

## CHAPTER VIII.

The garrison of Ciudad Rodrigo make some successful excursions—Morillo operates against the French in Estremadura, is defeated and driven to Albuquerque—Civil affairs of Portugal—Bad conduct of the Regency—They imagine the war to be decided, and endeavor to drive Lord Wellington away from Portugal—Indications that Napoleon would assume the command in the Peninsula observed by Lord Wellington—He expects a combined attack on Lisbon by sea and land—Marmont and Dorsenne collect convoys and unite at Tamames—Advance to succor Ciudad Rodrigo—Combat of Elbodon—Allies retire to Guinaldo—To Aldea Ponte—Combat of Aldea Ponte—The allies retire to Soita—The French retire—Observations.

DURING the first arrangements for the blockade of Ciudad Rodrigo, the garrison made some excursions to beat up the quarters of the British cavalry, and to forage the villages; and some lancers from Salamanca drove Julian Sanchez from Ledesma. Meanwhile, in Estremadura, Morillo chased the enemy from Caceres, and advancing to Montanches, menaced Truxillo, but being beaten there by General Foy, he returned to Montijo, where some French cavalry, arriving from Zafra, again defeated him and drove him to Albuquerque. Other military operations, worth relating, there were none, but the civil transactions in Portugal were very important.

Mr. Stuart's exertions had produced some improvement in the Portuguese revenue; the ranks of the infantry were again filling by the return of deserters, and by fresh recruits, which, with the reinforcements from England, had raised the actual number of the allied army to upwards of eighty thousand men, fifty-six thousand of which were British; the number under arms did not however exceed twenty-four thousand Portuguese and thirty-three thousand British, of whom five thousand were cavalry, with about ninety pieces of artillery. The previous operations in Alemtejo had produced sickness, which was increasing, and twenty-two thousand men were in hospital; and hence, Hill's corps being deducted, Lord Wellington could not bring to the blockade of Ciudad above forty-four thousand of all arms, including Sanchez's partida.\* But Marmont, alone, could in a few days bring as many to its succor, and Dorsenne always had from twenty to twenty-five thousand men in hand; because the French reinforcements had relieved the old garrisons in the north, and the latter had joined the army in the field.

At this time the British military chest was quite bankrupt; even the muleteers, upon whose fidelity and efficiency the war absolutely depended, were six months in arrears for wages; and the disputes

\* Appendix 13, § 1.

with the Portuguese government were more acrimonious than ever. The Regency had proposed a new system of military regulations, calculated to throw the burthen of feeding the native troops entirely upon the British commissariat, without any reform of abuses, and Lord Wellington had rejected it, hence renewed violence; and as Beresford had fallen sick at Cintra, Mr. Stuart, deprived of his support on military questions, and himself no longer a member of the Regency, was unable to restrain the triumphant faction of the Souzas. The Prince Regent's return to Portugal was prevented by troubles in the Brazils, and the Regency expecting a long hold of power, and foolishly imagining that the war was no longer doubtful, were, after the custom of all people who employ powerful auxiliaries, devising how to get rid of the British army. With this view they objected to or neglected every necessary measure, and made many absurd demands, such as that the British General should pay the expenses of the Portuguese post office; and at the same time they preferred various vexatious and unfounded charges against British officers, while gross corruption, and oppression of the poorer people, marked the conduct of their own magistrates.

But the fate of Portugal, which to these people appeared fixed, was in the eyes of the English General more doubtful than ever. Intercepted letters gave reasons to believe that the Emperor was coming to Spain. And this notion was confirmed by the assembling of an army of reserve in France, and by the formation of great magazines at Burgos and other places, to supply which, and to obtain money, the French generals were exacting the fourth of the harvest, and selling the overplus of corn again even by retail. Minute reports of the state of these magazines were demanded by Napoleon; reinforcements, especially of the imperial guards, were pouring into Spain, and Wellington judging that the Emperor must either drive the British from the Peninsula, or lower his tone with the world, thought that he would invade Portugal from the side of Rodrigo, the valley of the Tagus, and Alemtejo at the same time; and that he would risk his fleet in a combined attack upon Lisbon by sea and land.

Whether Napoleon really meant this, or whether he only spread the report with a view to restrain the allies from any offensive operations during the summer, and to mislead the English cabinet as to the real state of his negotiations with Russia, intending if the latter proved favorable to turn his whole force against the Peninsula, does not very clearly appear; yet it is certain that everything in Spain at this time indicated his approach. Lord Wellington's opinion that the Emperor was bound to drive the British army away or lose his influence in the world does not however seem quite

just; because the mighty expedition to Moscow proved that Napoleon did not want force to conquer Spain; and success in Russia would have enabled him to prolong the war in the Peninsula as a drain on the English resources for many years; which was so obvious a policy, that the rest of Europe could not from thence draw conclusions unfavorable to his influence.

Under the notion that Napoleon's coming was probable, the English General, with characteristic prudence, turned his own attention to the security of his ancient refuge within the lines, and therefore urgently desired the government to put the fortresses in order, repair the roads, and restore the bridges broken during Massena's invasion. An increased number of workmen were also put to the lines, for the engineers had never ceased to improve those on the northern bank of the Tagus, and on the southern bank the double lines of Almada had been continued on a gigantic scale. The defensive canal there was planned to float ships of three hundred tons, and to serve as a passage from the Tagus to Setuval by joining the navigation of the Sadao and Marateca rivers; thus conducting to objects of general utility as well as the military defence; as it will be found that Lord Wellington did at all times sustain, not only the political, and financial, and military affairs, but also the agricultural, the commercial, and charitable interests of Portugal. The batteries at the mouth of the Tagus were likewise put into complete order; they were provided with furnaces for heating shot, and Captain Holloway of the engineers, at a trifling expense, constructed four jetties at St. Julian's, in such an ingenious manner, that they withstood the most tempestuous gales and secured the embarkation of the army in any season.\* Finally the militia were again called out, a measure of greater import, in the actual state of affairs, than would at first appear; for the expense was a very heavy drain upon the finances, and the number of hands thus taken away from agriculture was a serious evil.

Had all these preparations been duly executed, Lord Wellington would not have feared even Napoleon; but all that depended upon the Portuguese government, if that can be called government which was but a faction, was, as usual, entirely neglected. The Regency refused to publish any proclamation to display the danger, or to call upon the people to prepare for future efforts; and although the ancient laws of Portugal provided the most ample means for meeting such emergencies, the bridges over the Ceira, the Alva and other rivers, on the line of retreat, were left unrepaired. The roads were therefore impassable, and as the rainy season was coming on, the safety of the army would have been seriously endangered

\* Colonel Jones's History of the Peninsular War.

if it had been obliged to retire before the Emperor. The Regency pleaded want of money, but this also could be traced to their own negligence in the collection of taxes, for which there was no solid reason; because, with the exception of the devastated districts, the people were actually richer than they had ever been, not indeed in goods, but in hard cash, derived from the enormous sums expended by the British army. To add to these embarrassments, the secret correspondents of the army on the side of Salamanca suddenly ceased their communications, and it was at first feared they had paid with their lives for the culpable indiscretion of the Portuguese government; for the latter had published, in the Lisbon Gazette, all the secret information sent to Silveira, which being copied into the English newspapers drew the enemy's attention. Fortunately this alarm proved false, but a sense of the other difficulties was greatly aggravated to the English General, by comparison of his situation with that of the enemy: neither necessity nor remuneration could procure for him due assistance from the Portuguese people, while the French generals had merely to issue their orders to the Spaniards through the prefects of the provinces, and all means of transport or other succor, possible to be obtained, were sure to be provided on the day and at the place indicated.\*

In the midst of these cares, Lord Wellington was suddenly called into military action by the approach of the enemy. Ciudad Rodrigo having been blockaded for six weeks, wanted food, and Marmont, who had received a reinforcement of eleven thousand men from France, and had now fifty thousand present under arms, in the valley of the Tagus, being in pain for the garrison, had concerted with Dorsenne a great combined operation for its succor. In this view, Truxillo had been occupied by a part of the fifth corps, and Girard with the remainder had advanced to Merida, while Foy, reinforced by a strong division of the army of the centre, occupied Placentia. Marmont himself, quitting Talavera, had passed the mountains and collected a large convoy at Bejar; at the same time Dorsenne, reinforced by eight thousand men under Souham, had collected another convoy at Salamanca, and leaving Bonnet's division, which now included Mayer's troops, at Astorga, to watch the Gallicians, came down to Tamames. They met on the 21st, their united armies presenting a mass of sixty thousand men, of which six thousand were cavalry, and they had a hundred pieces of artillery.

The English General, who had expected this movement, immediately concentrated his scattered troops. He could not fight beyond the Agueda, but he did not think fit to retreat until he had

\* Wellington's Correspondence with Lord Liverpool, MS.

seen their whole army, lest a detachment should relieve the place to his dishonor. Hence, to make the enemy display his force, he established himself in the following positions near the fortress:

The third division, reinforced by three squadrons of German and British cavalry, formed his centre. It was posted on the heights of Elbodon and Pastores, on the left of the Agueda, and within three miles of Ciudad, commanding a complete prospect of the plains round that place.

The right wing, composed of the light division, some squadrons of cavalry, and six guns, was posted beyond the Agueda, and behind the Vadillo, a river rising in the Peña de Francia, and flowing in a rugged channel to the Agueda, which it joins about three miles above Rodrigo; from this line an enemy coming from the eastern passes of the hills could not be discerned.

The left wing, composed of the sixth division and Anson's brigade of cavalry, the whole under General Graham, was placed at Espeja, on the lower Azava, with advanced posts at Carpio and Marialva. From thence to Ciudad Rodrigo was about eight miles over a plain, and on Graham's left, Julian Sanchez's partida, nominally commanded by Carlos d'España, was spread along the lower Agueda in observation. The heads of the columns were, therefore, presented on three points to the fortress; namely, at the ford of the Vadillo, and the heights of Pastores and Espeja. The communication between the left and centre was kept up by two brigades of heavy cavalry, posted on the upper Azava, and supported at Campillo by Pack's Portuguese brigade. But the left of the army was very distant from Guinaldo, which was the pivot of operations, and to obviate the danger of making a flank march in retreat, should the enemy advance, the seventh division was placed in reserve at Alamedillo, and the first division at Nava d'Aver. Thus the allied army was spread out on the different roads which led, like the sticks of a fan, to one point on the Coa.

The fifth division remained at St. Payo watching the passes from Estremadura, lest Foy should from that direction fall on the rear of the right wing; and as Marmont's movement affected the line of communication along the eastern frontier, General Hill first sent Hamilton's Portuguese towards Albuquerque, to support the Spanish cavalry, which was menaced by the fifth corps, and then brought the remainder of his troops nearer to the Tagus, in readiness to take the place of his third brigade, which now marched from the Ponçul to Penamacor.

Wellington's position before Rodrigo was very extensive, and therefore very weak. The Agueda, although fordable in many places in fine weather, was liable to sudden freshets, and was on

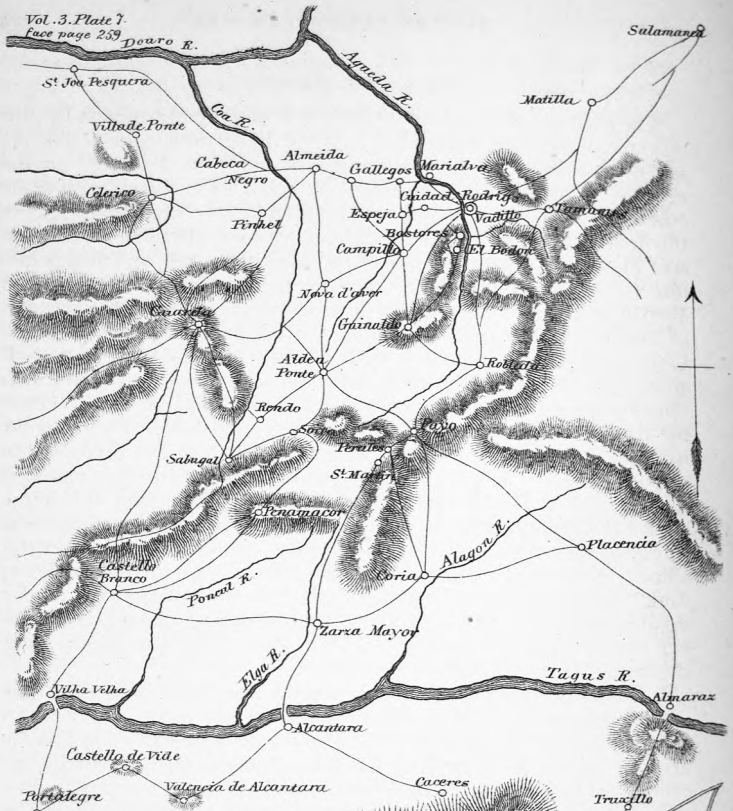
both sides lined with high ridges. The heights occupied by the troops, on the left bank, were about three miles wide, ending rather abruptly above Pastores and Elbodon, and they were flanked by the great plains and woods which extend from Ciudad to the bed of the Coa. The position of Elbodon itself, which was held by the centre of the army, was, therefore, not tenable against an enemy commanding these plains; and as the wings were distant, their lines of retreat were liable to be cut if the centre should be briskly pushed back beyond Guinaldo. But, at the latter place, three field redoubts had been constructed, on the high land, with a view to impose upon the enemy, and so gain time to assemble and feel Marmont's disposition for a battle, because a retreat behind the Coa was to be avoided if possible.

On the 23d, the French advanced from Tamames, and encamped behind the hills to the north-east of Ciudad Rodrigo. Then a strong detachment entered the plain, and having communicated with the garrison and examined the position of the light division on the Vadillo, returned.

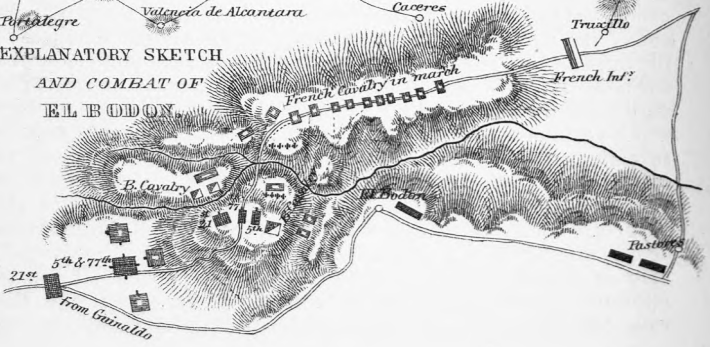
The 24th, six thousand cavalry, with four divisions of infantry, crossed the hills in two columns, and placing some troops in observation on the Vadillo, introduced the convoy. On this day, the fourth division of the allies was brought up to the position of Guinaldo, and the redoubts were completed, yet no other change was made, for it was thought the French would not advance further. But on the 25th, soon after daybreak, fourteen squadrons of the imperial guards drove the outposts of the left wing from Carpio across the Azava, and the lancers of Berg crossed that river in pursuit; they were, however, flanked by some infantry in a wood, and then charged and beaten by two squadrons of the fourteenth and sixteenth dragoons, who reoccupied the post at Carpio.

During the skirmish, fourteen battalions of infantry, thirty squadrons of cavalry, and twelve guns, the whole under Montbrun, passed the Agueda by the bridge of Rodrigo and the fords above it, and marched towards Guinaldo. The road soon divided, one branch turning the Elbodon heights on the right hand, the other leading near to the Agueda, and passing through the villages of Pastores, La Encina, and Elbodon; and as the point of divarication was covered by a gentle ridge, it was for some time doubtful which branch the French would follow. In a short time this doubt was decided. Their cavalry poured along the right-hand road leading directly to Guinaldo, the small advanced posts which the allied squadrons had on the plain were rapidly driven in, and the enemy's horsemen, without waiting for their infantry, commenced the





EXPLANATORY SKETCH  
AND COMBAT OF  
EL BODON.





## COMBAT OF ELBODON.

The position of the third division was completely turned by this movement, and the action began very disadvantageously, for the seventy-fourth and sixtieth regiments, being at Pastores on the right, were too distant to be called in, and Picton, being with three other regiments at Elbodon, could not take any immediate part in the fight. Hence, as the French force was considerable, Wellington sent to Guinaldo for a brigade of the fourth division, and meanwhile directed General Colville to draw up the seventy-seventh and fifth British regiments, the twenty-first Portuguese, and two brigades of artillery of the same nation, on the hill over which the road to Guinaldo passed, supporting their flanks with Alten's three squadrons. The height, thus occupied by the allies, was convex towards the enemy, and covered in front and in both flanks by deep ravines, but it was too extensive for their numbers; and before Picton could bring in the troops from the village of Elbodon, the crisis of the combat passed. The Portuguese guns had sent their shot amongst the thickest of Montbrun's horsemen in the plain, but the latter passed the front ravine in half squadrons, and with amazing vigor riding up the rough height, on three sides, fell vehemently upon the allies. Neither the loose fire of the infantry, nor of the artillery, could stop them, but they were checked by the fine fighting of the cavalry, who charged the heads of the ascending masses, not once but twenty times, and always with a good will, thus maintaining the upper ground for above an hour.

It was astonishing to see so few troopers bearing up against that surging multitude, even favored as the former were by the steep rocky nature of the ground; but Montbrun, obstinate to win, soon brought up his artillery, and his horsemen gaining ground in the centre, cut down some of the gunners and captured the guns; and one of the British squadrons by charging too far got entangled in the intricacy of the ravines. The danger was then imminent, when suddenly the fifth regiment, led by Major Ridge, a daring spirit, darted into the midst of the French cavalry, and retook the artillery, which again opened its fire; and nearly at the same time the seventy-seventh, supported by the twenty-first Portuguese, repulsed the enemy on the left. However, this charging of a weak line of infantry against a powerful cavalry, could only check the foe at that particular point. Montbrun still pressed onwards with fresh masses, against the left flank of the allies, while other squadrons penetrated between the right flank and the village of Elbodon. From the inclosures and vineyards of that village, Picton was at this time with difficulty and some confusion extricating his regiments; the

expected brigade of the fourth division was not yet in sight, and the French infantry was rapidly approaching; the position was no longer tenable, and Lord Wellington directed both Picton and Colville to fall back and unite in the plain behind.

Colville forming his battalions in two squares immediately descended from the hill, but Picton had a considerable distance to move, and at this moment the allied squadrons, fearing to be surrounded by the French, who had completely turned their right, galloped away, and took refuge with the Portuguese regiment, which was farthest in retreat. Then the fifth and seventy-seventh, two weak battalions formed in one square, were quite exposed, and in an instant the whole of the French cavalry came thundering down upon them. But how vain, how fruitless to match the sword with the musket—to send the charging horseman against the steadfast veteran! The multitudinous squadrons, rending the skies with their shouts, and closing upon the glowing squares, like the falling edges of a burning crater, were as instantly rejected, scorched, and scattered abroad; and the rolling peal of musketry had scarcely ceased to echo in the hills, when bayonets glittered at the edge of the smoke, and with firm and even step, the British regiments came forth like the holy men from the Assyrian's furnace.

Picton now effected his junction, and the whole retired over the plain to the position at Guinaldo, which was about six miles distant. The French, although fearing to renew the close attack, followed, and plied the troops with shot and shell, until about four o'clock in the evening, when the intrenched camp was gained. Here the fourth division presented a fresh front, Pack's brigade came up from Campillo, and the heavy cavalry from the upper Azava being also brought into line, the action ceased. By this retrograde movement of the left and centre of the third division, the seventy-fourth and the sixtieth regiments, posted at Pastores, were cut off; they however crossed the Agueda by a ford, and moving up the right bank happily reached Guinaldo in the night, after a march of fifteen hours, in the course of which they captured a French cavalry patrol.

During the retreat from Elbodon, the left wing of the army was ordered to fall back on the first division, at Nava d'Aver, but to keep posts in observation on the Azava. Carlos d'España retired with Sanchez's infantry behind the Coa, and the guerilla chief himself passed with his cavalry into the French rear. The seventh division was withdrawn from Allemadilla to Albergaria, and the head-quarters baggage moved to Casilla de Flores. The light division should have marched to Guinaldo; General Craufurd received the order at two o'clock, he plainly heard the cannonade,

and might easily have reached Guinaldo before midnight, but he only marched to Cespedosa, one league from the Vadillo, which river was immediately passed by fifteen hundred French. The position at Guinaldo was therefore occupied by only fourteen thousand men, of which about two thousand six hundred were cavalry. The left of the army, concentrated at Nava d'Aver, under Graham, was ten miles distant; the light division being at Cespedosa and debarred the direct route, by the ford of Carros, was sixteen miles distant; and the fifth division, posted at Payo in the mountains, was twelve miles distant. Meanwhile Marmont brought up a second division of infantry, and in the course of the night, and the following day, united sixty thousand men in front of Guinaldo. The situation of the English General was become most critical, yet he would not abandon the light division, which did not arrive until after three o'clock in the evening. Marmont's fortune was fixed in that hour! He knew nothing of the allies' true situation, and having detached a strong column by the valley of the Azava to menace their left, contented himself with making an ostentatious display of the imperial guards in the plain, instead of attacking an adversary who was too weak to fight, and laughing to see him so employed, soon changed the state of affairs.

In the night, Wellington, by a skilful concentric movement from Guinaldo, Nava d'Aver, Perales, and Payo, united the whole army on new ground, between the Coa and the sources of the Aguada, twelve miles behind Guinaldo; and it is a curious fact, that Marmont had so little knowledge of his own advantages, that instead of harassing the allies in this difficult movement, he also retired during the night, and was actually in march to the rear, when the scouts of the column which had marched by the valley of Azava brought word that the allies were in retreat, and their divisions still widely separated. Dorsenne then insisted that Marmont should wheel round and pursue, but Lord Wellington was already in a strong position behind the stream of the Villa Maior.

The fifth division, coming up from Payo, was now on the right at Aldea Velha, the fourth and light divisions, with Victor Alten's cavalry, and the heavy dragoons under Sir Stapleton Cotton, were in the centre in front of Alfayates; the convent of Sacaparte was on their left, and the line was prolonged to Rebulon by Pack's and M'Mahon's Portuguese brigades; the sixth division with Anson's cavalry closed the line at Bismula. The cavalry piquets were pushed beyond the Villa Maior in front of Aldea Ponte, in the centre, and towards Furcalhos on the right; and the third and seventh divisions were in reserve behind Alfayates. This position was extensive, but the days were short, serious dispositions were

required for a general attack, and the allies could not be turned, because they covered all the practicable roads leading to the bridges and fords of the Coa.

#### COMBAT OF ALDEA DE PONTE.

The French, moving by the roads of Furcalhos and of Aldea de Ponte, were checked by the piquets of the light division on the former; but on the latter their horsemen drove the cavalry posts from the hills, and across the stream of the Villa Maior, and about ten o'clock took possession of Aldea de Ponte.

At twelve o'clock, the head of the infantry came up and immediately attacked General Pakenham, then commanding a brigade of the fourth division, which was posted on the opposite heights. Lord Wellington arrived at the same moment, and directed the seventh fusileers to charge in line, and he supported them on each flank with a Portuguese regiment in column. The French, who had advanced well up the hill, were driven back, and though they afterwards attempted to turn the brigade by a wood, which was distant about a musket-shot from the right, while their cavalry advanced to the foot of the hills, the artillery sufficed to baffle the effort. Then the English General, taking the offensive, directed the twenty-third fusileers and Portuguese caçadores to turn the French left, and seize the opposite hill, which finished the action, and Aldea de Ponte was again occupied by the allies. Wellington, who had been much exposed to the fire, rode to another part of the position, but scarcely had he departed, when the French from the Furcalhos road joined those near Aldea de Ponte, and at five o'clock renewing the attack retook the village. Pakenham, with his fusileers, immediately recovered it, but the French were very numerous, the country rugged, and so wooded that he could not tell what was passing on the flanks; wherefore, knowing that the chosen ground of battle was behind the Coa, he abandoned Aldea de Ponte and regained his original post.

In the night the allies retreated, and on the morning of the 28th occupied a new and very strong position in front of the Coa, the right resting on the Sierra de Mesas, the centre covered by the village of Soita, the left at Rendo upon the Coa. The whole army, thus inclosed as it were in a deep loop of the Coa river, could only be attacked on a narrow front, and Marmont, who had brought up but a few days' provisions and could gather none in that country, retired the same day. This terminated the operations. The French placed a fresh garrison in Ciudad Rodrigo; Dorsenne marched to Salamanca; a strong division was posted at Alba de Tormes, to communicate with Marmont, and the latter

resumed his old position in the valley of the Tagus. At the same time Foy, who had advanced with his two divisions as far as Zarza Mayor, in the direction of Castello Branco, returned to Placentia; Girard also, being threatened by Hamilton's Portuguese division, which Hill had sent to check his advance, left two thousand men of the fifth corps at Merida, and retired to Zafra; and when these movements were known, the light division, reinforced by some cavalry, resumed the nominal blockade of Ciudad Rodrigo, in concert with Julian Sanchez. The rest of the army was cantoned on both sides of the Coa, and head-quarters were fixed at Frenada.

Nearly a month had been employed by the French in the preparation and execution of this great operation, which terminated so feebly and so abruptly, because the generals were, as usual, at variance.\* They had victualled Ciudad Rodrigo, but they had lost the favorable opportunity of invading Galicia. Nothing had been gained in the field, time was lost, and the English General's plans were forwarded.

#### OBSERVATIONS.

1. Lord Wellington's position behind the Soita has been noticed by two recent authors. The one condemns the imprudence of offering battle on ground whence there was no retreat; the other intimates that it was assumed in contempt of the adversary's prowess.† This last appears a mere shift to evade what was not understood; for if Lord Wellington had despised Marmont, he would have fought him beyond the Agueda.‡ But sixty thousand French soldiers were never to be despised, neither was Wellington a man to put an army in jeopardy from any overweening confidence; and it is not difficult to show that his position was chosen well, without imprudence and without presumption.

The space between the Sierra de Mesas and the Coa was less than six miles, and the part open to attack was very much reduced by the rugged bed of a torrent which covered the left. Forty thousand men were quite able to defend this line, which was scarcely more than one-third of their full front; and as the roads were bad, the country hilly and much broken with woods and ravines, the superiority of the enemy's horse and guns would have availed him little. Lord Wellington had a right to be bold against an adversary who had not molested him at Guinaldo, and it is always of importance to show a menacing front. It was also certain that great combinations must have been made by Marmont before he could

\* *Victoires et Conquêtes des Français.*

† *Londonderry's Narrative.*

‡ *Annals of the Peninsular Campaigns.*

fight a general battle on such ground; it was equally certain that he could only have a few days' provisions with his army, and that the neighborhood could not supply him. It was, therefore, reasonable to expect that he would retire rather than fight, and he did so.

Let us, however, take the other side, and suppose that Marmont was prepared and resolute to bring on a great battle. The position behind Soita would still have been good. The French were indeed too strong to be fought with on a plain, yet not strong enough to warrant a retreat indicating fear; hence the allies had retired slowly for three days, each day engaged, and the enemy's powerful horse and artillery was always close upon their rear. Now the bed of the Coa, which was extremely rugged, furnished only a few points for crossing, of which the principal were, the ford of Ser-raleira, behind the right of the allies; the ford of Rapoulha de Coa, behind their left; and the bridge of Sabugal, behind their centre. The ways to those points were narrow, and the passage of the river, with all the baggage, could not have been easily effected in face of an enemy without some loss, and perhaps dishonor; and had Lord Wellington been unable to hold his position in a battle, the difficulty of passing the river would not have been much increased, because his encumbrances would all have been at the other side, and there was a second range of heights half-a-mile in front of Sabugal, favorable for a rear-guard. The position of Soita appears therefore to have been chosen with good judgment in regard to the immediate object of opposing the enemy; but it is certain that the battering train, then between Pinhel and Villa Ponte, was completely exposed to the enemy. Marmont, however, had not sufficiently considered his enterprise, and knew not where or how to strike.

2. The position of Aldea Ponte was equally well chosen. Had the allies retreated at once from Guinaldo to Soita, baggage and stores would have been lost, and the retrograde movement have had the appearance of a flight; the road from Payo would have been uncovered, and the junction of the fifth division endangered. But, in the position taken up, the points of junction of all the roads were occupied, and, as each point was strong in itself, it was not difficult for a quick-sighted general, perfectly acquainted with the country, and having excellent troops, to check the heads of the enemy's columns, until the baggage had gained a sufficient offing, and the fifth division had taken its place in line.

3. The position at Guinaldo was very different from the others. The previous intrenching of it proved Lord Wellington's foresight, and he remained there thirty-six hours, that is, from midday of the 25th until midnight of the 26th, which proved his firmness. It is said that Sir George Murray advised him to abandon it in the night

of the 25th, and that arrangements were actually made in that view; yet, anxious for the safety of the light division, he would not stir. The object was certainly one of importance sufficient to justify the resolution; but the resolution itself was one of those daring strokes of genius which the ordinary rules of art were never made to control. The position was contracted, of no great natural strength in front, and easily to be turned; the intrenchments constructed were only a few breast works and two weak field redoubts, open in rear, and without palisades; not more than fourteen thousand British and Portuguese troops were in line, and sixty thousand French veterans with a hundred pieces of artillery were before them! When Marmont heard of the escape of the light division, and discovered the deceit, he prophetically exclaimed, alluding to Napoleon's fortune, "*And Wellington's star, it also is bright!*"

4. The positions of Aldea Ponte and Soita are to be commended, that at Guinaldo to be admired rather than imitated, but the preceding operations are censurable. The country immediately beyond Ciudad Rodrigo offered no covering position for a siege or blockade; and the sudden floods, to which the Agueda is subject, rendered the communications with the left bank precarious. Nor, though bridges had been secured, could Wellington have ventured to encamp round the place with lines of contravallation and circumvallation, on both sides of the river; because Marmont's army would then have advanced from Placentia to Castello Branco, have seized the passage over the Tagus at Villa Velha, and in concert with the fifth corps endangered the safety of Hill. This would have obliged the allies to quit their intrenched camp, and Dorsenne could then have revictualled the place. It was therefore necessary to hold a strong central position with respect to Marmont and Dorsenne, to keep both in check while separate, and to oppose them while united. This position was on the Coa; and as Salamanca or Bejar, the nearest points where convoys could be collected for Ciudad Rodrigo, were from fifty to sixty miles distant, Lord Wellington's object, namely, the forcing the French to assemble in large bodies without any adequate result, could be and was obtained by a distant as well as by a close investment.

So far all was well calculated; but when Marmont and Dorsenne arrived with sixty thousand men at Ciudad Rodrigo, the aspect of affairs entirely changed; and as the English General could not dispute the entrance of the convoy, he should have concentrated his army at once behind Guinaldo. Instead of doing this, he kept it extended on a line of many miles, and the right wing separated from the centre by a difficult river. In his despatch he says that, from some uncertainty in his estimate of the enemy's numbers, it

was necessary to ascertain their exact strength by actual observation; but this is rather an excuse than a valid reason, because for this object, which could be obtained by other means, he risked the loss of his whole army, and violated two vital rules of war, which forbid—

1. The parceling of an army before a concentrated enemy.
2. The fixing of your own point of concentration within the enemy's reach.

Now Lord Wellington's position on the 24th and 25th extended from the ford of the Vadillo on the right of the Agueda, to Marialva on the Azava; the distance either from the Vadillo, or Marialva, to Guinaldo, was as great as that from Ciudad to Guinaldo, and by worse roads; and the distance from Ciudad to Elbodon was as nothing, compared to the distance of the wings from the same place. Wherefore when Montbrun attacked, at Elbodon, the allies' wings were cut off, and the escape of the third and light divisions, and of the troops at Pastores, was a matter of fortune and gallantry, rather than of generalship; that is, in the enlarged sense of the last word; for it cannot be denied that the actual movements of the troops were conducted with consummate skill.

But what if Marmont, instead of being drawn by circumstances into a series of ill-combined and partial attacks, had previously made dispositions for a great battle? He certainly knew, through the garrison, the real situation of the allies, and he also knew of the camp at Guinaldo, which, being on their line of retreat, was the important point. If he had issued from the fortress before day-break on the 25th with the whole or even half of his forces, he could have reached Campillo in two hours with one column, while another fell on the position at Pastores and Elbodon; the third division, thus attacked, would have been enveloped and captured, or broken and driven over the Agueda, by the ford of Zamara, and would have been irretrievably separated from Guinaldo. And if this division had even reached Guinaldo, the French army would have arrived with it in such overwhelming numbers, that the fourth division could not have restored the battle; meanwhile, a few thousand men thrown across the ford of Caros near Robleda would have sufficed to keep the light division at bay, because the channel of the Robleda torrent, over which their retreat lay, was a very deep and rugged ravine. The centre being broken, the French could, at choice, have either surrounded the light division, or directed the mass of their forces against the reserves, and then the left wing under Graham would have had to retreat from the Azava over the plains towards Almeida.

It may be said that all the French were not up on the 25th: but



they might have been so, and, as Lord Wellington was resolved to see their number, he would have been in the same position the 26th. It is, however, sufficient to remark that the allies, exclusive of the fifth division, which was at Payo, did not exceed thirty-five thousand men of all arms; that they were on an irregular line of at least twenty miles, and mostly in an open country; that at no point were the troops more than eight, and at the principal point, namely Pastores, only three miles from a fortress from whence sixty thousand infantry and six thousand cavalry, with one hundred and twenty guns, were ready to issue. Finally, the point of concentration at Guinaldo was only twelve miles from that fortress. The allies escaped because their adversary was blind! Lord Wellington's conduct at Guinaldo was above rules, but at Elbodon it was against rules, which is just the difference between genius and error.

4. In these operations Marmont gave proof that, as a general, he was rather shining than great. He was in error throughout. Before he commenced his march, he had desired Girard to advance on the side of the Alemtejo, assuring him that the whole of the allied army, and even the Spanish troops under Castaños, had crossed the Tagus to operate against Rodrigo; but in fact only one brigade of Hill's corps had moved, and Girard would have been destroyed, if, fortunately for him, the allies had not intercepted the original and duplicate of the letter containing this false information.

5. When Marmont brought his convoy into Ciudad, it would appear he had no intention of fighting; but, tempted by the false position of the allies, and angry at the repulse of his cavalry on the lower Azava, he turned his scouting troops into columns of attack. And yet he permitted his adversary to throw dust in his eyes for thirty-six hours at Guinaldo; and at Aldea Ponte his attack was a useless waste of men, because there was no local advantage offered, and he did not intend a great battle.

6. The loss incurred in the different combats was not great. About three thousand men and officers fell on the part of the allies, and on that of the French rather more, because of the fire of the squares and artillery at Elbodon. But the movements during the three days were full of interest and instruction, and diversified also by brilliant examples of heroism. Ridge's daring charge has been already noticed, and it was in one of the cavalry encounters, that a French officer, in the act of striking at the gallant Felton Harvey, of the fourteenth dragoons, perceived that he had only one arm, and with a rapid movement brought down his sword into a salute, and passed on! Such was the state of the war on the frontier of Portugal; in the next book will be found the contemporary events in Spain.

# BOOK XV.

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## CHAPTER I.

State of the war in Spain—Northern provinces—State of Galicia—Attempt to introduce English officers into the Spanish service—Trafficked for by the Spanish government—Repelled by the Spanish military—The English government encourage the partidas—Lord Wellington sends the chiefs presents—His after opinion of them—Sir H. Douglas succeeds General Walker—Miserable state of Galicia described—Disputes between the civil and military—Anomalous proceedings of the English government—Gross abuses in the Spanish army—Expedition against America fitted out in Galicia with the English supplies intended for the defence of the province—Sir H. Douglas's policy towards the partidas criticised—Events in the Asturias—Santander surprised by Porlier—Reille and Caffarelli scour Biscay and the Rioja—Bonnet invades the Asturias—Defeats Moscoso, Paul Lodosa, and Mendizabel, and occupies Oviedo—In Galicia the people prefer the French to their own armies—In Estremadura, Drouet joins Girard and menaces Hill—These movements parts of a great plan to be conducted by Napoleon in person.

### STATE OF THE WAR IN SPAIN.

*Northern Provinces.* The invasion of Galicia, which had been arrested by the arrival of the allies on the Coa, would have been a most serious calamity. Abadia, a weak man, with troops distressed for provisions and clothing, was on bad terms with the chief of his staff, Moscoso, whom he feared, and on worse terms with the Junta. The great road to Coruña was open; and although General Walker, seeing the danger, advised that Ferrol, which was indefensible, should be dismantled, and the guns, amounting to fifteen hundred, with the timber and vessels of war in the harbor, transferred to Coruña, neither that nor any other useful measure was executed.

Before this, overtures had been made to the Spanish government, to take Spanish troops into British pay, after the manner of the Portuguese; but the Regency, remembering the prodigality of Canning, demanded three millions yearly, besides arms and clothing, without which they said the Spaniards could make no efficient exertions! To introduce British officers into the service on any other terms was not possible, because the Spanish military were indignant at what they termed the degradation of such a proposal. The Perceval faction, finding it thus, and wanting greatness of mind to

support Wellington on a scale commensurate with his talents, then turned their attention to the encouragement of the partidas, as being less expensive, and affording an example to the continental nations of popular and protracted resistance to France.

Sir Howard Douglas, who succeeded General Walker as military agent, (these officers must not be confounded with the military agents originally sent out, and whose mischievous proceedings I have had occasion to notice,) was directed to encourage those bodies by increased supplies, and to combine their movements better with each other, and with the British squadron in the Bay of Biscay. Lord Wellington, at the desire of government, sent to the guerilla chiefs military presents, with a letter acknowledging the importance of their services; and this was not mere compliment, for he had indeed derived great advantages from their exertions, and thought he had derived more, because he only knew of their exploits by hearsay.\* When he afterwards advanced into Spain, and saw them closely, he was forced to acknowledge that the guerillas, although active and willing, and although their operations in general occasioned the utmost annoyance to the enemy, were so little disciplined that they could do nothing against the French troops, unless the latter were very inferior in numbers. If the French took post in a house or church of which they only barricaded the entrance, both regular troops and guerillas were so ill equipped as military bodies, that their enemy could remain in security until relieved. In like manner Napoleon, reprimanding his generals for suffering the partidas to gain any head, observed, that when cut off from communication with the English ships they were a nullity!

Douglas arrived just as Dorsenne's retreat enabled Abadia to resume his position on the frontier, but the army was in a miserable state; † the wet season was setting in upon men, destitute of even the necessaries of life, although the province abounded in cattle and goods, which could be easily procured, because money, although plentiful, was generally hoarded, and commodities were therefore cheap, and could be obtained in lieu of taxes at the market price. An extraordinary increase of the customs, arising from the trade of Santander and Bilbao being transferred to Coruña by the war, also offered a valuable resource; the harbor was filled with colonial goods, and as the appetites of men generally stifle patriotism, and baffle power, a licensed commerce was carried on with the enemy's ports in Biscay; yet without judgment as related to the war, for the return was iron, to re-export to the colonies, whereas by an internal traffic of the same kind, clothes and grain for the troops

\* Sir H. Douglas's Correspondence, MS.

† lb.

might have been had from Castile and Leon. But confusion and corruption everywhere prevailed, the exigencies of the war were always the last things cared for, and the starving soldiers committed a thousand excesses with impunity, for where there is no food or pay, there can be no discipline.

The people were oppressed with imposts, legal and illegal, and yet the defalcation in the revenue was great, and the monopoly of tobacco, the principal financial resource, was injured by the smuggling arising from the unsettled nature of the times. The annual charge on the province was about £1,300,000, the actual receipts were less than £500,000, and the Junta endeavored to supply the deficiency by an extraordinary contribution from all property, save that of day-laborers, which they expected would produce sixty millions of reals (£750,000). But a corrupt and vexatious collection of this tax tormented the people without filling the treasury; the clergy, and the richer classes, were, as in Portugal, favored, and it yielded, in six months, less than a seventh part.

From this state of affairs two inferences may be safely drawn: 1. That England and not Gallicia had hitherto supported the war here, as in other parts of the Peninsula. 2. That as England had in 1808-9 paid to Gallicia three millions of hard dollars, and given other succors sufficient for double the number of troops employed, the deficiency of the revenue had been amply compensated, and the causes of distress must be sought for in the proceedings of the authorities, and in the anomalous nature of the war itself. The successive Juntas, apprehensive of offending the people, were always inert in the civil administration, and either too corrupt or too incapable to apply the succors from England justly or wisely. The Junta of this period was like its predecessors, factious and intriguing; it was hostile to the Junta of Leon, unfriendly to that of Asturias, jealous and contemptuous of the military leaders; in return these last abhorred the Junta, and were tormented with factions of their own. The regular officers hated the guerillas, and endeavored to get the control of the succors granted by England to the latter; and as they necessarily lived by plundering their own countrymen, they strenuously opposed the arming of the peasants, partly from fear lest the latter should resist this license, partly because the republican and anti-English spirit, which was growing up in the Cortes, had also reached this quarter.

The clergy clung to the peasantry, with whom they had great influence, but the army, which had imbibed liberal words, rather than principles, was inimical to them. A press had been established at head-quarters, from whence issued political papers either original, or repeated from the libels at Cadiz, in which the Portuguese

were called slaves, for submitting to British influence; and it was openly avowed that the French yoke was preferable to that of England; the guerilla system and the arming of the people were also attacked, and these writings were met by other political papers from the civil press, at Coruña and St. Jago. The frequent changes of commanders rendered all the evils more prominent; for the local government had legal power to meddle with the military arrangements, and every change of commander produced a new difficulty. Thus the Junta refused to acknowledge Abadia as their president during the absence of Castaños; he in return complained alike of their neglect and of their interference; and when they proposed to establish a general dépôt at Lugo, he marched a part of his army there to prevent it.

But the occult source of most of these difficulties is to be found in the inconsistent attempts of the British cabinet to uphold national independence with internal slavery, against foreign aggression, with an ameliorated government. The clergy, who had led the mass of the people, clung to the English, because they supported aristocracy and church domination; and they were also strongly for the partidas, because these were commanded by men who sprung directly from the church itself, or from people who were attached to the church, while the regular armies, being officered by the friends of the Cortes, disliked the partidas, both as interlopers and as political enemies. The English ministers, hating Napoleon, not because he was the enemy of England, but because he was the champion of equality, cared not for Spain, unless her people were enslaved. They were willing enough to use a liberal Cortes to defeat Napoleon, but they also desired to put down that Cortes, by the aid of the clergy, and of the bigoted part of the people; nevertheless, as liberty will always have more charms than slavery, they would have missed of both objects, if the exigencies of the continental system had not induced the Emperor to go to Moscow, where the snow destroyed him; and if the very advocates of liberty in Spain had not, in their madness, resolved to oppress the Americans. The Cortes, by discovering a rapid love of power in practice, rendered their democratic doctrines suspected, and lost partisans; but Lord Wellington, in support of aristocracy, used the greatest prudence in policy, and in his actions was considerate and just.

In the first conference held at Coruña, after Sir Howard Douglas's arrival, the Junta, as the usual preliminary, demanded more money from England; but he advised, instead, a better management of their own resources, and pointed out the military measures requisite to render the army efficient. He recommended the adoption of the line of retreat upon Orense, rather than upon

Lugo and Coruña; and he endeavored to establish a permanent dépôt in the island of Arosa, on the Vigo coast, as a secure resource in the event of defeat; he also furnished the soldiers with shoes and great coats, the hospitals with blankets, and completed the firelocks of the army to twenty-five thousand. There were however abuses which he could not remedy, and which would seem rather to belong to the army of an Asiatic despot, than to an European force fighting for independence. Innumerable baggage animals devoured all the forage, and the personal servants and cooks, who from custom never did duty, were above five thousand! or a sixth part of the whole force!\* When the sick men were deducted, scarcely sixteen thousand infantry and three squadrons of cavalry remained for service. Then there was so little organization or arrangement that, although young, robust, patient, and docile to the greatest degree, the troops could scarcely be moved, even from one quarter to another, as a military body, and the generals, unable to feed them on the frontier, more than once menaced, and in December did actually retire to Lugo, leaving the province open to invasion.

Abadia at first exerted himself with activity, and appeared to enter loyally into the ameliorations proposed. He gave the command of the troops to Portasgo, repaired to Coruña himself, and organized the province in seven military governments, under as many chiefs, one for each division of the army. Every government was to raise a reserve, and to supply and clothe the corresponding division on the frontier. But in a little time this activity relaxed; he entered into various intrigues, displayed jealousy, both of the peasantry and the English, and no real improvement took place, save in that select part of the army which the Cadiz Regency had destined for South America, and had ordered him to equip from the English stores. This was done at the very moment when a French army on the frontier was again preparing to invade Galicia, and Sir Howard Douglas vehemently opposed the disloyal proceeding; the Junta also were really averse to it, and Abadia pretended to be so; but he had a personal interest in the colonies and secretly forwarded the preparations. The Regency, to evade Mr. Wellesley's reproaches, promised to suspend the embarkation of these troops, but the expedition sailed from Vigo, and the organization of another, three times its strength, including all the best artillery in the province, was immediately commenced, and also sailed a few months later. This then was the state of Galicia in the latter end of 1811. She was without magazines, hospitals, or system, whether civil or military, and torn by faction; her people were oppressed, her governors foolish, her generals bad; she had no

\* Appendix 4, § 1.

cavalry, and the infantry were starving, although the provinces easily supplied cattle for the allies in Portugal. As a natural consequence those famished soldiers were too undisciplined to descend into the plains of Leon, and were consequently of light weight in the general contest.

Under these circumstances, Sir Howard Douglas had nothing to work upon, save the guerilla leaders, whose activity he very considerably increased. His policy was to augment the number of chiefs, but to keep the force of each low, lest, growing proud of their command, they should consider themselves generals, and become useless, as indeed had already happened to Campillo, Longa, and Porlier, when they were made a part of the seventh army. Nevertheless the advantage of this policy may be doubted, for of all the numerous bands in the north, seven only were not supported entirely by robbery. Mina, Pastor, Salazar, Pinto, Amor, and the curate, whose united forces did not exceed ten thousand men, were sustained by regular taxes, customs, convent revenues, and donations;\* Longa supported his from the produce of the salt-mines of Paza, but all the rest were bandits, whose extinction was one of the advantages expected from the formation of the seventh army.

It is now convenient to resume the narrative of military events.

In the Asturias, previous to Mendizabel's arrival, and when Bonnet had marched to the Orbijo, Porlier surprised Santander, and plundered some houses; but being followed by General Caucault, a very active officer, he retired again to his stronghold of Liebana. The British cruisers, in concert with whom he acted, then destroyed several coast batteries, and the Iris frigate, having arms on board, came to the Bay of Biscay, for the purpose of arranging an intercourse with the partidas of that province. But this was the period when Reille and Caffarelli were, as I have before noticed, chasing Mina and Longa, whom they drove from the coast into the mountains of Leon, and thus marred the object of the Iris. Nevertheless, when Mina was reinforced by the Valencians and other fugitives from Catalonia, he returned to Navarre and there performed very considerable exploits, which, as belonging to other combinations of the war, will be hereafter noticed.

While Caffarelli and Reille thus scoured the line of communication, Dorsenne, having the invasion of Galicia in view, relieved Bonnet on the Esla, and sent him early in November, with eight thousand men, to re-occupy the Asturias as a preliminary measure. The Gallicians, foreseeing this, had detached Moscoso with three thousand five hundred men to reinforce San Pol, who was at Pa-

\* Mr. Stuart's Papers, MS.

gares, below the passes leading from Leon; and on the other hand Mendizabel, uniting the bands of Porlier and other chiefs, concentrated five thousand men to the eastward on the Xalon. Eleven thousand men were therefore ready to oppose the entrance of Bonnet, but with the usual improvidence of the Spaniards, the passes of Cubillas and Ventana, to the westward of Pagares, were left unguarded. By these roads Bonnet, an excellent officer, turned Moscoso, and drove him down the Lena with loss and disgrace; then turning upon Mendizabel he chased him also in disorder from Lanes into the Liebana.

All the civil authorities immediately fled to Castropol, the Spanish magazines fell into the hands of the French, and Bonnet having resumed his old positions at Oviedo, Gihon, and Grado, fortified several posts in the passes leading to Leon, raised contributions, and effectually ruined all the military resources of the Asturias. The organization of the seventh army was thus for the time crushed, and in Galicia great mischief ensued. For the return of Moscoso's division, and the want of provisions in the Bierzo, which had obliged Abadia to retire to Lugo, while Dorsenne was menacing the frontier, had thrown that kingdom into a ferment, which was increased by the imposition of the new contributions. The people became exceedingly exasperated, and so unfavorably disposed, that it was common to hear them say, "the exactions of a French army were a relief in comparison to the depredations of the Spanish troops."\*

During these transactions in the north, Drouet had joined Girard at Merida, and menaced the allies in the Alemtejo, hoping thus to draw Wellington from the Coa; but the demonstration was too feeble, and the English General thought it sufficient to reinforce Hill with his own brigade from Castello Branco. These movements were undoubtedly a part of a grand plan for invading Portugal, if the Emperor could have arranged his affairs peaceably with Russia. For to move once more against Lisbon, by Massena's route, was not promising, unless the northern provinces of Portugal were likewise invaded, which required the preliminary occupation of Galicia, at least of the interior. In the south also, it was advisable to invade Alemtejo, simultaneously with Beira; and the occupation of Valencia and Murcia was necessary to protect Andalusia during the operation. The plan was vast, dangerous, and ready for execution; for though the wet season had set in, an attack on the northern parts of Portugal, and the invasion of Galicia, were openly talked of in Dorsenne's army; Caffarelli was to join in the expedition, and Monthion's reserve, which was to replace Caffarelli's

\* Sir H. Douglas's Correspondence, MS.



on the line of communication, was already six thousand strong. Ney or Oudinot were spoken of to command the whole, and a strong division was already in march to reinforce the army of the south, arrangements which could have reference only to Napoleon's arrival; but the Russian war soon baulked the project, and Wellington's operations, to be hereafter noticed, obliged Dorsenne to relinquish the invasion of Galicia, and caused Bonnet once more to abandon the Asturias.

Thus with various turns of fortune, the war was managed in the northern provinces, and no great success attended the French arms, because the English General was always at hand to remedy the faults of the Spaniards. It was not so on the eastern line of invasion. There Suchet, meeting with no opponent capable of resisting him, had continued his career of victory, and the insufficiency of the Spaniards to save their own country was made manifest; but these things shall be clearly shown in the next chapter, which will treat of the conquest of Valencia.

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## CHAPTER II.

Conquest of Valencia—Suchet's preparations described—Napoleon's system eminently methodical—State of Valencia—Suchet invades that province—Blake concentrates his force to fight—His advanced guard put to flight by the French cavalry—He retires to the city of Valencia—Siege of Saguntum—The French repulsed in an assault—Palombini defeats Obispo near Segorbe—Harrispe defeats C. O'Donnell at Beneguazil—Oropesa taken—The French batteries open against Saguntum—Second assault repulsed—Suchet's embarrassments—Operations in his rear in Catalonia—Medas islands taken—Lacy proposes to form a general dépôt at Palamos—Discouraged by Sir E. Pellew—The Spaniards blow up the works of Berga, and fix their chief dépôt at Buza—Description of that place—Lacy surprises the French in the town of Igualada—Eroles takes a convoy near Jorbas—The French quit the castle of Igualada and join the garrison of Monsterrat—That place abandoned—Eroles takes Cevara and Belpuig—Beats the French national guards in Cerdana—Invades and ravages the French frontier—Returns by Ripol and takes post in the pass of Garriga—Milans occupies Mattaro—Sarsfield embarks and sails to the coast of the Ampurdan—These measures prevent the march of the French convoy to Barcelona—State of Aragon—The Empecinado and Duran invade it on one side—Mina invades it on the other—Calatayud taken—Severoli's division reinforces Musnier, and the partidas are pursued to Daroca and Molino—Mina enters the Cinco Villas—Defeats eleven hundred Italians at Ayerbé—Carries his prisoners to Motrico in Biscay—Mazzuchelli defeats the Empecinado at Cubillejos—Blake calls in all his troops and prepares for a battle—Suchet's position described—Blake's dispositions—Battle of Saguntum—Observations.

### CONQUEST OF VALENCIA.

IN August and the beginning of September, Suchet, while preparing for this great enterprise, had dispersed the bands of Villa

Campa and the other chiefs, who during the siege of Tarragona vexed Aragon. He had sent his feeble soldiers to France, receiving conscripts in their places, and although the harvest was very bad, formed large magazines in Morella and Tortosa. Eight thousand men had been left in Catalonia under General Frere, another eight thousand were placed under General Musnier, to protect Aragon, and twenty-four thousand of all arms remained for the invasion of Valencia, but this force Suchet thought inadequate, and demanded a reinforcement from the army of reserve, then in Navarre. Napoleon, whose system of war, whatever has been said to the contrary, was eminently methodical, refused. He loved better to try a bold push, at a distant point, with a few men, than to make an overwhelming attack, if he thereby weakened his communications; he judged courage and enterprise fittest for the attack, prudence and force for the support. And yet he designed to aid Suchet's operations vigorously when the decisive blow could be struck. Then not only the divisions of the reserve were to march, but combined movements, of detachments from nearly all the armies in the Peninsula, were arranged; and we shall find, that if Wellington, by menacing Ciudad Rodrigo, saved Galicia, the French army of the north, in return, by menacing Galicia, fixed the allies on the Agueda, and so protected Suchet's invasion of Valencia.

Three roads led to the Guadalaviar, one from Tortosa by the sea-coast, one by Teruel and Segorbe, and one by Morella and San Mateo. That from Tortosa, and that by Teruel, were carriage-roads, but the first only was fit for heavy artillery, and it was blocked partially by the fortress of Peniscola, and completed by the fort of Oropesa. Wherefore, though the infantry and cavalry could move on a by-road to the right, the convoys and the guns, which were at Tortosa, could not pass until Oropesa was reduced. Nevertheless the French General, well knowing the value of boldness in war, resolved to mask Peniscola, to avoid Oropesa, to send his field artillery by Teruel, and uniting his troops near Saguntum, to offer battle to Blake; and if the latter declined it, to reduce Oropesa and Saguntum, trusting for subsistence to the "*huerta*" or garden of Valencia, until the arrival of his convoys.

He had, however, organized his system of supply with care. From Morella and Tortosa, brigades of mules, after the manner adopted in the British army, were to carry provisions to the troops, and sheep and cattle were delivered to each regiment for its subsistence in advance. This last plan, which Sir John Moore had also projected in his campaign, Suchet found advantageous; and I am persuaded that the principle should be extended, so that all

things requisite for the subsistence and fighting of troops should be organized regimentally, and the persons employed wear the uniform of their different corps. Jealousies between the functionaries of different branches of the service would then be unknown, and the character of all the subordinate persons, being under the guardianship of the battalions to which they belonged, would be equally praiseworthy, which cannot now be said.

While Suchet was thus gathering his strength, Valencia was a prey to disorder. About the period of the siege of Tarragona, Palacios, notwithstanding his high monarchical principles, which caused him to be dismissed from the Regency, had been appointed Captain-General of Valencia, Murcia, and Aragon; and he immediately raised a strong party amongst the friars and other opponents of the Cortes. When, after the dispersion of the Murcian army at Baza, Blake had rallied the fugitives, and in virtue of his power as regent, assumed the chief command at Valencia, Palacios' faction opposed him, and endeavored to draw the soldiers and the populace to their side, by proposing to inundate the plain of Murviedro, and to defend the strong country in advance.\* Blake, however, resolved to act on the flanks of the French army by detachments, and, in this view, sent C. O'Donnell, with the divisions of Obispo and Villa Campa, to Albaracin, supporting them with four thousand men at Segorbe and Liria. He charged Mahy, who commanded five thousand infantry and seven hundred cavalry of the Murcian army, to surprise the French detachment of the army of the centre, posted at Cuença. He detached Bassecour with two thousand men to Requeña, and at the same time directed Duran and the Empecinado to unite, and invade Aragon; and it was to aid in this expedition that Mina quitted the mountains of Leon.

Blake had, exclusive of Mahy's and Bassecour's divisions, about twenty thousand infantry and two thousand cavalry. Three thousand five hundred men were placed in Saguntum, which was provisioned for three months; two hundred were in Oropesa, and fifteen hundred in Peniscola; and there were so many partidas, that the whole country seemed to be in arms, but the assembling of these people being very uncertain, Blake could not depend upon having a permanent partisan force, of more than eight thousand.† The Valencian army contained the Albuera divisions, St. Juan's, Miranda's, and Villa Campa's veterans;‡ it was therefore, not only numerous, but the best that Spain had yet produced; and Valencia itself was exceedingly rich in all things necessary for its

\* Captain Codrington's papers, MS.

† Roche, MSS. Tupper, MSS.

‡ Mr. Wellesley, MSS.

supply; but there was no real power—the building, though fair enough outside, had the dry rot within. The French had many secret friends, faction was as usual at work, the populace were not favorable to Blake, and that General had rather collected than organized his forces, and was quite incapable of leading them. He was unpopular both at Cadiz and Valencia, and the Regency of which he formed a part was tottering. The Cortes had quashed Mahy's command of the Murcian army, and even recalled Blake himself; but the order, which did not reach him until he was engaged with Suchet, was not obeyed. Meanwhile that part of the Murcian army which should have formed a reserve, after Mahy's division had marched for Cuença, fell into the greatest disorder: above eight thousand men deserted in a few weeks, and those who remained were exceedingly dispirited. Thus all the interest became concentrated in the city of Valencia; which was in fact the key of all the eastern coast because Carthagenæ required an army to defend it, and could only be fed from Valencia, and Alicant was then quite defenceless.

It was in this state of affairs, that Suchet commenced the invasion. His army was divided into three columns, and, on the 15th of September, one moved by the coast-road, one by Morella and San Mateo, and one by Teruel, where an intermediate magazine was established;\* but this latter column, instead of proceeding directly to Segorbe, turned off to its left, and passed over the Sierra de Gudar to Castellon de la Plana, where the whole three were united on the 20th.† The main column, commanded by Suchet in person, had masked Peniscola on the 15th, and invested Oropesa by a detachment on the 19th; but as the road ran directly under the fire of the last place, the main body moved by the rugged route of Cabanes to Villa Franca, leaving the battering-train still at Tortosa.

During these operations Blake appeared inclined to fight, for he brought Zayas up in front of Murviedro, and called in Obispo;‡ Mahy, who had done nothing on the side of Cuença, was also in march to join him; but all these divisions marched slowly, and with confusion; and a slight skirmish at Almansora, on the Mingares, where a few French dragoons put a great body of Spanish infantry to flight, made Blake doubt the firmness of his troops. He therefore left O'Donnell with four thousand men on the side of the Segorbe, and then retired himself with fifteen thousand behind the Guadalaviar.§ Valencia was thus thrown into great confu-

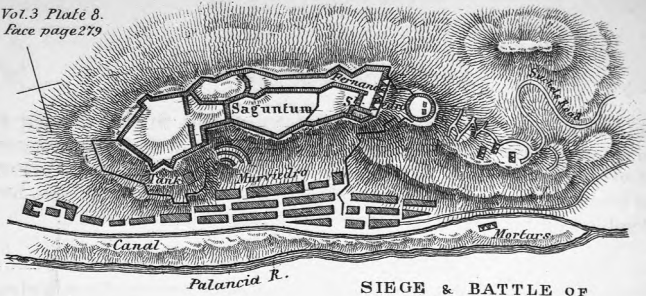
\* Suchet.

† Vacani.

‡ Roche, MSS.

§ Tupper, MSS.





SIEGE & BATTLE OF  
SAGUNTUM

1811.



sion, but Bassecour's division was at hand, and Suchet fearing to attack so large an army in an intrenched camp (which had cost two years to construct), while his own communication with Tortosa was intercepted, merely dispersed the armed peasants which had assembled on his flank, and then turned against Murviedro.

#### SIEGE OF SAGUNTUM.

This celebrated place, situated about four leagues from Valencia, was a rocky mountain, covered with the ruins of the ancient city, and the remains of Moorish towers and walls, which being connected by modern works, formed four distinct posts covering the whole summit of the rock; but in consequence of the usual Spanish procrastination the heavy guns prepared to arm it were not yet mounted, and only seventeen pieces of inferior size were available for defence. The modern town of Murviedro, situated at the foot of the rock, was covered by the river Palancia, and by a canal, and occupied by some Spanish piquets; but the 23d Habert, having passed the water, invested the rock on the east, while Harispe invested it on the west and south, and a third division drove the Spanish posts from Murviedro and intrenched itself in the houses. The rest of the army was disposed in villages, on the hills to the north-west, and patrols were pushed towards Valencia. Thus the rock of Saguntum was invested, but it was inaccessible to the engineer, save on the west, where the ascent, although practicable, was very rough and difficult. It would have been impregnable, if the Spaniards had mounted their large guns; for the French were obliged to bring earth from a distance, to form the batteries and parallels, and to set the miner to level the approaches, and their parapets were too thin to withstand heavy shot.

The first point of resistance was an ancient tower called San Pedro, and immediately above it was the fort of San Fernando, which could not be attacked until San Pedro fell, and, from its height, then only by the miner. But near the eastern extremity of the rock, there were two ancient breaches which the Spaniards were still engaged repairing, and had only stopped with timber; a large tank offered cover for the assembling of troops close to these breaches, and Suchet resolved to try an escalade. To effect this, three columns were assembled before daybreak on the 28th in the tank, a strong reserve was held in support, and a false attack was directed against the San Pedro to distract the attention of the besieged: but in the previous part of the night, the Spaniards having sallied were repulsed, and the action having excited both sides, a French soldier fired from the tank before the appointed

time, whereupon the columns rushing forward, in disorder, planted their ladders, and would have carried the place by noise, but the garrison thrust the ladders from the walls, and drove the stormers back, with the loss of three hundred men. After this check, as the artillery was still at Tortosa, Suchet ordered a part of his army to attack Oropesa, employed another part in making a road for the guns, to reach the battery raised against the tower of San Pedro, and then turned his own attention to the movements of Blake.

That General, following his first plan of action against the French flanks, had, during the investment of Saguntum, sent C. O'Donnell with Villa Campa's division and St. Juan's cavalry, to Betera and Beneguazil, and Obispo's division to Segorbe; thus forming a half circle round the French army, and cutting its communication with Teruel, near which place Mahy had by this time arrived. Suchet, however, caused Palombini to attack Obispo, whose whole division dispersed after a skirmish with the advanced guard, and the Italians then returned to the siege. The next night Harispe marched against O'Donnell, who was well posted at Beneguazil behind a canal, having his centre protected by a chapel and some houses; nevertheless the Spaniards were beaten with loss at the first shock, and fled in disorder over the Guadalaviar. During these events Blake remained an idle spectator of the defeat of his division, although he had a large body of troops in hand, and was within a few miles of the field of battle.

The French train now advanced from Tortosa, and four pieces were placed in battery against Oropesa. On the 10th Suchet took the direction of the attack in person, and the fort, situated upon an isolated rock, was breached in a few hours; but the garrison of the King's Tower (a separate work placed on a small promontory, and commanding the harbor) refused to surrender, and was carried off on the 11th, under the French fire, by the Magnificent. The French General, having thus with a loss of only thirty men opened the road for his artillery, returned to Saguntum, and pushed the siege of that place; but the difficulties were very great, the formation of the road to the batteries was itself a work of pain; and, although his indefatigable troops had formed a breaching battery on the 12th, while seven small mortars and howitzers, placed on the right and left, had nearly silenced the Spanish fire, the muskets of the besiegers alone brought down from fifteen to twenty men.

On the 17th the breaching battery, being armed, opened its fire against the tower, and the new masonry crumbled away at once; yet the ancient work resisted the guns like a rock. On the 18th the fire recommenced, when the wall gave way to the stroke of the