

posed to embark upon any hazardous undertaking, he showed himself well inclined, in the event of a favourable communication from Colonel Graham, to attempt something. Of the motions and strength of the enemy, no tidings had of late been received; but our own force was in the highest spirits, and in the best possible order. The hospitals were almost entirely tenantless, and the regiments of infantry were complete, not only in numbers, but in their equipments and clothing, and everything necessary for taking the field. The cavalry, again, were in admirable case; whilst of the artillery it is necessary to say no more, than that it never presented a more imposing appearance. How sincerely did all regret that the unhappy delay, occasioned by Baird's retrogression, should keep such an army idle, even for a single day!

From this period up to the return of Colonel Graham, only one event occurred of sufficient importance to be narrated. It was this: A courier, who was carrying despatches from Bayonne addressed to Napoleon at Aranda, having fallen into the hands of some armed peasantry, was by them sent in to the head-quarters of our army. Whether the mail contained any very interesting intelligence I cannot say, not having personally examined it; but I learned that some of its contents were at least amusing, if not instructive. They were of old date; for they spoke of the army

of Portugal as on its march through Bourdeaux, under the orders of Junot, whose letters were all written in a style of humility quite unprecedented. Their purport, however, accounted for their tone pretty effectually; for they were chiefly devoted to entreaties that some increase of pay might be granted; the writer being but badly provided for, now that his Portuguese resources had failed him. It will easily be believed that the perusal of these piteous petitions created no little merriment among the men, to whose exertions the Marshal was indebted for his present poverty.

On the 9th of December, Colonel Graham returned from his mission. He had taken the route by Talavera, at which place he arrived on the 7th, in time to be told of the surrender of Madrid, and of the murder of General St. Juan by his mutinous troops; and not judging it either prudent or necessary to proceed further, he instantly retraced his steps. According to his report, though many reverses had been sustained, still, from the attitude which the country continued to maintain, and the divided state of the French army, something might yet be done. The chiefs in the capital had indeed betrayed their trust; and the enemy were in possession of the Retiro; but the indignant populace had refused to lay down their arms, and there was little probability that they would soon be induced to change their

sentiments. There were about thirty thousand French troops thus kept in employment. Of the rest, some had proceeded against Saragoza, some against Toledo; some had taken the road to Valencia, and others had bent their steps towards Cadiz. All this appeared to Sir John Moore as inviting a forward movement on his part; and the army were too much gratified at the prospect of advancing at all, to question very minutely the grounds or motives upon which our General acted, or changed his opinions.

The movement began on the 12th from various points. On that day Lord Paget, with the principal part of the cavalry, marched from Toro, whither he had moved up in the course of the week, to Tordesillas; whilst the hussar brigade, under my own orders, proceeded from its ground at Arrivola. The divisions likewise defiled from Alba de Tormes, Salamanca, and Ludesma, and on the 14th a new position was taken up, the right resting on Tordesillas, the centre at Alayoz, and the left at Toro. In order to render it as secure as possible, the whole of the cavalry was placed upon the right of the stream, part occupying posts on one side of the river, and part upon the other. Lord Paget's corps crossed the stream; whilst that of which I was at the head, distributed itself through Patricios, Rubios, Madrigal, Nava del Rey, and Pollos, on the Douro. Thus we had

completely reversed the order in which, but a few days ago, we stood. Then our rear was to the Guadarama, that pass being in the hands of our friends, and opposed to the enemy; now we were facing the Guadarama, and expecting the enemy to debouch from the very places which we ourselves had formerly occupied.

It was the good fortune of a squadron of the 18th hussars to come, at this time, into contact with the enemy. There is a large village, or rather a small town, called Rueda, situated about half-way between Nava and Tordesillas; in which, we had been given to understand that detachments of the enemy's cavalry, with some infantry, were quartered. Having caused it to be reconnoitred, and finding that the French seemed quite ignorant of our proximity, I determined to surprise them, if possible; at all events to bring them to action. With this intention a squadron proceeded against them on the night of the 12th; and having happily made good our entrance unobserved, we soon threw them into confusion. The greater number were sabred on the spot, many were taken, and only a few escaped to inform General Franceschi, who occupied Valladolid with a body of two or three thousand horse, that the British army had not retreated.

When he began his movements, it was, I believe, General Moore's intention to advance by Valla-

dolid, to unite himself with Romana's army, and to threaten the communications between Madrid and France. With this view he had taken up his position at Tordesillas, and had despatched a messenger with a letter to Romana, making him acquainted with his plans. But on the 14th a French officer having been intercepted by the peasantry, the despatches of which he was the bearer were brought in to me; and seeing that they were of the first moment, I lost no time in forwarding them to head-quarters. An immediate change of plan was the consequence. The army, it was understood, would move to its left, for the purpose of effecting a junction at once with Sir David Baird's column; and then, either in connexion with Romana, if he could be found, or independently of him, should he keep out of the way, attack Marshal Soult, who, at the head of sixteen or eighteen thousand men, was in position about Valencia and Saldanha. The plan seemed to be both a wise and a spirited one; and it deserved success.

Whilst the columns of infantry were filing off in the direction of Toro and Benevente, the cavalry enjoyed several opportunities of again trying its strength with that of the enemy. In every instance the superiority of British soldiers was well asserted; and in a variety of skirmishes we succeeded in making prisoners of one lieutenant-colonel, one major, with upwards of a hundred

privates, and sixty horses. It was in truth a glorious spectacle to see with what perfect confidence of success the smallest patrol of British horse would charge bodies, often doubling themselves in number ; and it was no less gratifying to find that a mere numerical superiority in no single instance availed the enemy anything.

In the mean time intelligence came in from Romana, that he had actually commenced his retreat from Leon, in consequence, as it was surmised, of the arrangements into which Sir John Moore had entered a few days ago, for retiring upon Portugal. Such information, at a moment like the present, could not fail of causing considerable vexation to our leader. He blamed Romana severely, and despatched another courier, with a letter couched in terms even more pressing than any which he had employed before, to request that the Spanish General would retrace his steps without a moment's delay. It was added that, should he find it impossible to act upon this suggestion at once, General Moore could not wait any longer for his convenience ; because an opportunity of striking a blow was now before him, such as had never previously come in his way, and which the smallest loss of time might remove. In due course Romana's answer arrived ; and it was to the effect, that he would co-operate, to the

utmost of his power, in any enterprise in which the British General might see fit to embark.

So far all was satisfactory enough; but the same thing could certainly not be said with reference to the information which we derived from our prisoners, touching the amount of French troops employed in the Peninsula. From one of these, Colonel Arvignac, we learned that there either were, or shortly would be, opposed to us ten corps d'armie, each consisting of two divisions, or nearly twenty thousand men; and the following is the list of generals in command, with their stations, as he enumerated them:—Ney and Moncey, in the neighbourhood of Saragoza; Le Fevre and Macelliny moving on Salamanca; Bessieres, at Madrid; Soult and Lassalle, near Placencia; Junot, advancing to Burgos; Gouvion St. Cyr, in the direction of Barcelona; Milhaud, in communication with Le Fevre; and Marmont, whose exact province I have forgotten. The cavalry attached to this mass he represented as embracing no fewer than thirty-six regiments; and he affirmed that there were full seven thousand of the imperial guards then quartered in Madrid. How far these statements were to be relied upon, it was of course impossible to say; but of one truth no man could be ignorant,—namely, that the enemy's force in the country was enor-

mous, and that our only chance of success lay in beating him in detail. But was it probable that we should succeed in this? The most sanguine amongst us could not but experience doubts, when it was recollected that, of all the Spanish armies which but a month ago had kept the field, Romana's alone remained; and that it could hardly be counted upon, inasmuch as it was as yet only in the act of forming. Then, again, the French generals were as prudent as they were brave. Should any one of them be made aware of our approach, he would doubtless fall back, with the view of drawing us after him, till we should be thrown into the midst of as many corps as the Emperor might deem it advisable to employ in our destruction. Still, much was to be effected by promptitude and boldness; and though we heard of nothing except immense masses of French moving in every direction; though the people undeniably began to exhibit symptoms of abated zeal and decaying patriotism; and though, above all, our own General was not a man to attempt anything, unless he saw before him a sort of moral certainty of success, such as others would scarcely look for; in spite of all these considerations, not a man in the army desponded, but all felt their spirits rise in proportion as the prospect of meeting the enemy became more decided.

With this feeling uppermost in our minds, every

march which brought us nearer to the position of Marshal Soult was performed, not only without a murmur, but with an excess of good-will. On the 16th, the head-quarters had been established at Toro; on the 17th, 18th, and 19th, it passed Villapondo and Valderosa, and on the 20th we were established at Majorga. Here Sir David Baird's column joined us; and here we could muster no fewer than 23,000 infantry, 2,300 cavalry, and nearly fifty pieces of cannon of different calibres.

Whilst head-quarters were established at Majorga, the cavalry and horse-artillery having advanced as far as Monastero Melgar Abaxo, succeeded, on more than one occasion, in measuring their strength with the enemy's outposts. Of the skirmishes which took place at this time, few were productive of any very serious effects; though all tended, in a greater or less degree, to increase the confidence of our people in themselves, and so far to prepare them for the grand struggle which was supposed to be pending. But there was one exploit which deserves lasting remembrance, not only because of the gallantry which the troops displayed in its performance, but because of the complete knowledge of his profession which was exhibited by Lord Paget in conducting it.

The Monastero Melgar Abaxo is distant about three leagues from Sahagun; in which place a

corps of seven hundred French cavalry were reported to be lodged. As they were at some distance from the main body of the French army, it was deemed practicable to cut them off, and Lord Paget determined, at all events, to make the attempt. He accordingly put himself at the head of the 10th and 15th hussars; and, in the middle of a cold wintry night, when the ground was covered with snow, set off for that purpose.

When they had ridden about two-thirds of the way, Lord Paget divided his force, and desiring General Slade, with the 10th, to pursue the course of the Cea, and to enter the town by that side, he himself, followed by the 15th, wheeled off to approach it by a different route. It was not long before his Lordship's party fell in with a picket of the enemy. The picket was instantly charged; and all, except one man, were either cut down or made prisoners. But the escape of one was as injurious, under existing circumstances, as the escape of the whole; for the alarm was given, and before the 15th could approach the place, the enemy were ready to receive them. It was now broad daylight; and as our troops drew near, the French were seen formed in what appeared to be an open plain, at no great distance from the town. The 15th were wheeled into line in a moment; and as there was no time to be lost, they followed their leader at a brisk trot, with the intention of charging; but

when they were yet fifty yards from the enemy, they found that a wide ditch divided them, and that the French had availed themselves of other inequalities in the ground, of which, when some way off, they had not been aware. A pause was now necessarily made, but one instant served to put the whole again in motion. The regiment, wheeling to its left, soon found out a convenient spot for crossing; and though the enemy manœuvred actively to hinder the formation, they were again in line and advancing to the charge, within five minutes from the commencement of the check. A few changes of ground now took place, as each corps strove to gain the flank of another; but they were only a few. The British cavalry effected its object; and then coming down at full speed upon their opponents, who stood to receive the shock, they overthrew them in an instant. Many were killed upon the spot, many more unhorsed, and one hundred and fifty-seven were made prisoners, including two lieutenant-colonels. On this occasion the English cavalry amounted only to four hundred men, whilst that of the French fell not short of seven hundred.

This brilliant rencontre took place on the 20th; and on the 21st the head-quarters of the army were advanced to the spot where it occurred. The weather was at this time remarkably inclement, a succession of frost and snow having been

followed by heavy rains ; and the troops, who had performed of late many severe forced marches, were in a state of extreme exhaustion. Under these circumstances, though fully conscious that every hour which passed was so much time lost to him and gained by the enemy, Sir John Moore determined to halt for a day ; and he devoted it to a careful supply of all the necessaries of which the men seemed to be in need, as well as in preparing against the events of the trial which he felt to be at hand.

Whilst resting here, the correspondence between General Moore and the Marquis de la Romana was renewed. The latter made no secret of the general inefficiency of his army, but he agreed to co-operate with us in our attack upon Soult, with all whom he could bring into the field in a fit state to meet the enemy. He sent moreover, from time to time, such pieces of information as he was enabled, by means of spies, or the vigilance of the peasantry, to collect. At first he represented the French force as amounting to no more than ten thousand infantry and one thousand cavalry, with eight or ten pieces of cannon, whom it would be perfectly practicable to surround and destroy before any reinforcements could reach them from other quarters ; but by and by he began to discover that these reinforcements had actually arrived, and that there were full eighteen

or nineteen thousand men in position along the Carrion. Sir John Moore had been all along aware that Soult's corps amounted to this force; he was not therefore disconcerted by the intelligence; but he neglected no means which presented itself, of obtaining fresh communications; and his channels were, at this time, both numerous and sure. Hour after hour however passed on, without the occurrence of anything calculated to produce an alteration in his plans; hour after hour, therefore, was believed by the troops to bring nearer and nearer to them the opportunity for which they had long panted, of forcing upon the enemy the issue of a battle.

So passed the whole of the 21st, and the greater part of the 22nd of December. Respecting the French it was understood that, out of the eighteen thousand men of which Soult's army was composed, seven thousand were stationed at Saldanha, and five thousand at the town of Carrion; whilst the remainder either lined the banks of the river in files of communication, or covered, in force, the different fords and bridges by which it could be passed. On our part, again, no definite position—none at least deserving of the name in a military point of view—had been taken up. We were on the eve of moving, and therefore our regiments were kept as much together, as a regard to shelter would allow; but we had selected no

points d'appui, nor were we particularly prepared to receive an attack, should such be made upon us, to advantage; yet were we ready to act in almost any manner which circumstances might require; though our object was manifestly to act offensively rather than on the defensive; and to this end all our other and minor preparations were turned. Hospitals were established in every convent near, and arrangements made for the safe and speedy removal of the wounded to the rear; whilst nothing was spoken of except the approaching contest, and the probable consequences of a victory, which all anticipated.

The evening of the 22nd was now approaching, and orders had actually been issued, for an immediate advance against the enemy. The army was commanded to march at eight o'clock at night, in two columns, for the purpose of forcing the bridge at Carrion, and so penetrating to Saldanha; and the right column, to which this charge had been peculiarly intrusted, was making ready to get under arms, when two couriers, one from the head-quarters of the Marquis de la Romana, and the other from Los Santos, arrived. They were bearers of intelligence, of which it is no figure of speech to affirm, that none could have been received more replete with sources of mortification to every member of the army. The enemy, it appeared, were moving in all directions upon us.

The corps which had begun its march towards the south, had halted at Talavera ; several strong divisions had moved from Palencia, and were already in the vicinity of Carrion ; the Badajoz army had wheeled round, and was in full march towards Salamanca ; whilst Napoleon himself had set out from Madrid, with the avowed intention of making Benevente his next halting place. Sir John Moore felt, or imagined, that this was not the moment, nor these the circumstances, under which to risk a battle. He believed that Soult would retire before him, for the express purpose of allowing time to these different divisions to get into his rear ; and he was persuaded that the passage of a few days would, in all probability, expose him to the risk of being surrounded by sixty or seventy thousand troops, of the flower of the French army. With this prospect before his eyes, he instantly countermanded the orders which had been issued in the earlier part of the evening. The regiments which had begun to muster, were dismissed to their quarters ; and it was understood, throughout the ranks, that all idea of attacking, at least for this night, was abandoned.

## CHAPTER X.

Dissatisfaction of the army—Sir John Moore prepares to retreat—The infantry and artillery retire in two columns, covered by the cavalry—Movements of the French armies—Affair of cavalry at Majorga—Sufferings of the troops on their march—Alarm at Benevente, and brilliant cavalry action—Destruction of stores at Astorga—Wretched plight of Romana's troops—Disorganization of the English army—March from Astorga to Villa Franca—Serious skirmish at Villa Franca—Retreat to Liego, where battle is offered, but declined by the French—The armies in position three days—Retreat upon Corunna—The fleet arrives, and the embarkation is begun—Battle of Corunna, and death of Sir John Moore—The army is withdrawn.

It would be no easy matter to describe the effect which this unlooked-for event produced upon every man and officer in the army. The troops who had long panted to meet the enemy, and who but an hour ago were full of life and confidence, suddenly appeared like men whose brightest hopes were withered, and their favourite expectations

overthrown. Few gave vent to their feelings, either by complaint or murmur; but all retired to their quarters in a state of sullen silence, which indicated, more powerfully perhaps than any words could have done, the extent of the mortification under which they laboured.

We rose next morning perfectly ignorant, and to a certain degree quite indifferent, as to the fate which awaited us; nor were our spirits greatly heightened, when we saw hour after hour pass away without the occurrence of any movement either to the front or rear. There is good reason to believe that Sir John Moore himself had hardly determined on the course which it behoved him to follow. He was still imperfectly informed as to the amount of the different corps which were advancing against him; though the natural temperament of his disposition induced him to rate these at the highest; and he was extremely unwilling to commence a rapid retreat, till it should have become indispensable. Besides, despatches came in this day from Romana, announcing that he had advanced with all the disposable part of his army, amounting in the whole to seven thousand men, for the purpose of co-operating in the projected attack upon Soult. It was necessary to countermand this movement, as well as to make such arrangements with the Spanish General as should prevent the two armies from incommoding

or coming into collision with each other during the retreat. In settling this point, as well as in preparing the hospitals and stores for a speedy removal, the whole of the 23rd was spent; and the following is the order in which it was finally determined that the two corps should be withdrawn.

As the defence of the Gallicias was esteemed by no means impracticable, Sir John Moore was desirous of retiring in such a direction as would enable him, should circumstances authorise the measure, to take up positions in these provinces; whilst, at the same time, in case of the worst, a retreat should be open to him towards the coast. To effect this, it was necessary, in the first place, to cross the Eslar; which, from our present situation, might be done by three routes. We might proceed by Mansilla, at which point the river is crossed by a bridge; or by Valencia, where there was only a ferry; or we might take the route by Castro Gonsalo, where there is likewise a bridge, and from whence a road passes direct to Benevente. At Mansilla, however, the Spanish troops were already posted; they had exhausted the country of all its supplies; it was therefore vain to think of going thither; but the roads by Valencia and Castro Gonsalo were both open, and it was resolved to make use of them. This was the more necessary, as well because it would have

been extremely inconvenient to lead the whole column in the same direction; as because, were such a measure attempted, the magazines which had been established both at Benevente and Zamora, must, one or other of them, be exposed to capture by the enemy. Astorga was named as the place of meeting for the two columns, where it was understood that a determined stand would be made; whilst the Spaniards were requested to fall back upon Leon, from whence, in the event of our offering battle, they might harass the rear and flank of the French. In the mean while, however, Romana was to keep possession of the bridge of Mansilla as long as possible; and the city of Leon was not to be surrendered, till it should be reduced to the last extremity. Every preliminary arrangement being complete, the army began, on the 24th, to retire in the order which had been assigned to it. General Hope, with his own division, and that of General Fraser, fell back upon Majorga, on the road to Castro Gonsalo; whilst Sir David Baird, at the head of the other column, took the direction of Valencia. To cover these movements, the cavalry received directions to push strong patrols towards Carrion, as far as the enemy's pickets, and not to quit the position till night-fall on the 25th, some hours after the reserve and light infantry had been withdrawn. Everything was done with the most perfect regularity. The co-

lums made good their march, the one to Valencia, the other to Castro Gonsalo, without molestation, and the rear-guard withdrew, at the appointed hour, leaving the enemy in apparent ignorance that a retreat was in contemplation.

In the mean while, however, Buonaparte was advancing with rapid strides, from the Escorial. On the 24th, he had reached Tordesillas with the advance of his cavalry; sending strong detachments on as far as Villalpando and Majorga; and at the latter of these places our troops were again enabled to try the strength of their opponents. It was on the 26th that a considerable force of the enemy were seen drawn up upon the brow of some rising ground, and apparently making ready to cut off any stragglers which might lag behind, or wander far from the ranks. Lord Paget, who was present at Majorga, instantly directed Colonel Leigh, at the head of two squadrons of the 10th hussars, to dislodge them. Colonel Leigh, forming his little band into two lines, rode briskly forward, one squadron leading, and the other supporting, till he had gained the top of the hill. Here the men were commanded to rein up, for the purpose of refreshing the horses after the ascent; and they did so, under a heavy but not very destructive fire from the French. But the horses had no sooner recovered their wind, than the word was given to charge, and in five minutes the French were over-

thrown. Many were killed, many more wounded, and upwards of one hundred taken prisoners.

The 10th, however, was not the only cavalry corps which succeeded in distinguishing itself. It was remarked by all, that as often as the French and our people came into contact, the superiority of the British cavalry was shown to a degree far beyond anything which had been anticipated. They seemed to set all odds at defiance; and in no single instance was their temerity punished by defeat, or even by repulse. Matters went so far at last, that Captain Jones, of the 18th, ventured, with no more than thirty men of his regiment, to attack one hundred French cavalry; and he put them to the rout, killing fourteen, and making six prisoners.

Whilst the cavalry were thus coming into almost daily contact with the enemy, and kept in excellent spirits by their repeated successes, the infantry, covered by two or three light regiments, were marching over miserable roads, and through an exhausted country, exposed to hardships more terrible than it has frequently fallen to the lot of British soldiers to endure. The weather was now more severe than it had been since we entered Spain; cold winds blowing, and heavy showers of sleet and rain falling; and it was not always that the troops could find shelter, even at night, against their influence. The mules and other animals em-

ployed to carry the baggage, soon began to founder; or the muleteers, terrified at the prospect of being overtaken by the French, left them and fled. In such cases it was found quite impracticable to get the animals along, for they would obey no voice but that of their master, and they were consequently abandoned, and their loads given up to plunder. Nor were these the only evils to which our men saw themselves exposed. The Spaniards, whether they were men in authority or not, either abandoned their houses as the British army approached, locking their doors, and concealing, as far as they were able, the little stock of provisions of which they might chance to be possessed; or they met our requisitions for food and wine with murmurs and complaints, such as they would not have ventured to utter before French soldiers. These things not unnaturally increased the irritation under which the troops already laboured. They began to view the Spaniards as their worst enemies, and to treat them as people unworthy of any consideration whatever. This was severely retaliated upon them by an enraged peasantry; and scenes of violence and bloodshed, in which these allies were the actors, proved by no means uncommon.

On the 27th of December the column reached Benevente. Benevente is remarkable for an old baronial castle, which for many generations has

been the property of the dukes of Ossuna ; and to which, in point either of splendour or extent, it would be difficult to find in Europe a fellow. Near it runs the little river Eslar, across which, at some distance from the town, a bridge was thrown, but which was commanded by some hills, that rise rather abruptly from the opposite bank of the stream. Our people had scarcely entered the place, when an alarm was raised that the enemy were approaching ; and it proved to be so far not without foundation, that troops were seen, as if in the act of forming, on the heights beyond. Preparations were instantly made to receive them. The regiments assembled at their several points of muster, and the cavalry rushing through the gates, descended to the level country, where they could most conveniently act ; but neither the one nor the other were called into play. The enemy, satisfied with thus disturbing our repose, melted away, and we returned again to our former quarters and our original occupations. The best precautions were, however, taken, to provide against surprise ; the bridge over the Eslar was broken down ; and pickets of cavalry were extended all along the bank, so as to watch the fords, and give timely notice of any movement.

The night of the 27th passed by in quiet ; and as soon as day-light came in, the retreat was renewed. The cavalry, however, had not been

withdrawn, when certain movements on the part of the enemy appeared to indicate that we should not be permitted to escape thus easily. A body of five or six hundred horse were observed, about nine o'clock, to try a ford not far from the ruins of the bridge; and in a few moments afterwards they crossed, and began to form on our side of the river. Instantly the pickets, which had been appointed to do the duty of a rear-guard, made ready to oppose them. Though they mustered little more than two hundred men, they boldly advanced, under the command of Colonel Otway, against the mass, repeatedly charging its leading squadrons, and keeping it fairly in check, till Lord Paget and the writer of these pages arrived; when the former made haste to bring up the 10th hussars, whilst the latter put himself at the head of the detachments already in the field. Many charges were now made on both sides, and the squadrons were repeatedly intermingled; whilst the pickets still continued to give ground, as it was intended that they should. But the 10th were now ready: the pickets saw that they had support; and they required no entreaty to dash against the enemy. One cheer was given, and the horses being pressed to their speed, the enemy's line was broken in an instant. They fled in great disorder to the river, and repassed it much more actively than they had passed it before; leaving in our hands General Le

Fevre, their colonel, with upwards of seventy other officers and men. This was, however, the most serious affair in which we had yet been engaged. The cavalry opposed to us formed part of the imperial guard; they were all tried soldiers, and they fought in a manner not unworthy of the reputation which they had earned in the north of Europe. They lost in killed and wounded, independently of prisoners, about sixty men; our casualties fell somewhat short of fifty.

It has been said that Napoleon himself was an eye-witness of this rencontre, from the opposite heights on which he stood. Whether there be any truth in the rumour, I know not; but one thing is quite certain, that the enemy did not venture, for some days after, again to oppose themselves hand to hand to our cavalry. The column accordingly reached Astorga on the 30th, having been very little harassed by its pursuers. It arrived, however, in a state of great disorganisation; and it came to a place, where pictures of want and misery were already too frequent, in the persons of Romana's soldiers. For Romana, in spite of General Moore's entreaty to the contrary, had seen fit to fall back, not upon Leon, or the difficult country near, but in the same direction with ourselves. The consequence was, that all the houses were filled with his people, among whom a malignant typhus fever was raging; and the roads were lite-

rally covered and encumbered with men, horses, cars, and all the other accompaniments of an army, which had foundered or broken down on their march. It is hardly possible to conceive any set of men bearing less resemblance to soldiers, or having a stronger claim upon the compassion of those who beheld them, than these wretched creatures. They were almost all in a state bordering upon nudity. They had no provisions; their arms were, for the most part, useless; and of ammunition, either for musketry or cannon, they were wholly destitute. Nor, to say the truth, were our own people in a plight by many degrees superior. With us, as with them, provisions had long been scanty; and our shoes, that most essential article in a soldier's wardrobe, were, in most instances, worn out. Many officers had, indeed, brought with them from England considerable quantities of apparel; and depots of stores had been formed at various points, one of which chanced to be Astorga; but the mules which carried the baggage of individuals had almost all knocked up, and of the stores deposited in the town little use could be made. The Spaniards were, indeed, supplied with muskets—for of muskets, a large quantity had been collected here—and they received as much ammunition as they were able to carry; but as to clothing and provisions, these we possessed not in sufficient quantities to supply ourselves; we

could not, therefore, supply the wants of others. Romana's troops accordingly departed on the following morning, to follow the road by Fonubadon into Gallicia, having derived from us none of the refreshment of which they stood so much in need, and in the hope of obtaining which they had, perhaps, deserted their post at Mansilla many days earlier than they needed to have done.

The army had hitherto fallen back under the persuasion that it would not be required to retreat beyond its present position at Astorga; but that here, or hereabouts, matters would be brought to the issue of a battle. Though their conduct, in many respects, cannot certainly be spoken of in high terms, it is probable that this prospect, and this alone, had hitherto kept the men in something like a state of subordination. They had committed various excesses, it is true; many had individually robbed and plundered, and got drunk by the way, and some had thus fallen into the hands of the enemy, or perished from the inclemency of the weather; yet the army, considered as a body, was still efficient, and required nothing more than a few hours of rest, and a moderate supply of provisions, to restore it to the state of high order in which it was at Salamanca. From the moment when preparations began to be made for a continued retreat from Astorga, all this may be said to have been at an end. In Astorga, the

blowing up of ammunition-waggon, the destruction of intrenching tools, and the committal to the flames of field-equipments for a whole division, gave the signal, as it were, for all the bad passions of those who witnessed them, to be let loose; and mortifying as it is to confess it, the fact cannot be denied, that from that hour we no longer resembled a British army. There was still the same bravery in our ranks; but it was only at moments when the enemy were expected to come on, that our order and regularity returned; and except in that single point, we resembled rather a crowd of insubordinate rebels, in full flight before the victorious soldiers of their sovereign, than a corps of British troops executing a series of military movements in the presence of their enemy.

When he began his retreat in real earnest, it was, I apprehend, Sir John Moore's intention to fall back upon Vigo, and there to embark his army in the transports which had been ordered round to receive them. With this view he had, when at Benevente, despatched General Crawford, at the head of three thousand men, along the nearer but steeper road by Orense, in order that any attempt on the part of the enemy to gain ground upon him with a light column might be prevented; whilst he himself took the more circuitous but better route, by Astorga and Villa Franca. At