoza, after the fall of the latter city, and was soon subdued. Juan Martin, Rovera, Julian Sanchez, and the student Mina, discovered military talent, and Sanchez was certainly a very bold and honest man; but Espoz y Mina, the uncle and successor of the student, far outstripped his contemporaries in fame. He shed the blood of his prisoners freely, yet rather from false principles, and under peculiar circumstances, than from any real ferocity, his natural disposition being manly and generous; and although not possessed of any peculiar military genius, he had a sound judgment, surprising energy, and a constant spirit. By birth a peasant, he despised the higher orders of his own country, and never would suffer any *hidalgo*, or gentleman, to join his band. From 1809 until the end of the war, he maintained himself in the provinces bordering on the Ebro; often defeated, and chased from place to place, he yet gradually increased his forces, until, in 1812, he was at the head of more than ten thousand men, whom he paid regularly, and supplied from resources chiefly created by himself; one of which was remarkable:—He established a treaty with the French generals, by which articles, not being warlike stores, coming from France, had safe conduct from his *partida*, on paying a duty, which Mina appropriated to the subsistence of his followers.

That the guerilla system could never seriously affect the progress of the French, is proved by the fact, that the constant aim of the principal chiefs was to introduce the customs of regular troops; and their success against the enemy was proportionate to their progress in discipline and organization. There were not less than fifty thousand of these irregular soldiers, at one time, in Spain; and so severely did they press upon the country that it may be assumed as a truth, that if the English army had abandoned the contest, one of the surest means by which the French could have gained the good will of the nation would have been the extirpating of the *partidas*. Nevertheless, a great and unquestionable advantage was derived by the regular armies, and especially by the British, from the existence of these bands: the French could never communicate with each other, nor combine their movements, except

by the slow method of sending officers with strong escorts; whereas, their adversaries could correspond by post, and even by telegraph, an advantage equal to a reinforcement of thirty thousand men

PORTUGUESE POWER.

The Portuguese military system has been already explained. The ranks of the regular army, and of the militia, were filling; the arms and equipments were supplied by England; and means were taken to give effect to the authority of the *Capitães Mor*, or chiefs of districts, under whom the *ordenanzas* were to be gathered for the defence of the country. The people, having been a second time relieved from an invasion by the intervention of a British army, were disposed to submit implicitly to the guidance of their deliverers; but the effect of former misgovernment pervaded every branch of administration, political and municipal, and impeded the efforts made to draw forth the military resources of the kingdom; and it is curious that, until the end of the war, such was the reluctance of the people to become soldiers, that, notwithstanding their undoubted hatred of the French, their natural docility, and the visible superiority of the soldier's condition over that of the peasant or artisan, the recruiting was always difficult; the odious spectacle was constantly exhibited, of men marched in chains, to reinforce armies, which were fighting in what was a popular, and ought to have been a sacred cause.

The actual number of regular troops, armed and organized, was about fifteen thousand, but notwithstanding the courage displayed by those employed in the late operations, Marshal Beresford was still doubtful of their military qualities, and reluctant to act separately from the British troops. The most important fortresses in a condition for defence were Elvas, Albuquerque, and Almeida, in the first line; Abrantes and Peniché, in the second; the citadel, and forts of Lisbon, Palmela, and Setuval, in the third. But there were many other walled places, capable, if armed, of standing a siege, and presenting a variety of strong points for the irregular force of the country to assemble upon; and hence Portugal offered, not only great resources in men, but a base of operations solid in itself; central with respect to the French armies, and enabling the English General to act without reference to the Spanish government or Spanish commanders; an advantage more justly appreciated at the end of this campaign than at the commencement. Such were the relative situations of the contending hosts in the Peninsula; yet, to take an enlarged view of affairs, it is necessary to look beyond the actual field of battle; for the contest in Spain,

no longer isolated, was become an integral part of the great European struggle against France.

Napoleon, after his first successes near Ratisbon, entered Vienna, and attempted to carry the war to the left bank of the Danube; but a severe check, received at the battle of Esling on the 21st of May, so shook his moral ascendancy in Europe, that he deemed it necessary to concentrate all the disposable strength of his empire for one gigantic effort, which should restore the terror of his name. The appearance of inactivity assumed by him, while thus mightily gathering his forces, deceived his enemies; and as their hopes rose, their boasts became extravagant, more especially in England, where, to express a doubt of his immediate overthrow, was regarded as a heinous offence; and where the government, buoyed up with foolish expectations, thought less of supporting a noble and effectual warfare in Portugal than of nourishing and aiding the secondary and rather degrading hostility of conspirators, malcontents, and military adventurers in Germany.

While Sir Arthur Wellesley was waiting impatiently on the Tagus for the scanty reinforcements afforded him, two other armies were simultaneously preparing to act against the extremities of the French empire. The one, consisting of about twelve thousand men, drawn from Sicily, was destined to invade Italy, the southern parts of which had been denuded of troops to oppose the Austrians on the Tagliamento.* The other was assembled on the coast of England, where above forty thousand of the finest troops the nation could boast of, and a fleet of power to overthrow all the other navies of the world combined, composed an armament intended to destroy the great marine establishment which the French Emperor had so suddenly and so portentously created at Antwerp. So vast an expedition had never before left the British shores, neither any one so meanly conceived, so improvidently arranged, so calamitously conducted; for the marine and land forces, combined, numbered more than eighty thousand fighting men, and those of the bravest, yet the object in view was comparatively insignificant, and even that was not obtained. Delivered over to the leading of a man whose military incapacity has caused the glorious title of Chatham to be scorned, this ill-fated army, with spirit, and strength, and zeal to have spread the fame of England to the extremities of the earth, perished, without a blow, in the pestilent marshes of Walcheren! And so utterly had party spirit stifled the feeling of national honor, that men were found in Parliament base enough to reprobate the convention of Cintra, to sneer at Sir John Moore's operations, and yet to declare the Walcheren expedition wise, profitable, and even glorious.

* Adjutant-General's Returns.

The operation against Italy was less unfortunate rather than more ably conducted, and it was equally abortive. What with slow preparations, the voyage, and the taking of the petty islands of Ischia and Procida, thirteen weeks were wasted, although during that period Murat, conscious of his inability to resist, was only restrained from abandoning Naples by the firmness of his Queen and the energy of Sallicetti, the Minister of Police. We have seen that it was the wish of the ministers to have the troops in Sicily employed in the south of Spain, but yielding to the representations of Sir John Stuart, they permitted him to make this display of military foolery: yet it is not with the bad or good success of these expeditions that this history has to deal, but with that direful ministerial incapacity which suffered two men, notoriously unfitted for war, to waste and dissipate the military strength of England on secondary objects, while a renowned commander, placed at the most important point, was left without an adequate force.

For the first time since the commencement of the Peninsular war, sixty thousand Spanish troops, well armed and clothed, were collected in a mass, and in the right place, communicating with a British force; for the first time since Napoleon swayed the destiny of France, the principal army of that country had met with an important check; the great conqueror's fortune seemed to waver, and the moment had arrived when the British government was called to display all its wisdom and energy. The Duke of York had performed his duty; he had placed above ninety thousand superb soldiers, all disposable for offensive operations, in the hands of the ministers; but the latter knew not their value, and, instead of concentrating them upon one, scattered them upon many points. Sir Arthur Wellesley might have had above eighty thousand British troops on the frontiers of Portugal, and he was a general capable of wielding them. He was forced to commence a campaign upon which the fate of the Peninsula, a quick triumph or a long-protracted agony of twelve millions of people depended, with only twenty-two thousand; while sixty thousand fighting men, and ships numerous enough to darken all the coasts of Spain, were waiting, in Sicily and England, for orders which were to doom them, one part to scorn, and the other to an inglorious and miserable fate. Shall the deliverance of the Peninsula, then, be attributed to the firmness and long-sighted policy of ministers who gave these glaring proofs of improvidence, or shall the glory of that great exploit lighten round the head of him who so manfully maintained the fierce struggle, under all the burden of their folly?

CHAPTER V.

Campaign of Talavera—Choice of operations—Sir Arthur Wellesley moves into Spain—Joseph marches against Venegas—Orders Victor to return to Talavera—Cuesta arrives at Almaraz—Sir Arthur reaches Placentia—Interview with Cuesta—Plan of operations arranged—Sir Arthur, embarrassed by the want of provisions, detaches Sir Robert Wilson up the Vera de Placentia, passes the Tietar, and unites with Cuesta at Oropesa—Skirmish at Talavera—Bad conduct of the Spanish troops—Victor takes post behind the Alberche—Cuesta's absurdity—Victor retires from the Alberche—Sir Arthur, in want of provisions, refuses to pass that river—Intrigues of Mr. Frere—The Junta secretly orders Venegas not to execute his part of the operation.

CAMPAIGN OF TALAVERA.

IN the foregoing chapters the real state of affairs in the Peninsula has been described; but it appeared with a somewhat different aspect to the English General, because false informations, egregious boasts, and hollow promises, such as had been employed to mislead Sir John Moore, were renewed at this period; and the allied nations were influenced by a riotous rather than a reasonable confidence of victory. The English newspapers teemed with letters, describing the enemy's misery and fears; nor was the camp free from these inflated feelings. Marshal Beresford was so credulous of French weakness as publicly to announce to the Junta of Badajos that Soult's force, wandering and harassed by continual attacks, was reduced to eight or ten thousand distressed soldiers. Nay, Sir Arthur Wellesley himself, swayed by the pertinacity of the tale-makers, the unhesitating assurances of the Junta, perhaps also a little excited by a sense of his own great talents, was not free from the impression that the hour of complete triumph was come.

The Spanish government and the Spanish generals were importunate for offensive movements, and lavish in their promises of support; and the English General was as eager; for he was at the head of gallant troops, his foot was on the path of victory, and he felt that, if the Duke of Belluno was not quickly disabled, the British army, threatened on both flanks, would, as in the case of Sir John Cradock, be obliged to remain in some defensive position, near Lisbon, until it became an object of suspicion and hatred to the Spanish and Portuguese people.

There were three lines of offensive operations open:—

1. *To cross the Tagus, join Cuesta's army, and, making Elvas and Badajos the base of movements, attack Victor in front.* This line was circuitous. It permitted the enemy to cover himself by the Tagus, and the operations of the allies would have been cramped

by the Sierra de Guadalupe on one side, and the mountains lying between Albuquerque and Alcantara on the other; strong detachments must also have been left to cover the roads to Lisbon, on the right bank of the Tagus. Finally, the communication between the Duke of Belluno and Soult being free, Beresford's corps would have been endangered.

2. *To adopt Almeida and Ciudad Rodrigo as the base of movements, and to operate in conjunction with Beresford, the Duke de Parque, and Romana, by the line of Salamanca, while Cuesta and Venegas occupied the attention of the first and fourth corps on the Tagus.* The objections to this line were, that it separated the British troops from the most efficient and most numerous, and obliged them to act with the weakest and most irregular of the Spanish armies; that it abandoned Cuesta to the ruin which his headstrong humor would certainly provoke; and as the loss of Seville or of Lisbon would inevitably follow, the instructions of the English ministers (which enjoined the defence of the latter city as paramount to every object, save the military possession of Cadiz) would have been neglected.

3. *To march upon Placentia and Almaraz, form a junction with Cuesta, and advance against Madrid, while Venegas operated in the same view by the line of La Mancha.* The obstacles in the way of this plan were—1. That it exposed Cuesta to be defeated by Victor before the junction; and after the junction, the combinations would still be dependent upon the accuracy of Venegas's movements. 2. That Sir Arthur Wellesley's march, with reference to Soult's troops, would be a flank march; an unsafe operation at all times, but, on this occasion, when the troops must move through the long and narrow valley of the Tagus, peculiarly dangerous. Nevertheless, this line was adopted, nor were the reasons in favor of it devoid of force. The number of French immediately protecting Madrid was estimated at fifty thousand; but confidential officers, sent to the head-quarters of Cuesta and Venegas, had ascertained that their strength was not overstated at thirty-eight thousand for the first, and twenty-five thousand for the second; all well armed and equipped, and the last certainly the best and most efficient army that the Spaniards had yet brought into the field. Now the English force in Portugal amounted to thirty thousand men exclusive of the sick, twenty-two thousand being under arms on the frontier, and eight thousand at Lisbon; here, then, was a mass of ninety thousand regular troops that could be brought to bear on fifty thousand; besides which, there were Sir Robert Wilson's legion, about a thousand strong, and the Spanish *partidas* of the Guadalupe and the Sierra de Bejar.

The ridge of mountains which separate the valley of the Tagus from Castile and Leon being, as has been already related, impracticable for artillery, except at the passes of Baños and Perales, it was supposed that the twenty thousand men under Beresford and the Duke del Parque would be sufficient to block those lines of march, and that Romana, moving by the Tras os Montes, might join the Duke del Parque; thus thirty thousand men, supported by two fortresses, would be ready to protect the flank of the British army in its march from Placentia towards Madrid. But this was a vain calculation, for Romana remained ostentatiously idle at Coruña, and Sir Arthur Wellesley, never having seen the Spanish troops in action, thought too well of them; having had no experience of Spanish promises, he trusted them too far, and at the same time made a false judgment of the force and position of his adversaries. The arrival of the sixth corps at Astorga and of the fifth at Valladolid were unknown to him; the strength of the second corps, and, perhaps, the activity of its chief, were also underrated. Instead of fifteen or twenty thousand harassed French troops, without artillery, there were seventy thousand fighting men behind the mountains!

The 27th of June, the English army, breaking up from the camp of Abrantes, and being organized in the following manner, marched into Spain:—

		<i>Artillery.</i>	
Six brigades,	30 guns,	commanded by Maj.-Gen. Howorth.	
		<i>Cavalry.</i>	
Three brigades,	3,047 sabres,	commanded by Lt.-Gen. Payne.	
		<i>Infantry.</i>	
1st div. of 4 brigades,	6,023 bayonets,	commanded by Lt.-Gen. Sherbrooke.	
2d do. 2 do.	8,947 do.	do.	Maj.-Gen. Hill.
3d do. 2 do.	3,736 do.	do.	Maj.-Gen. Mackenzie.
4th do. 2 do.	2,957 do.	do.	Br.-Gen. Campbell.
5 divs. 13 brigades,	19,710 sabres and bayonets.		
—	1,287 Engineers, artillery, and wagon-train.		
Grand total.....20,997 men, and 30 pieces of artillery.			

Besides this force, the 40th regiment, so long detained at Seville by Mr. Frere, had arrived in Lisbon, and the troops on their march from that city, being somewhat less than eight thousand bayonets, were organized in three brigades, commanded by Major-General Lightfoot and Brigadier-Generals Robert and Catlin Craufurd. But the leading brigade, under Robert Craufurd, only quitted Lisbon on the 28th of June.

The army moved by both banks of the Tagus; one column proceeding through Sobreira Formosa, the other by Villa Velha, where a boat-bridge was established. The 1st of July the head-quarters

were at Castello Branco, and from thence the troops continued their route in one column, by Moralejo and Coria; a flanking brigade, under General Donkin, being directed through Ceclavan and Torijoncillos, to explore the country between Zarza Mayor and the Tagus. The 8th, the head-quarters were established at Placentia. The 10th, the army arrived at that place, and was, soon after, joined by a regiment of cavalry and two battalions of infantry from Lisbon.

At this period Cuesta was at Almaraz; and Victor, of whose intermediate movements it is time to take notice, was at Talavera de la Reyna. When that Marshal had retired from Torremocha, the valley of the Tagus was exhausted by the long sojourn of the fourth and fifth corps;* but the valley of Placentia was extremely fertile and untouched, and the Duke of Belluno, whose troops, weakened by the tertian sickness, required good nourishment, resolved to take post there, keeping a bridge at Bazagona, on the Tietar, by which he could, in two marches, fall upon Cuesta, if he ventured to pass the Tagus at Almaraz. At Placentia, also, he could open a communication with the second and fifth corps, and observe closely the movements of the English army on the frontier of Portugal. The bridge at Bazagona had been finished on the 21st of June, and the French light troops were scouring the country towards Placentia, when the King, who had already withdrawn a division of infantry and a large part of the cavalry of the first corps to reinforce the fourth, ordered the Duke of Belluno to retire instantly to Talavera, leaving rear-guards on the Tietar and at Almaraz. This order, which arrived the 22d of June, was the result of that indecision which none but truly great men, or fools, are free from; the first, because they can see their way clearly through the thousand difficulties that encumber and bewilder the mind in war; the last, because they see nothing.

On the present occasion, General Sebastiani had reported that Venegas was reinforced and ready to penetrate by La Mancha; and the King, swayed by this false information, disturbed by the march of Cuesta, and still more by Blake's advance against Zaragoza (the result of which was then unknown), became so alarmed that he commanded St. Cyr to move into Aragon, repaired himself to Toledo with his guards and reserve, withdrew the light cavalry and a division of infantry from Victor, obliged that Marshal to fall back on Talavera; and even commanded Mortier to bring up the fifth corps from Valladolid to Villa Castin, near Avila, although, following Napoleon's orders, it should have gone to Salamanca.

In the hope of meeting Venegas, Joseph had penetrated as far

* Sémélé's Journal of Operations, MS.

as the Jabalon river, in La Mancha; and as the Spaniard, fearful of the tempest approaching him, immediately took shelter in the Morena, the King, leaving some posts of the 4th corps at Toledo, restored the light cavalry to the first corps, and, with his guards and reserve, returned to Madrid. But, while he had been pursuing a shadow, Victor was exposed to great danger; for the Jabalon is six long marches from Madrid, and hence, for ten days, the Duke of Belluno, with only two divisions of infantry and two thousand cavalry—in all about fourteen thousand men—had remained at Talavera without any support, although sixty thousand men were marching against him from different points.

Victor did not suffer as he might have done, but his numerical weakness was certainly the safety of Cuesta; for that General, having followed the retreat of the first corps from Torremocha, crossed the Tagus at Almaraz on the 23d of June, and pushed an advanced guard towards Oropesa. He had thirty-eight thousand men, yet he remained tranquil while (at a distance of only twelve miles) fourteen thousand French made a flank movement that lasted three days; and his careless method of acting, and his unskilful dispositions were so evident, that the French cavalry, far from fearing, were preparing to punish him, when he suddenly took the alarm, and, withdrawing to Almaraz, occupied himself in finishing his bridges over the Tagus.

The 28th of June, Victor, having removed his hospitals and dépôts from Arzobispo, had taken a position behind the Alberche, keeping, however, three battalions and the cavalry at Talavera, with advanced posts at Calera and Gamonal; a small detachment, also, watched the course of the Tagus from the mouth of the Alberche to that of the Guadarama, and a movable column was sent to Escalona, to observe the Vera de Placentia, and the passes leading upon Avila. In executing this retrograde movement, Victor, having no means of transport, burnt ten out of the fifteen pontoons supporting his bridge over the Tietar; and, for the same reason, he threw a considerable quantity of powder and shot into the river.* His troops had been for four days on quarter rations, and were suffering from sickness and hunger; and as the Tagus was fordable in several places, the danger of his position is evident. The British were, however, still at Abrantes, and Cuesta knew not how to profit by this opportunity before the King returned to La Mancha.

Such was the position of the different armies when the British General arrived at Placentia. He had seen Soult's letters, found upon General Franceschi, and thus ascertained that the second

* Sémélé's Journal of Operations, First Corps, MS.

corps was at Zamora, and from Franceschi himself, who passed as a prisoner, at the same time, he learned the arrival of the fifth corps at Valladolid; but the march of Ney's corps was not suspected, and the tenor of Soult's letters led to the notion that Galicia was to be retained. A letter of Victor's to Joseph, dated the 23d of June, and written in the most desponding language, had been likewise intercepted; and, as Soult's correspondence also gave a strong picture of *his* difficulties, the general impression that the French armies were not only weak but utterly dismayed, was rather augmented than lessened by this information. Sir Arthur Wellesley, however, could not but have some distrust, when he knew that *two corps* were beyond the mountains, on his left, and though far from suspecting the extent of his danger, he took additional precautions to protect that flank, and renewed his instructions to Beresford to watch the enemy's movements, and to look carefully to the defence of the *Puerto Perales*. But the pass of Baños was still to be guarded, and for this purpose Sir Arthur applied to Cuesta.*

The Spanish General was at first unwilling to detach any men to that quarter, yet finally agreed that two battalions from his army and two others from the town of Bejar, at the other side of the pass, should unite to defend Baños, and that the Duke del Parque should also send a detachment to the pass of Perales. Although these measures appeared sufficient to obviate danger from Soult's corps, weakened as it was supposed to be, they were evidently futile to check the real force under that Marshal; and they were rendered absolutely ridiculous by Cuesta, who sent two weak battalions of three hundred men each, and with only twenty rounds of ammunition per man: and this was only a part of a system which already weighed heavily on the English General.

The 10th, Sir Arthur Wellesley had proceeded to Cuesta's headquarters, near the Col de Mirabete, to confer with him on their future operations. Ever since the affair of Valdez, in 1808, the Junta had been sorely afraid of Cuesta, and, suspecting that he was meditating some signal vengeance, they endeavored to raise up rivals to his power. In this view, they had lavished honors and authority upon Blake, and when the defeat at Belchite crushed their hopes in that quarter, they turned their eyes upon Venegas, and increased his forces, taking care to give him the best troops. Still Cuesta's force was formidable, and to reduce it was the object both of Mr. Frere and the Junta; the motive of the first being to elevate the Duke of Albuquerque: the intention of the others being merely to reduce the power of Cuesta.

* Sir A. Wellesley's Correspondence, Parl. Papers, printed in 1810.

But whatever might have been the latter's ultimate intention with respect to the Junta, it is certain that his natural obstinacy and violence were greatly increased by a knowledge of these proceedings, and that he was ill-disposed towards the English General, as thinking him a party concerned in the intrigues. When, therefore, Sir Arthur, at the instigation of Mr. Frère, proposed that a draft of ten thousand Spanish troops should be detached towards Avila and Segovia, Cuesta replied that it must be done by the British, and absolutely refused to furnish more than two battalions of infantry and a few cavalry to strengthen Sir Robert Wilson's partisan corps, which was destined to act on the enemy's right.* This determination again baffled Mr. Frère's project of placing the Duke of Albuquerque at the head of an independent force, and obliged the Supreme Junta to fall upon some other expedient for reducing Cuesta's power; however, it was fortunate that the old Spaniard resisted the proposal, because the ten thousand men would have gone straight into the midst of the fifth corps, which, in expectation of such a movement, was then at Villa Castin, and having been rejoined by the detachment of Colonel Briche, from Catalonia, was eighteen thousand strong, and supported by Kellermann's division of cavalry at Valladolid.

The discussion between the generals lasted two days; but with the approbation of the Supreme Junta, it was finally agreed that the British and Spanish armies, under Sir Arthur and Cuesta, should march on the 18th against Victor, and that Venegas, advancing at the same time through La Mancha, should leave Toledo and Aranjuez to his left, and push for Fuente Duenas and Villa Maurique on the upper Tagus. If this movement should draw Sebastiani, with the fourth corps, to that side, Venegas was to keep him in play while the allied forces defeated Victor. If Sebastiani disregarded it, Venegas was to cross the Tagus and march upon Madrid from the south-east, while Sir Robert Wilson, reinforced by some Spanish battalions, menaced that capital from the opposite quarter.

Previous to entering Spain, Sir Arthur had ascertained that the valleys of the Alagon and the Arago, and those between Bejar and Ciudad Rodrigo, were fertile, and capable of nourishing his army, and he had sent commissaries to all these points to purchase mules and to arrange with the alcaldes of the different districts for the supply of the troops. He had obtained the warmest assurances from the Supreme Junta, that every needful article should be forthcoming, and the latter had also sent the Intendant-General, Don Lonzano de Torres, to the British head-quarters, with full powers

* Sir A. Wellesley's Correspondence, Parl. Papers, 1810.

to forward all arrangements for the supply of the English soldiers. Relying upon these preparations, Sir Arthur had crossed the frontier with few means of transport and without magazines, for Portugal could not furnish what was required, and, moreover, the Portuguese peasants had an insuperable objection to quitting their own country; a matter, however, apparently of little consequence, because Mr. Frere, writing officially at the time, described the people of Estremadura as viewing "*the war in the light of a crusade, and carrying it on with all the enthusiasm of such a cause!*"

From Castello Branco to Placentia is but seven days' march, yet that short time was sufficient to prove the bad faith of the Junta, and the illusion under which Mr. Frere labored. Neither mules for the transport of ammunition and provisions, nor the promised help of the authorities, nor aid of any kind could be procured; and Don Lonzano de Torres, although to Sir Arthur he freely acknowledged the extent of the evil, the ill-will of the inhabitants, and the shameful conduct of the Supreme Junta, afterwards, without shame, asserted that the British troops had always received and consumed double rations, and were in want of nothing; an assertion in which he was supported by Don Martin de Garay, the Spanish Secretary of State; the whole proceeding being a concerted plan to afford the Junta a pretext for justifying their own and casting a slur upon the English General's conduct, if any disasters should happen.*

Sir Arthur Wellesley, seriously alarmed for the subsistence of his army, wrote, upon the 16th, to Mr. Frere and to General O'Donoghue, the chief of Cuesta's staff, representing to both the distress of the troops, and intimating his resolution *not to proceed beyond the Alberche*, unless his wants were immediately supplied; faithful, however, to his agreement with Cuesta, he prepared to put his force in motion for that river. It was known at Placentia on the 15th, that Ney had retreated from Coruña; but it was believed that his corps had been recalled to France, and no change took place in the plan of campaign. It was not suspected that the sixth corps had then been sixteen days at Astorga!

The valley of the Tagus, into which the army was about to plunge, is intersected by several rivers, with rugged banks and deep channels; but their courses being very little out of the parallel of the Tagus, the Alberche is in a manner inclosed by the Tietar. Now, Sir Robert Wilson, having a detachment of four thousand Portuguese and Spanish troops, had ascended the right bank of the latter river, and gained possession of the passes of Arenas, which lead upon Avila, and of the pass of San Pedro Bernardo, which leads upon Madrid; in this position he covered the

* Appendix 13.

Vera de Placentia, and threatened Victor's communication with the capital. The French Marshal was alarmed, and a movement of the whole army in the same direction would have obliged him to abandon the lower Alberche;* because two marches effected beyond Arenas, in the direction of Escalona and Maqueda, would have placed Sir Arthur Wellesley between the first corps and Madrid. But, on the other hand, the line of country was too rugged for rapid movements with a large body; and it was necessary first to secure a junction with Cuesta, because Victor, having recovered his third division on the 7th of July, was again at the head of twenty-five thousand men. With such a force he could not be trusted near the Spaniards, and the British General therefore resolved to cross the Tietar, at the Venta de Bazagona, and march by Miajadas upon Oropesa.

The 16th, two companies of the *staff corps*, with a working party of five hundred men, marched from Placentia to Bazagona, to throw a bridge over the Tietar. The Duke of Belluno had wasted many days in dragging up fifteen pontoons from the Tagus, to form his bridge at that place, and when he retired upon Talavera, he destroyed the greatest part of the equipage;† but the English officer employed on this occasion pulled down an old house in the neighborhood, felled some pine trees in a wood three miles distant, and, uniting intelligence with labor, contrived, without other aid than a few hatchets and saws, in one day, to throw a solid bridge over the Tietar.

The 18th, the army crossed that river, and taking the route of Miajadas, reached Talayuela.

The 19th, the main body halted at Centinello and Casa de Somas. The advanced posts were at Venta de St. Juliens.

The 20th, the troops reached Oropesa; but as their marches had been long, and conducted through a difficult country, they halted the 21st; on which day Cuesta, who had moved from Almaraz by Naval Moral and Arzobispo, passed Oropesa, and united his whole force at Velada, except a small detachment, which marched along the south bank of the Tagus, to threaten the French by the bridge of Talavera.

The Duke of Belluno, aware of these movements, had supported his posts at Talavera with a division of infantry, which was disposed in successive detachments behind that town; but his situation appeared critical, because the allies, covered by the Alberche, might still gain a march and reach Escalona before him, and from thence either push for Madrid, by the pass of Brunete, or, taking post at

* Sémélé's Journal of Operations, MS.

† Sémélé's Journal of the First Corps' Operations, MS.

Maqueda, cut him off from the capital. His sources of information were however sure, and he contented himself with sending a regiment of hussars to Cazar de Escalona, to watch the upper Alberche, and to support the movable column opposed to Sir Robert Wilson.

The 21st, the allies being between Oropesa and Velada, Victor recalled all his foraging parties, altered his line of retreat from the Madrid to the Toledo road, removed his parc from St. Ollalla to Cevolla, and concentrated two divisions of infantry behind the Alberche.

The 22d, the allies moved in two columns, to drive the French posts from Talavera, and Cuesta, marching by the high road, came first up with the enemy's rear-guard, near the village of Gamonal. Then commenced a display of ignorance, timidity, and absurdity, that has seldom been equalled in war; the past defeats of the Spanish army were rendered quite explicable; the little fruit derived from them by Marshal Victor, quite inexplicable. General Latour Maubourg, with two thousand dragoons, came boldly on to the table-land of Gamonal, and sustaining a cannonade, not only checked the head of the Spanish leading column, but actually obliged General Zayas, who commanded it, to display his whole line, consisting of fifteen thousand infantry and three thousand cavalry; nor did the French horsemen give back at all, until the appearance of the red uniforms on their right informed them that it was time to retire. Then, and not till then, Latour Maubourg, supported by some infantry, retreated behind the Alberche, and without loss, although many batteries, and at least six thousand Spanish horse, were close on his rear; the latter could never be induced to make even a partial charge, however favorable the opportunity, and by two o'clock the whole French army was safely concentrated on its position. Ruffin's division on the left touched the Tagus, and protected the bridge over the Alberche, which was more immediately defended by a regiment of infantry and fourteen pieces of artillery. Villatte's and Lapisse's divisions, drawn up in successive lines, on some high ground that overlooked the surrounding country, formed the right; the heavy cavalry were in second line near the bridge, and in this situation Victor rested the 22d and 23d.

It was at all times difficult to obtain accurate information from the Spaniards by gentle means; hence, the French were usually better supplied with intelligence than the British, while the native generals never knew anything about the enemy, until they felt the weight of his blows. Up to this period, Sir Arthur's best sources of information had been the intercepted letters of the French; and now, although the latter had been in the same position, and without any change of numbers since the 7th, the inhabitants of Talavera

could not, or would not, give any information of their strength or situation; nor could any reasonable calculation be formed of either, until some English officers crossed the Tagus, and, from the mountains on the left bank of that river, saw the French position in reverse. The general outline of an attack was, however, agreed upon for the next morning, but the details were unsettled, and when the English commander came to arrange these with Cuesta, the latter was gone to bed! The British troops were under arms at three o'clock the next morning; Cuesta's staff were, however, not aroused from slumber until seven o'clock, and the old man finally objected to fight that day, alleging, among other absurd reasons, that it was Sunday. There was something more than absurdity in these proceedings. Victor, who was not ignorant of the weak points of his own position, remained tranquil the 23d, being well assured that no attack would take place, for it is certain that he had a correspondence with some of the Spanish staff, and the secret discussions between Sir Arthur Wellesley and Cuesta, at which only one staff officer of each party was present, became known to the enemy in twenty-four hours after; indeed, Cuesta was himself suspected of treachery by many, yet apparently without reason.

In the course of the 23d, the Spanish officer commanding the advanced posts reported that the French guns were withdrawn, and that it was evident they meant to retreat; Cuesta then became willing to attack, and proposed, in concert with Sir Arthur Wellesley, to examine Victor's position, when, to the surprise of the English commander, the Spaniard arrived in a coach, drawn by six horses, to perform this duty, and as the inequalities of the ground obliged him to descend from his vehicle, he cast himself at the foot of a tree, and in a few moments went to sleep; yet he was always ready to censure and to thwart every proposal of his able coadjutor. This time, however, he consented to fall upon the enemy, and the troops were in motion early in the morning of the 24th; but the Duke of Belluno was again duly informed of their intention, and having withdrawn his movable column from Escalona, and relinquished the road to Madrid, retreated during the night to Torrijos. Thus, the first combination of the allies failed entirely, and each hour the troops of the enemy were accumulating around them; for Venegas, who should have been at Fuente Duenas, high up on the Tagus, had not even passed Damiel; the King was collecting his whole strength in front, between Toledo and Talavera, and Soult was fast gathering his more formidable power behind the mountains of Bejar.

The English General was indeed still ignorant of the danger which threatened him from the Salamanca country, or he would

doubtless, have withdrawn at once to Placentia, and secured his communications with Lisbon, and with Beresford's troops; and other powerful reasons were not wanting to prevent his further advance. Before he quitted Placentia he had completed contracts with the alcaldes, in the Vera de Placentia, for two hundred and fifty thousand rations of forage and provisions; this, together with what he had before collected, would have furnished supplies for ten or twelve days, a sufficient time to beat Victor, and carry the army into a fresh country; but distrustful, as he had reason to be, of the Spaniards, he again gave notice to Cuesta and the Junta, that BEYOND THE ALBERCHE he would not move, unless his wants were immediately supplied; for hitherto the rations contracted for had not been delivered, and his representations to the Junta and to Cuesta were, by both, equally disregarded; there were no means of transport provided; the troops were already on less than half allowance; absolute famine approached, and when the General demanded food for his soldiers, at the hands of those whose cause he came to defend, he was answered with false excuses, and insulted by false statements. Under any circumstances this would have forced him to halt, but the advance having been made in the exercise of his own discretion, and not at the command of his government, there could be no room for hesitation: wherefore, remonstrating warmly, but manfully, with the Supreme Junta, he announced his resolution to go no further, nay, even to *withdraw from Spain altogether*.*

It is evident that without these well-founded reasons for pausing, Cuesta's conduct, and the state of his army, offered no solid ground for expecting success by continuing the forward movement; yet the faithless and perverse conduct of the Supreme Junta, although hidden as yet from Sir Arthur Wellesley, far exceeded the measure even of Cuesta's obdurate folly. That body, after having agreed to the plan upon which the armies were acting, concluded, in the fulness of their ignorance, that the combined troops in the valley of the Tagus would be sufficient to overthrow Joseph, and, therefore, secretly ordered Venegas not to fulfil his part; arguing to themselves, with a cunning stupidity, that it would be a master-stroke of policy to save him from any chance of defeat, and hoping thus to preserve a powerful force, under one of their own creatures, to maintain their own power. This was the cause why the army of La Mancha had failed to appear on the Tagus: and thus, the welfare of millions was made the sport of men, who yet were never tired of praising themselves, and have not failed to find admirers elsewhere.

As the Spaniards are perfect masters of the art of saying every thing and doing nothing, Sir Arthur's remonstrances drew forth

* Sir A. Wellesley's Correspondence, Parl. Papers, 1810.

many official statements, plausible replies, and pompous assertions, after their manner, but produced no amelioration of the evils complained of. Mr. Frere, also, thinking it necessary to make some apology for himself, asserted that the evil was deep-rooted, and that he had had neither time nor power to arrange any regular plan for the subsistence of the English armies. But all the evils that blighted the Spanish cause were deep-seated, and Mr. Frere, who could not arrange a plan for the subsistence of the troops, that indispensable preliminary to military operations, and which was really within his province, thought himself competent to direct all the operations themselves which were in the province of the generals. He had found leisure to meddle in all the intrigues of the day; to aim at making and unmaking Spanish commanders; to insult Sir John Moore; to pester Sir John Cradock with warlike advice; and to arrange the plan of campaign for Sir Arthur Wellesley's army, without that officer's concurrence.

CHAPTER VI.

Cuesta passes the Alberche—Sir Arthur Wellesley sends two English divisions to support him—Soult is appointed to command the second, fifth, and sixth corps—He proposes to besiege Ciudad Rodrigo and threaten Lisbon—He enters Salamanca, and sends General Foy to Madrid to concert the plan of operations—The King quits Madrid—Unites his whole army—Crosses the Guadarama river, and attacks Cuesta—Combat of Alcabon—Spaniards fall back in confusion to the Alberche—Cuesta refuses to pass that river—His dangerous position—The French advance—Cuesta re-crosses the Tietar—Sir Arthur Wellesley draws up the combined forces on the position of Talavera—The King crosses the Tietar—Skirmish at Casa de Salinas—Combat on the evening of the 27th—Panic in the Spanish army—Combat on the morning of the 28th—The King holds a council of war—Jourdan and Victor propose different plans—The King follows that of Victor—Battle of Talavera—The French re-cross the Alberche—General Craufurd arrives in the English camp—His extraordinary march—Observations.

THE English General's resolution to halt at Talavera made little impression upon Cuesta. A French corps had retreated before him, and Madrid, nay, the Pyrenees themselves, instantly rose on the view of the sanguine Spaniard: he was resolved to be the first in the capital, and he pushed forward in pursuit, reckless alike of military discipline and of the friendly warnings of Sir Arthur, who vainly admonished him to open his communications as quickly as possible with Venegas, and to beware how he let the enemy know that the British and Spanish armies were separated. In the fulness of his arrogant vanity, Cuesta crossed the Alberche on the

24th, and being unable to ascertain the exact route of the French, pursued them by the road of Toledo, as far as Cebolla, and by the road of Madrid, as far as El Bravo. On the 25th, still inflated with pride, he caused the troops at Cebolla to move on to Torrijos, and marched himself to St. Ollalla, as if chasing a deer, but the 26th he discovered that he had been hunting a tiger. Meanwhile Sir Arthur Wellesley, foreseeing the consequence of this imprudence, had sent General Sherbrooke, with two divisions of British infantry and all the cavalry, across the Alberche, to Cazalegas, where, being centrally situated with respect to Talavera, St. Ollalla, and Escalona, he could support the Spaniards, and, at the same time, hold communication with Sir Robert Wilson, who had been at the latter town since the 23d. But a great and signal crisis was at hand, the full importance of which cannot be well understood without an exact knowledge of the situation and proceedings of all the armies involved in this complicated campaign.

The 30th of June, Soult, when at Zamora, had received a despatch from the Emperor, dated near Ratisbon, conferring on him the supreme command of the second, fifth, and sixth corps, with orders to concentrate them, and act decisively against the English. "*Wellesley,*" said Napoleon, "*will probably advance, by the Tagus, against Madrid: in that case, pass the mountains, fall on his flank and rear, and crush him;*" for, at that distance, and without other information than what his own sagacity supplied, this all-knowing soldier foresaw the leading operations even as soon and as certainly as those who projected them. The Duke of Dalmatia immediately imparted these instructions to the King, and, at the same time, made known his own opinions and designs with respect to the probable projects of the allies. He was ignorant of the precise object and exact position of Sir Arthur Wellesley, but, judging from the cessation of hostility in the north, that the English were in march with the design of joining Cuesta, and acting by the line of the Tagus, he proposed to concentrate the third corps at Salamanca, besiege Ciudad Rodrigo, and menace Lisbon, which, he justly observed, would bring the English army back to the northern provinces of Portugal; and if, as some supposed, the intention of Sir Arthur was to unite, at Bragança, with Romana, and open the campaign to the north of the Douro, the French army would still be in a suitable position to oppose them.

In pursuance of this opinion, Soult ordered Mortier to approach Ciudad Rodrigo, with the double view of preparing for the siege and covering the quarters of refreshment so much needed by the second corps after its fatigues. Ney also was directed to march with the sixth corps, by the left bank of the Escla, to Zamora; but

the spirit of discord was strong, and it was at this moment that the King, alarmed by Sebastiani's report, drew the fifth corps to Villa Castin, while Marshal Ney, holding it imprudent to uncover Astorga and Leon, mortified also at being placed under the orders of another Marshal, refused to move to Zamora. Soult, crossed by these untoward circumstances, sent the division of light cavalry, under his brother, and one of infantry, commanded by Heudelet, from Zamora and Toro to Salamanca, with orders to explore the course of the Tormes, to observe Alba and Ledesma, and especially to scour the roads leading upon Ciudad Rodrigo and Placentia: these troops relieved a division of dragoons belonging to Kellermann, who was still charged with the general government of the province.

The 10th of July, the march of the British upon Placentia became known, and it was manifest that Sir Arthur had no design to act north of the Douro; wherefore the Duke of Dalmatia resolved to advance, with the remainder of the second corps, to Salamanca; and, partly by authority, partly by address, he obliged Ney to put the sixth corps in movement for Zamora, leaving Fournier's dragoons to cover Astorga and Leon. Meanwhile King Joseph, having returned from his fruitless excursion against Venegas, was at first incredulous of the advance of Sir Arthur Wellesley and Cuesta, but he agreed to Soult's project against Ciudad Rodrigo, and ordered Mortier to return to Valladolid, where that Marshal arrived, with his first division, on the 16th of July: his second division, under General Gazan, halted, however, at Medina del Campo and Nava del Rey, on the route from Salamanca to Valladolid, and an advanced guard was sent forward to Alba de Tormes.

The 13th of July, Soult, being assured that the British army was on the eastern frontier of Portugal, and that considerable reinforcements had been disembarked at Lisbon, became certain that Sir Arthur meant to operate by the line of the Tagus, and therefore again addressed the King to move him to an immediate siege of Ciudad Rodrigo, promising to have the three corps under his own command in full activity in fifteen days, provided his demands were complied with, the most important being—1. The formation of a battering train; 2. The concentration of an immense number of detachments, which weakened the active corps; 3. A reinforcement of fifteen or twenty thousand conscripts, drawn from France, to enable the old troops, employed on the line of communication, to join the *corps d'armée*. The first corps should, he said, continue to watch the Spanish army of Estremadura, and be prepared either to prevent it from uniting with the English to disturb the siege, or to join the first, second, and sixth corps, and give battle,

if that should become necessary.* The siege might thus be pressed vigorously, Ciudad would fall, Almeida would be next invested, and the communications of the English army with Lisbon threatened.

The 17th, the King replied, through Marshal Jourdan, that he approved of the plan, but had not means to meet several of Soult's demands, and he proposed that the latter should reinforce Kellermann and Bonnet with ten thousand men, to enable them to seize the Asturias and thus strengthen the communications with France. This drew from the Duke of Dalmatia the following remonstrance: "Under present circumstances we cannot avoid some sacrifice of territory. Let us prepare, first, by concentrating on a few points capable of defence and covering the hospitals and dépôts which may be on the extremity of our general position. This will not be so distressing as it may appear, because the moment we have beaten and dispersed the enemy's masses we shall recover all our ground." Then reiterating his own advice, he concluded thus: "I conceive it impossible to finish this war by detachments. It is large masses only, the strongest that you can form, that will succeed." It is remarkable that Sir Arthur Wellesley, writing at this time, says: "I conceive that the French are dangerous only when in large masses."

Meanwhile, Heudelet's division, having pushed back the advanced guards of the Duke del Parque upon Ciudad Rodrigo, ascertained that a great movement of troops was taking place near that city, and that Sir Arthur Wellesley, advancing quicker than was expected, had already reached Placentia; wherefore, on the 18th, Soult directed Mortier to march upon Salamanca with the fifth corps, and, at the same time, reinforced Heudelet's division with Merle's; the latter's place, at Zamora, being supplied by a division of the sixth corps, the remainder of which continued on the Esla, fronting the *Tras os Montes*. Thus, not less than fifty thousand men were at or close to Salamanca, with their cavalry-posts pointing to the passes of Baños, on the very day that Sir Arthur Wellesley crossed the Tietar to effect his junction with Cuesta. Yet, neither through the Duke del Parque, nor Beresford, nor the guerillas, nor the peasantry, did intelligence of this formidable fact reach him!

Having put the three corps in motion, Soult despatched General Foy to Madrid, with information of Sir Arthur's march, and to arrange the future combinations of the two armies. "It is probable," he said, "that the concentration of my army at Salamanca will oblige the English General to change his plan; but, if he shall already have advanced on the road to Madrid, we should assemble

* S. Journal of Operations, MS.

all our forces, both on the Tagus and on this side, fall upon him all together, and crush him. Thus, his campaign will be finished, and our operations may go on with advantage." Foy arrived, the 22d, at Madrid; and, a few hours afterwards, intelligence reached the King that the allies were at Talavera, in front of the first corps, and that Sir Robert Wilson (whose strength was much exaggerated) was at Escalona. The die was now cast. Joseph directed Soult to march immediately upon Placentia; then, leaving General Belliard, with only three thousand men, in the Retiro, set out himself, with his guards and reserve, by the road of Mostoles, to join Victor at Talavera. The 23d, being at Naval Carneiro, he received notice that the first corps would retreat that night to Torrijos, and, in two days, would be behind the Guadarama river; whereupon, turning to the left, Joseph descended the Guadarama to Vargas, and effected his junction with the Duke of Belluno on the 25th.

During this time, Sebastiani, who had been watching Venegas near Danyel, deceived that General, and, returning to Toledo by forced marches, left three thousand men there, with the design of obliging him to cross the Tagus, at Aranjuez. With the remainder of the fourth corps Sebastiani joined the King, and thus nearly fifty thousand fighting men and ninety pieces of artillery were concentrated, on the morning of the 26th, behind the Guadarama, and within a few miles of Cuesta's advanced guard. But, on the side of the allies, the main body of the Spaniards was at St. Ollalla, Sherbrooke, with two divisions and the cavalry, at Casalegas, and the rest of the English in Talavera. So that, while the French were concentrated and in full march to attack, the allies were separated in four nearly equal and unconnected parts, of which three were inclosed, as it were, in a net, between the Alberche and the Tagus! On such an occasion Napoleon would have been swift and deadly.

In retiring upon Toledo, instead of Madrid, the Duke of Belluno showed himself an able commander. Toledo was the strategic pivot upon which every movement turned; it was the central point, by holding which the army of Venegas was separated from the allies on the Alberche. If the latter advanced, Soult's operations rendered every forward step a stride towards ruin; if, leaving Venegas to his fate, they retired, it must be rapidly, or there would be neither wisdom nor safety in the measure. The King knew that Foy would reach Soult the 24th, and as that Marshal had already assembled his army about Salamanca, which was only four days' march from Placentia, he might be in the valley of the Tagus by the 30th; hence, to insure complete success, the royal army

needed only to keep the allies in check for four or five days. This was the plan that Soult had recommended, that the King promised to follow, and that Marshal Jourdan strenuously supported. The unskilful proceedings of Cuesta and Venegas, the separation of the allies, the distressed state of the English army, actually on the verge of famine, (a circumstance that could hardly be unknown to Victor,) greatly facilitated the execution of this project, which did not preclude the King from punishing the folly of the Spanish General, whose army, scattered and without order, discipline, or plan, so strongly invited an attack.

I have said that Cuesta was following a tiger: he had some faint perception of his danger on the 25th, and he gave orders to retreat on the 26th; but the French, suddenly passing the Guadarama, at two o'clock in the morning of that day, quickly drove the Spanish cavalry out of Torrijos, and pursued them to Alcabon; where General Zayas had drawn up four thousand infantry, two thousand horsemen, and eight guns, on a plain, and now offered battle.

COMBAT OF ALCABON.

The Spanish right rested on the road of Domingo Perez, and the left on the chapel of the same name. The French cavalry, under Latour Maubourg, advanced in a parallel line against the position, and a cannonade commenced; but at that moment, the head of the French infantry appeared in sight, the Spaniards broke, and fled in disorder towards St. Ollalla, followed at full gallop by the horsemen, who pressed them so sorely that the panic would, doubtless, have spread through the whole army, but for the courage of Albuquerque, who, coming up with a division of three thousand fresh cavalry, held the enemy in play, while Cuesta retreated, in the greatest disorder, towards the Alberche.

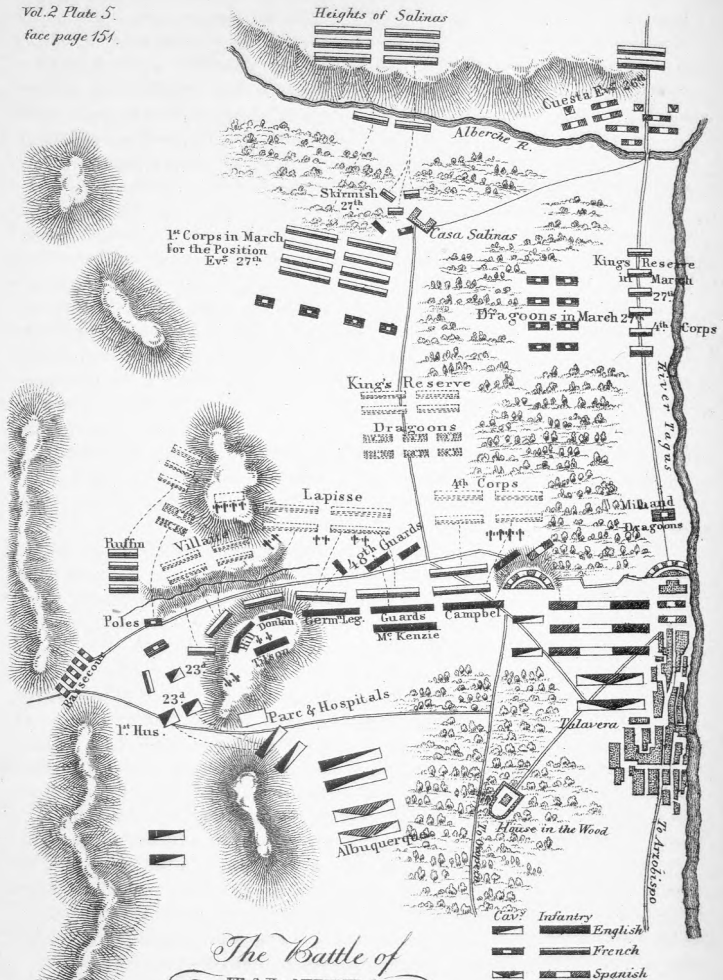
After reaching St. Oilalla, the French slackened their efforts; the main body halted there, the advanced guards, save a few cavalry-posts, did not pass El Bravo, and no attempt was made to profit from the unconnected position of the allies—a gross and palpable error; for, either by the sword or dispersion, the Spaniards lost, on that day, not less than four thousand men, and such was their fear and haste that it required but a little more perseverance in the pursuit to cause a general rout. Albuquerque, alone, showed any front; but his efforts were unavailing, and the disorder continued to increase until General Sherbrooke, marching out of Cazalegas, placed his divisions between the scared troops and the enemy. Still the danger was imminent; there was no concert between the commanders, the ground on the left of the Alberche was unfavorable to a retiring party, and, as yet, no position upon which the combined

forces could retire had been agreed upon! What, then, would have been the consequence if the whole French army had borne down, compact and strong, into the midst of the disordered masses?

Sir Arthur Wellesley, who, at the first alarm, had hastened to the front, seeing the confusion beyond the Alberche, knew that a battle was at hand, and, being persuaded that in a strong defensive position only could the Spaniards be brought to stand a shock, earnestly endeavored to persuade Cuesta, while Sherbrooke's people could yet cover the movement, to withdraw to Talavera, where there was ground suited for defence; but Cuesta's uncouth nature again broke forth; his people were beaten, dispirited, fatigued, bewildered, clustering on a narrow slip of low, flat land, between the Alberche, the Tagus, and the heights of Salinas, and the first shot fired by the enemy must have been the signal of defeat; yet it was in vain that Sir Arthur Wellesley pointed out those things, and entreated of him to avoid the fall of the rock that trembled over his head; he replied, that his troops would be disheartened by any further retreat, and that he would fight where he stood: in this mood he passed the night.

The 27th, at daylight, the British General renewed his solicitations, at first fruitlessly, but when the enemy's cavalry came in sight, and Sherbrooke prepared to retire, Cuesta sullenly yielded, yet, turning to his staff with frantic pride, observed that "*He had first made the Englishman go down on his knees.*" Sir Arthur Wellesley, by virtue of his genius, now assumed the direction of both armies. General Mackenzie's division and a brigade of light cavalry were left on the Alberche, to cover the retrograde movement, and the rest of the allied troops were soon in full march for the position, which was about six miles in the rear. Sir Robert Wilson, who had reached Naval Carneiro on the 25th, and opened a communication with Madrid, and who would certainly have entered that capital but for the approaching battle, was also recalled. He returned, on the 28th, to Escalona, and hung on the enemy's rear, but did not attempt to join the army.

Between the Alberche and the town of Talavera, the country was flat, and covered with olives and cork-trees; but nearly parallel to the Tagus, and at a distance of about two or three miles, a chain of round steep hills bounded the woody plain. Beyond these hills, and separated from them by a deep and rugged valley, something less than half a mile wide, was the mountain-ridge which divides the bed of the Alberche from that of the Tietar. Hence, a line drawn perpendicularly from the Tagus would cross the first chain of hills at the distance of two miles, and at two miles and a half would fall on the mountains.



The Battle of
TALAVERA
at the period of the final attack,
28th July, 1809.

Drawn by Gen^l Napier

Sir Arthur Wellesley, taking the town of Talavera, which was built close to the river, as his fixed point, placed the right of the Spaniards there, drawing their army up in two lines, with the left resting upon a mound, where a large field-redoubt was constructed, and behind which a brigade of British light cavalry was posted; all this front was covered by a convent, by ditches, mud walls, breast-works, and felled trees. The cavalry was posted behind the infantry; and the rear was supported by a large house in the wood, well placed, in case of defeat, to cover a retreat on to the main roads leading from Talavera to Arzobispo and Oropesa. In this position they could not be attacked seriously, nor their disposition be even seen; and thus, one-half of the line necessary to be occupied by the allies was rendered nearly impregnable, and yet held by the worst troops.

The front of battle was prolonged by the British infantry. Campbell's division, formed in two lines, touched the Spanish left, and Sherbrooke's division stood next to Campbell's, but arranged on one line only, because Mackenzie's division, destined to form the second line, was then near the Alberche. It was intended that Hill's division should close the left of the British, by taking post on the highest hill in the chain before mentioned, as bounding the flat and woody country; but, from some cause unknown, the summit of this height was not immediately occupied.

The whole line thus displayed was two miles in length, the left resting on the valley between the round hills and the mountain, and the front covered by a water-course, which, commencing about the centre of the line, opened deeply as it passed the left and became a wide chasm in the valley. Part of the British cavalry was with General Mackenzie, part in the plain beyond the left, and part behind the great redoubt, at the junction of the allied troops. The British and Germans under arms that day were somewhat above nineteen thousand sabres and bayonets, with thirty guns. The Spaniards, after their previous defeat, could only produce from thirty-three to thirty-four thousand men, but they had seventy guns. The combined army, therefore, offered battle with forty-four thousand infantry, nearly ten thousand cavalry, and a hundred pieces of artillery; the French came on with eighty guns, and, including the King's guards, nearly fifty thousand men, of which seven thousand were cavalry. But what a difference in the quality of the troops! The French were all hardy veterans, while the genuine soldiers of the allied army did not exceed nineteen thousand.

The King passed the night of the 26th at St. Ollalla, but put his troops in motion before daylight, on the 27th. Latour Maubourg, with the cavalry, preceded the column, and the first and fourth

corps, the royal guards, and reserve, followed in succession. The appearance of the leading squadrons, near Cazalegas, hastened, as we have seen, Cuesta's decision, and, about one o'clock in the afternoon, the first corps reached the heights of Salinas, from whence the dust of the allies, as they took up their position, could be perceived; but neither their situation nor disposition could be made out, on account of the forest, which, clothing the country from the Tagus nearly to the foot of the first range of hills, masked all their evolutions. The Duke of Belluno, however, being well acquainted with the ground, instantly guessed their true position, and, in pursuance of his advice, the King directed the fourth corps against the left of the allies, the cavalry against the centre, and Victor himself, with the first corps, against the right; the guards and the reserve supported the fourth corps.*

Two good routes, suitable to artillery, led from the Alberche to the position. The one, being the royal road to Talavera, was taken by the fourth corps and the reserve; the other, passing through a place called the *Casa de Salinas*, led directly upon Sir Arthur Wellesley's extreme left, and was taken by the first corps; but to reach this *Casa*, which was situated near the plain in front of the British left wing, it was necessary to ford the Alberche, and to march for a mile or two through the woods. A dust, which was observed to rise near the *Casa* itself, indicated the presence of troops at that place, and, in fact, General Mackenzie's division, and a brigade of light cavalry, were there posted, the infantry in the forest, the cavalry on the plain: yet no patrols had been sent to the front, and this negligence gave rise to the

COMBAT OF SALINAS.

About three o'clock, Lapisse and Ruffin's division having crossed the Alberche, marched in two columns towards the *Casa de Salinas*, and their light infantry came so suddenly upon the British outposts that the latter were surprised, and Sir Arthur Wellesley, who was in the *Casa*, nearly fell into the enemy's hands. The French columns followed briskly, and charged so hotly that the English brigades were separated, and being composed principally of young battalions, got into confusion; one part fired upon another, and the whole were driven into the plain. But, in the midst of this disorder, the forty-fifth, a stubborn old regiment, and some companies of the fifth battalion of the sixtieth, were seen in perfect array, and when Sir Arthur rode up to the spot, the fight was restored, and maintained so steadily that the enemy was checked. The infantry, supported by two brigades of cavalry, then crossed the plain, and

* Sémélé's Journal of Operations, MS.

regained the left and centre of the position, having lost about four hundred men. General Mackenzie, with one brigade, immediately took post in second line behind the guards; the other was commanded by Colonel Donkin, who, finding the hill on the left unoccupied, drew up there without orders, and so accidentally completed the position. The cavalry was formed in column behind the left of the line.

Victor, animated by the success of this first operation, brought up Villatte's division, together with all the artillery and light cavalry, to the Casa de Salinas, and then, issuing from the forest, rapidly crossed the plain, advancing, with a fine military display, close up to the left of the position, where he seized an isolated hill, directly in front of Colonel Donkin's ground, and immediately opened a heavy cannonade upon that officer's brigade. Meanwhile, the fourth corps and the reserve, approaching the right more slowly, and being unable to discover the true situation of Cuesta's troops, sent their light cavalry forward to make that General show his lines. As the French horsemen rode bodily up to the front, and commenced skirmishing with their pistols, the Spaniards made a general discharge of small arms, and then, as if deprived of all sense, ten thousand infantry, and all the artillery, breaking their ranks, fled to the rear; the artillery-men carried off their horses, the infantry threw away their arms; the Adjutant-General O'Donoghue was amongst the foremost of the fugitives, and even Cuesta himself was in movement towards the rear. The panic spread, and the French would fain have charged home, but Sir Arthur Wellesley, who was at hand, immediately flanked the main road with some English squadrons, and the ditches on the other side rendered the country impracticable; the fire of musketry was then renewed by those Spaniards who remained, the enemy lost some men, and finally retreated in disorder.

The greatest part of Cuesta's runaways fled as far as Oropesa, giving out that the allies were totally defeated and the French army in hot pursuit; thus, the rear became a scene of incredible disorder; the commissaries went off with their animals, the paymasters carried away their money chests, the baggage was scattered, and the alarm spread far and wide; nor is it to be concealed that some English officers disgraced their uniform on this occasion. Cuesta, however, having recovered from his first alarm, sent many of his cavalry regiments to head the fugitives and drive them back, and a part of the artillery, and some thousands of the infantry, were thus recovered during the night; but, in the next day's fight, the Spanish army was less by six thousand men than it should have

been, and the great redoubt in the centre was silent for want of guns.

COMBAT ON THE EVENING OF THE 27TH.

The hill on the left of the British army was the key of the whole position. It was steep and rugged on the side towards the French, and it was rendered more inaccessible by the ravine at the bottom, but towards the English side it was of a smoother ascent. Victor, however, observing that the extreme summit was unoccupied, and that Donkin's brigade was feeble, conceived the design of seizing it by a sudden assault.* The sun was sinking, and the twilight, and the confusion among the Spaniards on the right, appeared so favorable to his project, that, without communicating with the King, he immediately directed Ruffin's division to attack, Villatte to follow in support, and Lapisse to fall on the German legion, so as to create a diversion for Ruffin, but without engaging seriously himself. Although the assault was quick and vigorous, Colonel Donkin beat back the enemy in his front, but his force was too weak to defend every part, and many of the French turning his left, mounted to the summit behind him. At this moment, General Hill was ordered to reinforce him, and it was not yet dark when that officer, while giving orders to the Colonel of the 48th regiment, was shot at by some troops from the highest point; thinking they were stragglers from his own ranks firing at the enemy, he rode up to them, followed by his Brigade-Major, Fordyce, and in a moment found himself in the midst of the French. Fordyce was killed, and Hill's horse was wounded by a grenadier, who immediately seized the bridle; but the General, spurring the animal hard, broke the man's hold, and galloping down the descent met the 29th regiment, and, without an instant's delay, led them up with such a fierce charge, that the enemy could not sustain the shock.

The summit being thus recovered, the 48th regiment and the first battalion of detachments were immediately brought forward, and, in conjunction with the 29th, and Colonel Donkin's brigade, presented a formidable front of defence, and in good time; for the troops thus beaten back were only that part of the 9th French regiment which formed the advance of Ruffin's division; the two other regiments of that division had lost their way in the ravine, and hence the attack had not ceased, but only subsided for a time. Lapisse also was in motion, and soon after opened his fire against the German legion, and all the battalions of the 9th, being re-formed in one mass, again advanced up the face of the hill with redoubled vigor. The fighting then became vehement, and, in the darkness,

* Sémélé's Journal of Operations, MS.

the opposing flashes of the musketry showed with what a resolute spirit the struggle was maintained; the combatants were scarcely twenty yards asunder, and for a time the event seemed doubtful; but soon the well known shout of the British soldier was heard, rising above the din of arms, and the enemy's broken troops were driven once more into the ravine below. Lapisse, who had made some impression on the German legion, immediately abandoned his false attack, and the fighting of the 27th ceased. The British lost about eight hundred men, and the French about a thousand, on that day.

The bivouac fires now blazed up on both sides, and the French and British soldiers were quiet; but, about twelve o'clock, the Spaniards on the right being alarmed at some horse in their front, opened a prodigious peal of musketry and artillery, which continued for twenty minutes without any object; and during the remainder of the night, the whole line was frequently disturbed by desultory firing from the allied troops, by which several men and officers were unfortunately slain. The Duke of Belluno, who had learned, from the prisoners, the exact position of the Spaniards, until then unknown to the French generals, now reported his own failure to the King, and proposed that a second attempt should be made in the morning, at daylight. Marshal Jourdan opposed this, as being a partial enterprise, which could not lead to any great result; yet Victor was so earnest for a trial, and, resting his representation on his intimate knowledge of the ground, pressed the matter so home, that he won Joseph's assent, and immediately made dispositions for the attack.

The guns of the first corps, being formed in one mass, on the height corresponding to that on which the English left was posted, were enabled to command the great valley on their own right, to range the summit of the hill in their front, and obliquely to search the whole of the British line to the left, as far as the great redoubt between the allied armies.

Ruffin's division was placed in advance, and Villatte's in rear of the artillery; but the former kept one regiment close in the ravine.

Lapisse occupied some low table-land, opposite to Sherbrooke's division.

Latour Maubourg's cavalry formed a reserve to Lapisse; and General Beaumont's cavalry formed a reserve to Ruffin.

On the English side, General Hill's division was concentrated; the cavalry was massed behind the left; the parc of artillery and hospitals established under cover of the hill, between the cavalry and Hill's division.

COMBAT ON THE MORNING OF THE 28TH.

About daybreak, Ruffin's troops were drawn up, two regiments abreast, supported by a third, in columns of battalions, and in this order went forth against the left of the British; a part moving directly against the front, and a part by the valley on the right, thus embracing two sides of the hill. Their march was rapid and steady, they were followed by Villatte's division, and their assault was preceded by a burst of artillery, that rattled round the height, and swept away the English ranks by whole sections. The sharp chattering of the musketry succeeded, the French guns were then pointed towards the British centre and right, the grenadiers instantly closed upon General Hill's division, and the height sparkled with fire. The inequalities of the ground broke the compact formation of the troops on both sides, and small bodies were seen here and there struggling for the mastery with all the virulence of a single combat; in some places the French grenadiers were overthrown at once, in others they would not be denied, and reached the summit, but the reserves were always ready to vindicate their ground, and no permanent footing was obtained. Still the conflict was maintained with singular obstinacy; Hill himself was wounded, and his men were falling fast, yet the enemy suffered more, and gave back, step by step at first, and slowly, to cover the retreat of their wounded, but, finally, unable to sustain the increasing fury of the English, and having lost above fifteen hundred men in the space of forty minutes, the whole mass broke away in disorder, and returned to their own position, covered by the renewed play of their powerful artillery.

To this destructive fire no adequate answer could be made, for the English guns were few, and of small calibre, and when Sir Arthur Wellesley desired a reinforcement from Cuesta, the latter sent him only two pieces; yet even those were serviceable, and the Spanish gunners fought them gallantly. The principal line of the enemy's retreat was by the great valley, and a favorable opportunity for a charge of horse occurred, but unfortunately the English cavalry, having retired during the night, for water and forage, were yet too distant to be of service. However, these repeated efforts of the French against the hill, and the appearance of some of their light troops on the mountain, beyond the left, taught the English General that he had committed a fault in not prolonging his flank across the valley, and he hastened to rectify it. For this purpose, he brought up the principal mass of his cavalry behind his left, with the leading squadrons looking into the valley, and having obtained, from Cuesta, General Bassecour's