

perfectly secured. General Hope, however, whose head-quarters were now at the Escorial, could not listen to any suggestion of the kind. The orders from his superior were abundantly explicit to join him, unless something extraordinary came in the way, at Salamanca; and General Hope saw nothing, either in the immediate situation or future prospects of the Spanish capital, to lead him into a neglect of these orders. Having, therefore, halted a few days, for the purpose of collecting his stragglers, and closing up the cavalry, which had marched at some distance from the rear of his column, he made preparations for pushing on, with as little delay as possible, upon Salamanca.

On the 27th, the whole division passed the Guadarama mountains; and the 18th hussars, with the 71st infantry, reached Villa Castrin, on the opposite side of the Sierra. Next day, the rest of the infantry, together with three brigades of guns and the whole park of ammunition-waggons, reached the same point; whilst the hussars pushed on to Adanero, where they took the duty of the outposts. But though our movements had been so far abundantly satisfactory, certain intelligence came in that day, which caused considerable uneasiness, as well to General Hope as to all who happened to be intrusted with it. It was in substance as follows:—

Lord Proby had been sent forward by Sir John Moore on the road to Valladolid, with the view, if possible, of ascertaining whereabouts the enemy were, and how they might appear disposed to act. Lord Proby had proceeded as far as Tordesillas, when a patrol of the French cavalry entered the town, and he with great difficulty escaped being made prisoner. In spite of this interruption, however, he so far effected his object as to be able to report that six hundred French cavalry, with two field-pieces and two howitzers, were actually in Tordesillas, and that they were supported by six hundred more who occupied Valladolid. The former force, he stated, had advanced their posts as far as Puerto del Douro and Arnajo, and detachments from both were scouring the country, levying contributions, and acting exactly as if no troops were in the field against them. But this was not all the intelligence which his despatch contained. It appeared that the magistrates of the towns and villages near, had received requisitions, accompanied by proclamations, from Marshal Bessieres, indicating that he was on his march from Palencia, at the head of ten thousand men; that he expected to be in Valladolid on the 24th; and that he should look to find rations prepared for his men, as well as forage for his horses, along the whole line of his march.

The reader will easily believe that such information, coming from such a quarter, produced no little stir among the principal functionaries of our little corps. Whoever will take the trouble to consult the map, may see that the distance from Valladolid to Salamanca is at least not greater than from Villa Castine to the latter place; and hence that, supposing the two corps to have arrived at their several destinations on the same day, there was every probability that Bessieres, unencumbered as he doubtless was with waggons, and even with artillery, would be able to throw himself between us and our point of rendezvous, should he feel so disposed. But if such were the case on the supposition of our arriving simultaneously at Valladolid and Villa Castine, the danger of being intercepted was doubled, provided the French Marshal should have acted up to the purport of his manifestos, and entered Valladolid on the 24th. Bad, however, as this was, it was not the worst news that met us here; for on the very same night a courier came in with accounts of the disastrous battle of Tudela. That the reader may the better understand how this misfortune threatened to affect us, it will be necessary for me to draw off his attention, for a few moments, from the details of our own proceedings, and to make him acquainted with the operations of the different

Spanish corps, upon whose efficiency we had been all along led to calculate.

Previous to our entrance into Spain, we had been given to understand that three large armies, one under Blake and Romana, another under Castanos, and a third, which kept up the communication between these two, under the Conde de Belvidere, were all manœuvring in the front and on the flanks of the French line, and would probably overwhelm it ere we should be able to join them. The manœuvring of the three corps proved to be nothing more than a mere retention of their separate positions, in which they watched the French, with extreme caution no doubt, but from which they never dreamed of attempting anything offensive. In this state things continued till the enemy's reinforcements arrived; and then it was left to them to form their own plan, and to choose their own field of operations. The first Spanish General who felt the weight of their prowess was Blake; he was attacked in his position in the debouches of Villarcayo, Orduna, and Munjuca; from which, after a very spirited and obstinate resistance, he retired upon Espinosa. No time, however, was granted him for breathing. On the very day after his arrival there, he was again assailed by an overwhelming force; and his army, worn out with fatigue, and destitute of pro-

visions and clothing, was utterly dispersed. It fled in all directions, and the magazines at Reynosa, as well as the harbour of St. Andero, were both taken possession of by the enemy.

Whilst the operations which led to this victory were going on, Buonaparte himself entered Spain, and fixed his head-quarters, on the 8th of November, at Vittoria. His first act was to send forward a corps, under the orders of Marshal Soult, against the Estremadura army, which, headed by the Conde Belvidere, lay in his front. Belvidere was a young man of great bravery, but said to be deficient in military talent; he took up a defensive position near Burgos, and awaited the approach of the enemy. The consequence was, that, attacked in an open country by veteran troops, of which a large proportion was cavalry, he suffered a complete defeat, upwards of three thousand dead being left upon the field, and the rest scattered, beyond the possibility of immediate reunion. Thus were two of the three armies, of which so much notice had been taken, summarily disposed of; it remained now only to dispose of the third in a like manner; nor did any great while elapse ere it also was made to succumb under superior discipline and numbers.

Castanos was at this time posted in the vicinity of Calahorra, and had under his orders the united armies of Andalusia and Arragon. Of the num-

bers which composed that army, it is impossible even now to speak with accuracy ; for the records of Spanish history are so overrun with exaggeration, that it would be extremely unsafe, in almost any case, to rely upon them ; but from every credible rumour, it could not exceed forty thousand men ; and of these, perhaps, one half only were adequately armed. As soon as Castanos heard of the fate of Blake's and Belvidere's armies, he declared his determination to retreat, and to avoid, as long as he possibly could, bringing matters to the issue of a battle. But Castanos was not left to the guidance of his own judgment. He was beset by spies from the central junta, which, on all occasions, appeared to distrust its generals, in exact proportion to their abilities ; and he was by them urged and importuned to take a step, of the folly of which his better reason had long convinced him. He fell back from Calahorra upon Tudela, and there risked an action. As he had anticipated, his raw army was beaten ; and it was with the utmost difficulty that the General could keep together, after the defeat, a force sufficient to form the nucleus of another. With this he fled, rather than retreated, to Calatayud, where his troops endured all the miseries of destitution, and even famine to the utmost.

It soon became known that the enemy were moving in force upon Segovia ; and though Segovia

was occupied by a division of St. Juan's army, amounting to six thousand men, under General Aradia, no great confidence could be cherished, that such an impediment would long delay him. The resistance to be offered by Segovia had already been measured, by the facility with which St. Juan might be able to defend himself in the Somosierra pass. In case he should succeed in holding that, then was General Aradia to keep his post to the last extremity; but if the Somosierra were carried, then was Aradia to fall back at once upon the Guadarama pass. Now the Guadarama pass was the only road left open for our retreat, in the event of our junction with Sir John Moore being cut off by troops from Valladolid; should it likewise be forced, our situation would become a desperate one. Nothing indeed remained, except to throw ourselves into Avila; where, as it was a fortified place, we must needs maintain ourselves, till Sir John Moore should be able to advance to our relief.

When General Hope began his march from the Escorial, he intended to proceed by Adanero to Arrivola, and from thence to Madrigal, Penaranda, Huerto, and so onwards to Salamanca. As soon, however, as the above intelligence reached him, he prudently determined to alter his route, and to move by a road considerably to the left, and of course further from the direct line of the enemy's

probable operations. The cavalry accordingly received orders to march on the 30th to Fontiveros, and to occupy posts for the protection of the column of artillery and infantry, which moved on the same day to Avila. On the following morning the march was resumed, and the road to Penaranda taken, where the column arrived without molestation on the 2nd of December; but the main body of the cavalry was still kept at Fontiveros, whilst its outposts were extended as far as Adanero, Arrivola, Villa Nova de Aroud, Madrigal, Royama, and even to Penaranda itself. Thus were the rear and the right flanks of the division perfectly secured; and it was rendered quite impracticable for the enemy to harass its movements, without at least sufficient time being gained to provide against any emergency.

It is hardly necessary to say, that my own position was with the cavalry. While thus employed, I instituted various inquiries as to the nature and strength of the French troops which had shown themselves in this quarter; and I heard that they consisted only of portions of a partisan corps, detached at a great distance from their main body, and intended to effect no other end, than merely to spread alarm over the country, and distract people's attention. In this they had certainly succeeded; whilst the chief part of their force was moving all the while towards their left, with the

design, after the defeat of Castanos, of overwhelming St. Juan, and taking possession of Madrid. How it came about, that they made no attempt to penetrate between our columns; whether the possibility of succeeding in the effort had not occurred to them, or that they considered the other an object of much greater importance, I had of course no means of ascertaining. But I did ascertain that they had not, from the first, made any movement, either partially or generally, which could lead to the supposition, that such an undertaking had ever entered into their contemplation.

We had traversed a large portion of Spain, and during the last few weeks had been almost constantly in the immediate presence of the enemy; yet, strange to say, we had never exchanged shots. On the 29th, at night, that event occurred for the first time. It might be about midnight, when the videttes, furnished by the picket at Arrivola, gave an alarm that the French were coming on. The troopers mounted and made ready, and in a few minutes found themselves attacked by a strong party of cavalry; concerning the nature of which, whether it were the advanced-guard of a corps, or a mere patrol, they were unavoidably ignorant. As nothing was to be gained by keeping possession of Arrivola, our people, after skirmishing for a few minutes, fell back; but they were not pursued,

and they halted for the night at a house upon the road-side, distant about half a mile from the village. At daylight they once more advanced upon Arrivola. The movement was, of course, made with extreme caution; though for caution, as the event proved, there was no necessity; for the enemy had abandoned the place several hours before, having taken time merely to plunder the post-office. This was the only event which befell us from the hour of our quitting Lisbon, up to the day of our junction with the main body of the army at Salamanca.

During the 3rd of December, no change took place in the position of the cavalry; its main body still continuing at Fontiveros, whilst its posts were extended, as before, along the flank of the column of infantry: little, therefore, occurred calculated to amuse or excite; for the enemy made no movements, and we were left entirely to ourselves. Whilst thus situated, every little piece of intelligence which happened to come in, attracted a degree of attention far deeper and more lasting than, in all probability, would have been the case had our minds and bodies been more actively employed. All the rumours which reached us were not, however, in themselves uninteresting; at least there was one, which, under any circumstances, would have driven us, in spite of ourselves, into a train of speculation and inquiry.

We were given to understand that Sir David Baird's column, which had landed at Corunna on the 13th of the preceding month, and had advanced on the road to Salamanca as far as Astorga, had suddenly received orders to fall back again upon Corunna. Such intelligence excited in us great surprise; nor could we see either the motive which should lead to such a measure, or the necessity which could compel it. Was it that a retreat had been determined upon, in order to save Portugal, by abandoning Spain altogether? or were we to take shipping, and proceeding southwards to Cadiz, to make the south instead of the north of Spain the theatre of our operations? These were questions which, at the outposts, it was impossible to answer; yet was it equally impossible not to perceive the unhappy results which would certainly follow out of the one as well as the other. This was not the moment for retracting, unless we should be fairly driven to it by a force overwhelmingly superior; and of such we certainly saw nothing, at least in our immediate front. Our business, on the contrary, was to advance; and the late disasters, so far from taking away from that necessity, only increased it.

In order to carry on operations with at least a fair prospect of success, several modes of acting were before us. In the first place, supposing the Somosierra and the Guadarama passes to be de-

fensible by St. Juan's army, and that the remains of Castanos's troops should have arrived, as they were said to have arrived, at Siguenza, on the 30th, all immediate apprehension as to the fate of Madrid might safely be laid aside. In this case, Moore's column might endeavour to unite itself with that of Blake, either at Leon or at any other convenient spot in that quarter, Sir David Baird's corps directing its march upon the same point; and as Blake was represented to have still twenty thousand men under his orders, the junction of the two would make up a formidable force, fit either for offensive or defensive undertakings. Upon this centre, the scattered battalions from the other armies might easily rally; and then, or even earlier, should it be deemed advisable, an advance upon Valladolid might be undertaken, and a campaign opened, upon a grand scale, with the combined strength of the whole.

In the next place, and still taking it for granted that the passes could be maintained for some time, the British army would run but little risk, were it, unconnected with any Spanish force whatever, to advance from Salamanca, by Abba de Tormes, upon Madrid. There was no force between these two points capable of resisting it; and the very knowledge that it was in motion to the front, would call off the attention of the enemy from their present plans, and give time to the broken

Spaniards to collect and recover their order. And lastly, should matters fall out in every respect contrary to our wishes and interests; should the Somosierra pass be carried, and all communication between St. Juan's army and the army at Sigüenza be cut off; should Blake's corps be so completely broken up, as to be rendered incapable of rallying or re-assembling; and Portugal be fallen into a state of helpless inactivity,—even in the event of all these misfortunes befalling us, we were not without a resource. There was nothing to prevent St. Juan's and Castanos's troops from retreating with all speed upon Cuenca or Valencia, and to unite themselves there with the Catalonians; or passing the Sierra Morena, to collect everything around them under the walls of Cadiz; whilst we also, with a good grace, might change our ground from the north to the south; whither our shipping could convey us from any ports between Corunna and Lisbon. At all events, a precipitate retreat, at a moment like the present, was unpopular. Our army had suffered no disasters; it had never come into contact with the enemy; it was now in the very centre of Spain, and the eyes not of Spain only, but of all Europe, were upon it;—what would be the consequence were it to abandon the capital without striking a blow, and quit the field before a single encounter had taken place? No doubt the game was a deep

one; but it was the last which England had to play, and it appeared desirable in the eyes of the army to play it boldly.

Such were the ideas which occurred at the moment, and which, in spite of very dispiriting intelligence from other quarters, continued to remain uppermost in our minds. The supineness and inactivity of the Portuguese, excessive as these were represented to be, in no respect led to a change of opinion. It is true that, from these, little efficient co-operation was to be expected; the energies of the people being applied wholly to the arrangement of religious processions; and the government, either from the absence of power or of ability, making no attempt whatever to support us; for even a line of dragoons, between Sir John Moore's army and that of the British commander in Lisbon, though requested in the joint names of these two functionaries, was refused. Yet in Spain the case was certainly different. There the common people, with some remarkable exceptions, were all enthusiastic in the cause; in Madrid this was particularly the case, as their expressions of joy, at beholding a British uniform, abundantly testified. Why should men thus actuated be abandoned? It was no good reason to urge, that the inhabitants of Estremadura and Toledo had exhibited symptoms of a self-confidence sadly misplaced, and of a hauteur and irritability of tem-

per highly disagreeable to their allies. Among them the French had not yet appeared; they knew nothing, therefore, either of the sufferings or of the defeats of their fellow-countrymen, except by report. With as little justice might it be urged, that the people of Old Castile deserved no support, because they were either unwilling or unable to defend themselves. The people of Old Castile present doubtless a poor specimen of the Spanish character; and resemble, in indolence and sloth, the natives of Portugal rather than those of Spain; but the people of Old Castile constituted but a small portion of the Spanish nation. Spain itself was not to be abandoned, because some Spaniards were spiritless or uncivil.

But Napoleon himself was in the field, his headquarters being already at Aranda. It was to be regretted that the case should be so, and that Alexander had not detained him somewhat longer at Erfurth; for he had, beyond question, appeared upon our stage too soon. Still, even Napoleon was not invincible. And, lastly, there was no unanimity, no vigour, no energy, in the proceedings either of the Spanish government or the Spanish generals. Instead of nominating some one person as commander-in-chief, to whom all the other generals might pay obedience, each leader of an army was left to act according to the suggestions of his own fancy; and all were, or claim-

ed to be, on a footing of the most perfect equality. Palafox, Blake, and Cuesta, were continually intriguing and caballing against one another; Castanos had been ruined by the presence of spies, and Blake sacrificed to a similar interference. As to Romana, his place of sojourn was quite unknown, though rumours were in circulation, both that he was about to be placed at the head of the Spanish armies, and that he might be daily expected at Salamanca, to consult with Moore. No doubt these were terrible evils; so terrible, as to bring upon Spain greater danger and greater calamities, than she ran the smallest risk of incurring from the efforts of the enemy. Yet were they not such as to authorise our withdrawal from the scene of action, at a time when upon our presence the very existence of the country might be said to depend. Besides, there was something so galling to the mind of a British soldier in the prospect of flight before he was beaten, that no one could think of it with patience. The very common troopers seemed indignant at the suggestion; and it certainly did appear strange, that whilst the women of Madrid were labouring night and day to put their city in a posture of defence, we should be preparing to abandon them.

CHAPTER IX.

Visit to head-quarters, and interview with Sir John Moore—

A retreat determined upon—General dissatisfaction of the army—The idea of retreating abandoned, and orders issued to advance—Movement upon Tordesillas—Skirmish at Rueda—Sir John Moore resolves to attack Soult on the Carrion—The army advances for that purpose—Brilliant affair of cavalry at Sahagun—Preparations for a battle suddenly countermanded.

HAVING good reason to believe that the French were all moving upon Madrid, and that there was no probability of any attack being made upon our posts for some time to come, I set off at an early hour on the morning of the 4th, and reached Salamanca about noon on the day following. I was induced to take this step, not from mere curiosity alone, but in consequence of certain letters which I had received from Sir John Moore, concerning the contents of which I was desirous of personally consulting him. I entered the place full of doubts

and apprehensions ; and I certainly did not quit it with apprehensions allayed, or doubts removed.

Having waited upon the General, and the compliments usual on such occasions having passed, our conversation naturally took the turn into which the present situation of affairs, and the position of the army, were calculated to guide it. It was then that Sir John explicitly stated to me, that he had come to a final determination to retreat. He had called the general officers together, he added, for the purpose of acquainting them with his decision, as well as with the reasons which led to it ; but he had neither requested their opinions, nor demanded their judgment. He next entered, at great length, into the motives which swayed him, reasoning, in conversation, as he reasoned in his letters, with a decided leaning to the gloomy side of the picture. He spoke warmly in condemnation of the Spanish government, and of the nation generally ; and enlarged upon the absence of all right understanding among the generals, as well as upon the absurdity of their military movements, which had subjected them all to be beaten in detail. He expressed his sincere regret that they had not marched, as they ought to have done, when he first began to enter the country, so as to unite themselves with him ; and declared that, with a force as yet uncollected, and having nothing but the remains of defeated corps on his flanks, a

choice of evils alone remained for him. The determination to which he had at last come, was not formed without extreme pain to himself; but the duty of preserving his army, situated as it now was, presented to his mind a consideration paramount to every other; he was, therefore, resolved to retreat.

Though I could not but feel deeply on hearing such a declaration, I deemed it my respectful duty to say little in reply, further than by expressing my regret that so strong a necessity for the measure should exist, and my apprehension of its consequences to the cause. The slightest indication of a retrograde movement, exhibited at such a moment as this, would, I feared, produce fatal effects; for Spain would fall, Portugal would fall, and the whole of Europe be once more at the feet of the enemy. Then what would become of Madrid, whose inhabitants were enduring the severest privations, chiefly with the hope of receiving aid from us; and of Castanos, and Palafox, and Blake, all of whom, on the same explicit understanding, were labouring to re-assemble their scattered troops. No doubt, I added, the General's information was more likely to be correct than mine; but I dreaded the heavy disappointment which his proposed step would occasion to the people of England, whose very hearts seemed set upon the success of his under-

taking; and whose mortification at his failure would be bitter, in proportion to the degree of hope with which they saw him embark upon it. I then retired, with the painful conviction on my mind, that the army would begin its backward journey in the course of a day or two at the furthest.

The feelings of regret under which I laboured were not, I soon found, confined to my own breast; they were shared by many in the army. Even the General's personal staff sought not to conceal their chagrin at the adoption of a system which seemed so unsatisfactory. General Hope having by this time joined, there were at Salamanca and in the neighbourhood full twenty thousand British troops, in a state, both from their equipment and discipline, to oppose any French force of almost double the number. General Baird, with a strong reinforcement, particularly in cavalry, was at Astorga; nor were there any impediments whatever in his way, which should hinder him from arriving within six days at the furthest. But if it should be deemed unsafe to wait so long here, why not move towards him, and concentrate the divisions behind the Douro, from whence offensive operations might be undertaken? Any thing, in short, was pronounced preferable to a retreat, which, independently of the disgrace which it would bring upon the Bri-

tish arms, must expose Madrid to destruction, and cause the certain annihilation of Castanos and Palafox's armies. Seldom did men, situated as we were, venture to speak out so boldly against the measures of their chief. But murmurings and remonstrances were useless; the die was cast, and it could not be recalled.

In the midst of these discussions, news came in from the capital, which served to produce an effect upon the mind of our General. The Spaniards were represented as prepared to bury themselves under the ruins of the city, and to perish to a man, before the French should enter. In the short space of forty-eight hours they had unpaved the streets, and loaded the balconies and flat roofs of their houses with the stones, in readiness to be hurled on the heads of the assailants. A huge trench was already drawn round the entire circumference of the city; numerous outworks were begun, and men and women of all ranks and classes were labouring incessantly for their completion. Morla had assumed the chief command of the place; and all were united in one enthusiastic resolution to conquer or perish. It is probably needless to add that the annunciation of these tidings served but to increase our discontent. Men were no longer contented to express generally their disapprobation of the retreat, but each

was ready with his own plan, from the adoption of which he was perfectly convinced that the most advantageous results might arise. Why not move to the right; cried one, and endeavour to unite with Castanos? Should matters come to the worst, there will always be a retreat across the Sierra Morena, upon Cadiz. Why not make a forward movement at once, exclaimed another, or else close up our own troops in the rear of the Douro? this will at least retard the enemy's operations, if it do not absolutely defeat them? Was it to be expected that Buonaparte, having gone so far, would relinquish Spain, till his whole strength should have been brought against it? or that the raw Spanish levies would not suffer defeats? Were there no provinces whither, in the event of being overpowered, the British army could withdraw, still warm in the cause, and still capable of exertion? Would not a British force in the north of Spain, even though driven to act on the defensive; or the same force retiring gradually towards the south, and gathering round it, as it went, the remnants of the different Spanish corps, cast prodigious difficulties in the way of the enemy, and give prodigious encouragement to our allies? All these questions were asked with the tone which men will assume, when matters are in progress of which they disapprove; and it was

answered, as if with one voice, that half the army had better be sacrificed, than the cause thus abandoned.

Notwithstanding these murmurs, of which he was not left in ignorance, General Moore exhibited no signs of any alteration in his previous resolutions. On the contrary, Lord Paget, who had been previously commanded to close up from Astorga with the whole of the cavalry, received orders not to march; and it was given out that the retrograde movement would commence on the day after the morrow; one cavalry regiment only was summoned, but it was called in for the avowed purpose of strengthening the hussar brigade, and enabling it to cover more effectually the retreat of the column. Thus, on the night of the 5th, the troops retired to rest, in the unshaken belief that the proud hopes with which they had entered this country, were all doomed to suffer overthrow.

Having remained during the night in Salamanca, I departed on the following morning to the outposts, which had been drawn in, and now occupied stations in the immediate front of this city. I had not resumed my ordinary routine of duty many hours, when, to my inexpressible satisfaction, intelligence was communicated to me that the General had altered his plans. Sir David Baird, who had actually begun his retrograde

movement from Astorga, was ordered to retrace his steps; and an advance, instead of a retreat, was understood to be in contemplation. Never has a condemned criminal rejoiced more heartily at the receipt of a reprieve, than did the British army when these tidings got abroad among them. But a few hours ago, and every face looked blank and woe-begone; men did their duty, indeed, attended to their horses and accoutrements, and performed all the other offices which their stations required; but they set about every thing with the air of people who took no manner of interest in what they were doing. Now all was life and activity, insomuch, that even occupations, which but a few hours ago would have cost many a complaint whilst in process of execution, were executed, not only without murmur, but with apparent satisfaction.

It was but natural that the curiosity of all should be powerfully excited respecting the causes which, in so short a space of time, had produced effects so remarkable. Whilst by some it was surmised that the disapprobation of the general officers to his proposed measures, had of itself induced Sir John Moore to take them into further and more serious consideration; others, with perhaps more reason, attributed the circumstance mainly to the receipt of fresh information from Madrid, and letters which were known to have

come in from Mr. Frere. From the former of these it was collected, that the inhabitants of the capital had abated nothing of their ardour; that the French had made one assault, in which they were repulsed with loss; and that, from the temper of the people and the zeal of their leaders, it was anticipated that no better success would attend them in others. Such were the news from Madrid; whilst Mr. Frere's letter was understood to contain little else than one tissue of cogent reasons against any movement to the rear. Mr. Frere was doubtless fully justified in writing in this strain; as minister from the court of England, he was perfectly authorised to give advice respecting the course to be pursued by the English General, even if that officer had abstained from requesting it; but Sir John Moore having repeatedly solicited his opinion, as to the prudence or imprudence of schemes in agitation, his right to speak or write strongly became increased fourfold. Mr. Frere, however, in my humble judgment, erred, in desiring that Colonel Charmilly should be examined before a council of war prior to any movement being made. Respecting Colonel Charmilly's trust-worthiness, I beg to be understood as offering no opinion; he might have been a very good and a very prudent man, or he might have been the reverse; but in either case it would have been not only insulting to the Commander of

the forces, to have the judgment of an unofficial emigrant set up in opposition to his own ; but the consequences might have been in every way ruinous. Sir John Moore dismissed that person with marks of dissatisfaction ; and I think I should have done the same.

In spite of all this, however, and in spite of the excessive timidity of the Supreme Junta, which on the first alarm of danger had fled to Badajoz, at the very extremity of the kingdom, only one opinion can, I conceive, be formed, as to the soundness of the views taken by Mr. Frere on the present occasion. No doubt we should have had serious difficulties to contend against, not the least serious of which was presented by the disorganised and disjointed state of the Spanish armies ; but of the evils arising from that system, even the imbecile government seemed to be aware ; and there was a prospect that the separate corps would be shortly brought together under some single chief. Romana, too, was generally spoken of as the man ; and in Romana we had all great confidence. Now should this plan be acted upon, as we had good reason to believe it would, the absence of the junta, so far from being a subject of regret, ought rather to be viewed as one of cordial congratulation ; inasmuch as the intrigues, cabals, and absurdities, which attended constantly upon its deliberations, were likely to produce less mischief when the body itself

was at a distance, than if it were near at hand. But to return to our own movements.

It was on the evening of the 5th,—on the evening of the very day on which I had my last interview with him, that Sir John Moore's sentiments began to waver. A courier was accordingly despatched that night, with directions to General Baird not to persist in his movement upon Corunna; and on the following morning a second courier set off, bearing orders for him to retrace his steps upon the Astorga road. At the same time Colonel Graham was despatched to Madrid, for the purpose of ascertaining the real condition of the city, and of bringing back such accounts as might be worthy of confidence. This officer, who throughout the war peculiarly distinguished himself by his activity and diligence, had come in, only a few days before, with tidings of the defeat of St. Juan's army, and the forcing of the Somosierra pass by a corps of French cavalry. It was then that men began to inquire why measures had not been adopted to secure that pass more effectually, than by leaving it to the care of a Spanish levy of half-armed peasants; and many were of opinion, that had General Hope's corps taken a position there, much time might have been gained; whilst Baird's column joining Sir John Moore's, the whole might have advanced together, or, in case of reverses, fallen back in a body upon Madrid. That advan-

tage, however, was lost; and hence not only would any movement of troops upon the capital be made at a double risk, but even a single messenger—such as Colonel Graham—was compelled to make a long detour, in order to reach it in safety. By a circuitous route, however, Colonel Graham proceeded; and upon the results of his mission, and the report which he might happen to bring back, the future operations of the army were understood to depend.

In these uncertain measures, and still more in the general tenor of his conversation, it was easy to perceive marks of the gloom which at this time overshadowed the mind of General Moore. That he was an officer of great distinction, every one acknowledged during his life, and posterity will never deny it; but it was too manifest that a fear of responsibility, a dread of doing that which was wrong, of running himself and his troops into difficulties from which they might not be able to extricate themselves, were a great deal too active to permit either his talents or his judgment properly to exert their influence. Sir John Moore had earned the highest reputation as a general of division; he was aware of this; and perhaps he felt no inclination to risk it—at all events, he was clearly incapable of despising partial obstacles in the pursuit of some great ultimate advantage; in one word, he was not a Wellington. Of this no

more convincing proof need be given, than the fact that, even at the moment when preparations for an advance were going on, his whole heart and soul seemed turned towards the Portuguese frontier. Did any one talk to him of the possibility of gaining Valladolid, and then, in case of the worst, of retiring into the northern provinces, and acting on the defensive, he would answer by a declaration that in the north there were no supplies; and that it was a country, in every point of view, most unfavourable for military evolutions. Perhaps this might be true. The northern provinces are certainly barren enough; and we should have doubtless been met by a variety of inconveniences, had we made them the theatre of our operations; but with the sea open to us, what had we to apprehend? Besides, even upon the supposition that our first and greatest object was to defend Portugal, it was by no means certain that we might not cover it as effectually by taking up positions in the north of Spain, as by falling back at once upon the frontier. Unless the French possessed a disposable force much greater than we had reason to believe they did, it was extremely improbable that they would venture to pass us by; whereas, were we to retire, they would of course pursue, and thus the whole of the Peninsula would be gradually overrun.

But though our leader seemed in no way dis-