

there.—He had been there for ten days, and he was perfectly known, but not a man betrayed him. When the patrol left the town, he came out, and found the people in the streets, who declared, although they were unarmed, that they would have died rather than have allowed him to be taken. I have heard nothing in these parts that has shown so much character.

On the 28th, Sir John writes again to Sir David Baird.

Baron Tuyll brought me your letter of the 26th, yesterday, about four o'clock, P.M. The Marquis of Romana's intelligence is wrong—the French have no infantry on this side of Burgos; they have infantry, I believe, at Aranda de Duero—they are moving against Castaños, and had reached Soria—they have intercepted his communications with Madrid, and have in view to force his left, whilst probably another corps attacks him in front. A French corps had also arrived at Medina Celi, and a firing was heard on the 25th in the direction of Sigüenza. The Junta have taken the alarm, and will retire to Toledo, if not to Cordova.

They deserve to be hanged, for it is owing to their imbecility, that this country is so unprepared.

I see my situation, and that of the army I command, in as unfavourable a light as you or any one can do. I have given it my best consideration. I know that you should have landed at Cadiz, and I should have met you at Seville, where the army could have been united and equipped, but it was ordered otherwise; and it is our business to make every effort to unite here, and to obey our orders and the wishes of our country, to aid the Spaniards as far as lies in our power—it would never do to retreat without making the attempt.

If the enemy prevent us, there is no help for it; but if he does not, I am determined to unite the army; when that is done, we shall act according to circumstances: we shall be from 32,000 to 35,000 men.

I have still a chance that the presence of so large a British force may give spirit to the Spaniards; and I shall hope, if the cause is at last to be given up, to be able to make our retreat. I can give no orders more positive than I have already given you.

I hold my resolution to remain, and form the junction in the manner already explained in my former letters. In the execution of this, you will use your own discretion, as I do mine. If the enemy move against you, you cannot do it; you will in that case retreat, giving me notice. If he moves against me, I must do the same, and I shall give you notice. Your retreat cannot be more difficult than mine. I have but one brigade of artillery, and no cavalry.

On the 1st of December you will be able to move with one regiment of cavalry, and such number of infantry as you choose to take. I wish, therefore, you would do so, as far as Benevente, where you may arrive on the 2nd. I shall move from this on the 1st, towards Zamora and Toro, at each of which places we shall arrive from this also on the 2nd. I shall myself be with the corps at Toro, where I will communicate with you.

You may leave orders for your cavalry to follow you to Benevente, in squadrons or by regiments, as you deem best, as well as such infantry as may not march with you at first to Benevente. You will make what arrangements you think proper for having a corps at Astorga, and forward the money and stores of every description to Zamora, and probably the Marquis de Romana may occupy Astorga when you leave it.

As I shall have no cavalry, I shall want a regiment of

yours at Toro, as soon as a second joins you ; but on this and other subjects we can communicate when you arrive at Benevente, and I at Toro.”

Upon the receipt of this letter, Sir David Baird put every thing in train for moving forward on the 1st of December ; it was clear that the demonstration of popular feeling at Tordesillas had again awakened his hopes of support from the Spanish people, and his anxiety to aid them increased with the prospect of their co-operation.

All the arrangements however for the advance were as suddenly put a stop to, as they had been promptly begun. The following letter from Sir John Moore, written only a few hours after the one just cited, again changed the whole state of affairs.

Salamanca, 28th November, 1808.

MY DEAR SIR DAVID,

I have received this evening, despatches from Mr. Stuart, at Madrid, announcing the defeat and dispersion of Castaños' army. The French, in Spain, are estimated at 80,000 men, and 30,000 are expected in the course of a week. It certainly was much my wish to have run great risks in aid of the people of Spain ; but after this second proof of how little they are able to do for themselves (the only two armies they had having made so little stand), I see no right we have to expect from them much greater exertions. At any rate, we should be overwhelmed before they could be prepared.

I see no chance of our being able to form a junction, as certainly at Burgos the French have a corps, which will now move forward.

I have, therefore, determined to retreat upon Portugal,

with the troops I have here, and if possible with Hope's corps, if by forced marches he can join me. I wish you to fall back on Coruña. Send back immediately your stores under such part of your force as you judge proper. You may then stay with the rest a little longer, if you can depend upon knowing the movements of the enemy. I propose this, as were you at once to retire, it might encourage the enemy to push at once at Hope and me, and prevent our junction, which is the more necessary, as I must stop on the frontier of Portugal, and cover Lisbon as long as possible.

On your arrival at Coruña, you will, of course, embark and sail for the Tagus, where orders shall be waiting you. Write immediately to England, and give notice of what we are doing, and beg that transports may be sent to Lisbon; they will be wanted, *for when the French have Spain, Portugal cannot be defended.*

Believe me, &c.

JOHN MOORE.

When General Moore had thus made up his mind to retreat, he called a meeting of general officers, and having submitted to them the information he had received, confided to them the resolution to which he had come. He explained to the assembled officers that he had not summoned them either to ask their advice, or to relieve himself of any of the responsibility of the retreat, by inducing them to commit themselves even by giving an opinion. He had called them together, merely to inform them of his determination, and to desire them to take the most prompt and efficient measures for carrying that determination into effect.

After this meeting had taken place, Sir John wrote again to Sir David.

Salamanca, 29th November, 1808.

MY DEAR SIR DAVID,

I have nothing to add to what I wrote to you last night. You will make your retreat, concealing your intentions as long as you can. I had written to the Marquis de la Romana, that I should assemble the army, and act, if possible, with him. That is now out of the question, tell him.

When on the frontier of Portugal, I shall be ready to retire, if circumstances render it eligible, or by embarking and going round to another part of Spain, we may be more useful. We by no means abandon the cause of Spain, but only withdraw from a situation, where, without aiding it, we should ourselves be destroyed.

We want money—if it can be sent by land, as Murray wrote to Bathurst, do it : if not, land it at Oporto. Order inquiries to be made what victuallers are there, and if not sufficient, direct one or two of light draft of water to enter that port, as also a ship with oats.

I remain faithfully,

JOHN MOORE.

It is not our province, nor at this period is it necessary to enter into any discussion upon the wisdom of General Moore's decision. The Spaniards had no longer any thing like an army in the field, and the British force, even if united, was not of sufficient strength to contend with the French single-handed. The most natural course for the enemy to pursue, was to turn round upon the English, prevent the junction of the two armies, and attack

them in detail, while separate. Every sound principle of war, no doubt, suggested a retreat; yet, nevertheless, the announcement of Sir John Moore's resolution was received by all ranks of the army with the most unqualified discontent and dissatisfaction.

When Sir David Baird received Sir John's letter of the 28th, he resumed all the preparations for retreat, and despatched the following to the Marquis de la Romana.

Astorga, 30th Nov. 1808.

I feel great concern in acquainting your Excellency that at a late hour last night I received a despatch from Sir John Moore, announcing the defeat of General Castaños' army, and directing me immediately to fall back, for the purpose of joining him, either by sea or by the way of Portugal; it being impossible, under existing circumstances, to effect our junction by the road through Benevente and Zamora.

I lose no time in apprising your Excellency, that in consequence of these orders I am preparing to move the infantry to the rear; the cavalry I propose leaving at Astorga a few days longer.

As I have reason to believe that the Spanish troops are in great want of shoes, blankets, canteens, and havresacks, I beg to acquaint you, that I shall be able to spare you a quantity of each kind (which were intended for Sir John Moore's division), and to request you will appoint proper persons to receive them, at Villa Franca and Lugo," &c.

At this period it was thought prudent to prepare an address to the inhabitants of Leon and Galicia, which was accordingly written, translated into the Spanish language, and printed. It is subjoined.—

The unfortunate events which have recently occurred in Biscay and on the Ebro, and the consequent movements of the enemy, having rendered it indispensably necessary that His Britannic Majesty's forces in Spain should unite and concentrate, for the purpose of being enabled to afford effectual support and succour to the Spanish people in the glorious efforts they are making in defence of their independence: Lieut.-General Sir David Baird, commanding the division in Leon and Galicia, announces to the loyal inhabitants of their kingdom, that he has received orders from Sir John Moore, Commander-in-chief of the British armies in Spain, to lose no time in proceeding to join him by way of Portugal.

The object of this movement is in no way connected with any intention of withdrawing from Spain or abandoning its cause, so dear to Great Britain, but solely with a view of assembling the British army for the purpose of acting upon some point where its services may be more required and more useful.

The kingdom of Galicia, strong from the nature of the country, will require no force to defend it beyond its own brave army, now assembling at Leon under the Marquis de la Romana; and the presence of an additional number of troops in its passes and on its mountains, would but tend to exhaust its resources without adding to its security.

To the inhabitants of these kingdoms the warmest acknowledgments of the British army are due, for the friendly reception it has met with; and the Lieutenant-General trusts that the same sentiments of attachment and regard which now exist will continue to animate the two nations towards each other for ages to come.

In quitting, probably for a short time, this part of the Peninsula, the Lieutenant-General feels it his duty to call upon the inhabitants of these districts, by their loyalty to their king, their affection for their families, and by every

tie they may venerate or hold dear, to rise in defence of their religion and their country! Without the most vigorous efforts on the part of the people and the government, the cause of Spain is in danger; if these are made, it cannot, with the assistance of Divine Providence, fail of being successful.

However well calculated this address might have been to soothe the apprehensions and quiet the alarm of the Spanish people in general, the Marquis de la Romana was most sensibly affected by the announcement of General Moore's determination, and of Sir David Baird's consequent preparations for retiring from Astorga. He wrote to Sir David, entreating, almost imploring him, to delay his retrograde movement, and expressing his conviction of the ruinous consequences to the Spanish cause, of withdrawing the British troops from Astorga.

To this appeal from the Marquis Sir David made the following reply :

Astorga, 3rd Dec. 1808.

I have this instant had the honour to receive your Excellency's letter of yesterday, and although, in obedience to my orders, I had commenced the retreat of my division on Villa Franca, yet, in consequence of your Excellency's opinion that the continuance of a British force at Astorga is essential to afford security to the Spanish army assembling at Leon, and to enable it to retire upon Galicia in safety, I am induced to halt the troops in their present positions, and to direct the cavalry to remain at Astorga for a few days, by which I shall afford time and opportunity to Sir John Moore to send me any fresh instructions he may wish, in case he should have any such intention.

I have the honour, &c.

Colonel Sorell, in his "Notes,"* in referring to the above letter, says—

"The above extracts will prove that Colonel Napier mistakes in supposing that Sir David Baird had fallen back on Villa Franca without instructions to do so from Sir John Moore. Sir David Baird received the order to retreat on the 29th of November; on the 3rd December he was still at Astorga with all the cavalry, and the greater part of the infantry. The cavalry, indeed, never retrograded, but proceeded a few days afterwards, under Lord Paget, to join Sir John Moore.

"It may be asked why, if the cavalry could join Sir John Moore from Astorga, the whole force there might not have done the same? Experience has proved that this was practicable; but it was doubted at the time. Cavalry could move with much greater security through an open country than infantry, and they might make longer marches. Perhaps, also, Sir John Moore, having determined to retreat on Portugal, did not wish to be embarrassed by any additional infantry; and certainly it was important not to uncover the road from Astorga to Coruña, which would have risked the loss of the depôts and stores of the army on that line."

On the 2nd of December Sir David Baird received the following letter from Sir John Moore :

Salamanca, 2nd Dec.

MY DEAR SIR DAVID,

I have received both your notes of the 29th and 30th, acknowledging the receipt of my letter to you of the 28th.

My junction with General Hope is now pretty secure. The enemy are wholly occupied with Castafios and Madrid, and I have every reason to believe that at this moment

* "Notes on the Campaign," pp. 30, 31.

they have no infantry in front of Burgos, and no great body of cavalry in Castille, I should not think above a couple of thousand, and these much separated.

As you have transports but for one regiment of cavalry, and you will perhaps be under the necessity of marching the other two through Portugal, I should be glad if you would send one to me. I do not think it will run the smallest risk at this moment on the route of Benevente to Zamora.

I say this upon the supposition that you have not sent them all already back towards Coruña, in which case I should not wish one to be brought back ; but if one of the regiments is still at Astorga, and your intelligence, like mine, assures you that it can be done without risk, I should wish to have it here. Both at Zamora and Benevente, forage may be procured by sending on a day before, and the intermediate stages one day's forage can be carried.

You will let me hear your decision on this subject by courier, and apprise me of the march and arrival at Zamora, when orders shall be sent for the further proceedings of the officer commanding.

When you leave Coruña, General Broderick should be left there with a small garrison, for the sake of communication, as long as it is left open ; but he must have the means left with him to embark, should such measure become necessary.

Buonaparte is at Burgos, probably waiting the arrival of reinforcements, to move forward in this direction. Whether my junction with you could have been accomplished or not, I know not. It would have been attended with the risk of the destruction of the whole, and if accomplished, would have left us to contend single-handed with the whole French army, for the Spaniards are dispersed, and until the present Government is changed, and men of more ability are brought forward, there is little chance of their

being able to force anything to join us, or to resist France. If they *are* able, we shall see, and shall be able to go to their assistance. I am satisfied with the decision I have made ; how it will be viewed by others, or approved in England, God knows.

I remain, faithfully,
JOHN MOORE.

On the 4th of December Sir David Baird proceeded from Astorga to Villa Franca, and established his head-quarters in the castle of that place, as a central point whence he might be able to direct and regulate the retrograde movement upon Coruña. In this old chateau, built by the celebrated Duke of Alba, he remained several days, fully occupied in giving orders for a movement which required every caution in the arrangement of its details.

Independent of the troops on the march, and of the guns and artillery, and commissariat waggons, brought from England, every cart, horse, or mule, which could be hired or purchased in the country, was in motion with stores and provisions towards the interior. All was moving on one single line of road carried over tremendous mountains and through formidable defiles, and affording little shelter to men or cattle in the midst of winter. It had suddenly become necessary to give a directly opposite direction to this mighty mass, and it will easily be conceived that much care and skill were requisite to prevent it, in flowing back, from mixing and falling into inextricable disorder.

It was on the day of Sir David Baird's arrival at

Villa Franca that Lord Londonderry (then the Hon. Major-General Stewart) reached Salamanca ; and the description given by his Lordship in his narrative,* of his interview with Sir John, entirely confirms the state of his mind and feelings exemplified in the various letters we have already submitted to the reader.

“ He spoke,” says Lord Londonderry, “ 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 a defeated corps on his flanks, a choice of evils alone remained for him. The determination to which he had 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, and he was therefore resolved to retreat.

“ Though I could not but deeply feel at such a declaration, I deemed it a respectful duty to say little in reply, further than expressing my regret that so strong a necessity for the measure should exist, and my apprehensions of its consequences to the cause. The slightest indication of a retrograde movement at such a moment as this would, I feared, produce fatal effects, for Spain would fall, Portu-

* “ Narrative of the War in Spain and Portugal, by Charles Marquis of Londonderry,” p. 179.

gal 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 Castaños, and Palafox, and Blake, all of whom, in the same explicit understanding, were labouring to reassemble 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 the people of England, whose very hearts seemed set upon the success of his undertaking, 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 farthest.

“ The feelings of regret under which I laboured were not, I soon found, confined to my own breast ; even the General’s personal staff sought not to conceal the 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 farthest. But if it should be deemed unsafe to wait so long here, why not

* That Sir David Baird’s opinion coincided with that of Lord Londonderry on this point, the address to the people of Leon and Galicia, which he caused to be circulated, and which we have already given, is a strong and striking proof.

move towards *him*, and concentrate the division behind the Douro, whence offensive operations might be undertaken?

“Anything, in short, was preferable to a retreat, which, independently of the disgrace which it must bring upon the British arms, must expose Madrid to destruction, and cause the certain annihilation of Palafox’ and Castaños’ 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 vain — the die was cast, and it could not be recalled.

In addition to the expressions of dissatisfaction, which could not fail to reach, as no pains were taken to prevent it, the ears of the General, he received a letter from Mr. Frere, our minister at Madrid, in reply to one communicating his intention of retreating, in which that gentleman protested strongly against the measure, as being deeply deprecated by the Spanish Government, and pressed upon him, in the most energetic terms, the expediency of advancing as rapidly as possible upon Madrid.

Mr. Frere in that letter says—

“Of the zeal and energy of the people I have no doubt. The Governments are new, and have hitherto been too numerous to be very active; but I trust that this inconvenience will soon be remedied. They are resolute, and I believe every man of them determined to perish with the country. They will not at least set the example which the ruling powers and higher orders of other countries have exhibited of weakness and timidity.”

Mr. Frere, however, offered another alternative to Sir John Moore’s choice, in the supposition that he should still feel it rash and hazardous to proceed

towards Madrid; and that was, to take up a position in the strong country near Astorga; "because," says Mr. Frere, "a retreat from Astorga to Coruña would be less difficult than through Portugal and Lisbon, and he ought in that position to wait for the reinforcements of cavalry from England, which would enable the army to act in the flat country, which opens immediately from that point, and extends through the whole of Leon and Old Castile. The representation of Mr. Frere, however, did not shake the determination of Sir John Moore, and by the 7th of December the whole of Sir David Baird's division, with the exception of the three regiments of cavalry, which he had sent to Sir John Moore, was fairly on its road to Coruna.

CHAPTER IX.

COMMUNICATION WITH DON THOMAS MORLA—COLONEL CHARMILLY—
DISMISSAL—MR. FRERE'S LETTERS—SIR DAVID BAIRD'S OPINION—
LORD LONDONDERRY'S VIEW OF THE CASE—CONTINUATION OF SIR
JOHN MOORE'S CORRESPONDENCE—COLONEL SOBELL'S NOTES—SIR
WALTER SCOTT'S LIFE OF NAPOLEON—COLONEL SYMES VISITS THE
MARQUIS DE LA ROMANA—HIS REPORT—CHANGE OF AFFAIRS.

ON the 5th of December Sir John Moore received a letter, written jointly by Don Thomas Morla, who had been Governor of Cadiz, and was at the moment head of the Junta, and possessing great influence at Madrid; and the Prince of Castelfranco, informing him that about twenty-five thousand troops belonging to the army of Castanos, were falling back on Madrid; that ten thousand from the Somosierra were likewise concentrating; and that nearly forty thousand other troops were prepared to join in the defence of the capital. With these forces Sir John Moore was strongly invited to unite his army, or else to take such a direction as would enable him to fall on the rear of the French. "The Junta," concluded the letter, "cannot doubt that the rapidity

of your Excellency's movements will be such as the interests of both countries require.*

“ Before Sir John Moore had made any decision upon the contents of this letter, Colonel Charmilly, a French emigrant in the British service, arrived with despatches from Mr. Frere. On the 1st of December, Charmilly had been in Madrid; he had witnessed the strongest and most unequivocal demonstrations of ardour among all classes of the people. The whole mass of the population was rising in arms; the streets were broken up, the houses were barricadoed, and peasants from all quarters were flocking into the city to bear a part in the defence. The Duke del Infantado had commissioned him to make known this state of things to the British General, and to entreat him to make some movement that might operate as a diversion for the capital, which its defenders had determined to hold out to the last extremity.”†

It seems that Mr. Frere, who had proceeded with the Junta to Talavera, had given Colonel Charmilly two letters, addressed to Sir John Moore; one of which he was to deliver on his arrival, strongly urging him not to persist in his intention of retreating. The second was to be delivered only in case Sir John appeared resolved on maintaining his present determination.

Mr. Frere's first letter was extremely energetic, and it appeared to many officers on the spot, fully competent to form an opinion upon the subject, that

* “ Annals of the Peninsular Campaigns,” vol. ii. † Ibid.

the tone and style assumed by that gentleman, in urging points of a purely military character upon Sir John Moore, upon whom alone all the responsibility connected with the safety and honour of the army rested, were not exactly suitable to his official situation. Mr. Frere when pressing Sir John not to retreat, at a time when the retreat had actually been ordered, says, "I have no hesitation in taking upon myself any degree of responsibility which may attach to this advice, as I consider the state of Spain to depend absolutely for the present on the resolution you may adopt. I say *for the present*, for such is the spirit and character of the country, that even if abandoned by the British, I should by no means despair of ultimate success."

Upon the pertinacious adherence of Mr. Frere to the point of diverting Sir John Moore from his intentions of retreating, Lord Londonderry, however, expresses himself in very different terms from those employed by the officers more particularly attached to Sir John Moore.

"Mr. Frere," says his Lordship, "was doubtless fully justified in writing in this strain. As minister from the Court of England, he was perfectly authorized 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 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 Badajos, 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.”†

We have reason to know, that Sir David Baird himself was of opinion that Mr. Frere's conduct about Colonel Charmilly was not perfectly justifiable, neither did he approve of the tone of his letters to Sir John Moore. Sir John's resolution, however, was at

* It seems that the second letter which Charmilly delivered to Sir John was couched in these terms:—“Sir—In the event, which I did not wish to presuppose, of your continuing the determination already announced to me, with the army under your command, I have to request that Colonel Charmilly, who is the bearer of this, and whose intelligence has been already referred to, may be examined before a council of war.

“I have the honour, &c.

J. H. FRERE.”

—This letter very naturally irritated Sir John Moore. He ordered Colonel Charmilly out of his presence, and the next day directed him peremptorily to quit Salamanca, which he did.

† Lord Londonderry's Narrative, pp. 184-5.

all events shaken by the combination of intelligence which had reached him. Whatever doubt he might have had with respect to Morla, who appears to have been but of very equivocal respectability, and the representations he made of the state of popular feeling, he felt convinced that our own minister would not have suffered himself to be led away by exaggerated rumours or treacherous misrepresentations, and accordingly, on the evening of the 5th he addressed the following letter to Sir David Baird :

Salamanca, 5th Dec. 1808.

MY DEAR SIR DAVID,

The city of Madrid has taken up arms, has refused to capitulate to the French. The people are barricading the streets, and say, they are determined to suffer every thing rather than submit. This arrests the French ; and people who are sanguine entertain great hopes from it. For myself, I fear this spirit has arisen too late, and that the French are now too strong to be resisted in this manner. There is, however, no saying, and I feel myself the more obliged to give it a trial, that Mr. Frere has made a formal representation, which I received this evening. I must beg, therefore, that you will suspend your march until you hear from me again, and make arrangements for your return to Astorga, should it be necessary.

All this appears very strange and unsteady ; but if the spirit of enthusiasm does arise in Spain, there is no saying in that case what our forces may do. I hope in the mean time the cavalry is coming to me which I asked you for.

Believe me, very faithfully,

Sir David Baird.

JOHN MOORE.*

* It should be here mentioned, that the anger which Sir John Moore felt at the affront offered him by Mr. Frere, in sending Colonel Charmilly to be examined before a council of

As soon as Sir John Moore had despatched this letter, he sent off Colonel Graham to Madrid, for the purpose of personally ascertaining and reporting upon the actual state of affairs in that city.

Colonel Graham had only arrived at Salamanca a few days before, bringing intelligence of the defeat of St. Juan's army, and the forcing of the Somosierra Pass by a corps of Polish lancers. In consequence of this misfortune, Colonel Graham, on his return, had to take a circuitous route, in order to avoid the enemy, a circumstance which could not fail to be extremely disagreeable to the English army, inasmuch as they believed their future movements very much to depend upon the report which the Colonel might bring back.

“ In these uncertain measures,” says Lord Londonderry, “ 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

war, never induced him to forego the respect he owed to the representative of his Sovereign. In reply to Mr. Frere's letters, Sir John said, “ I shall abstain from any remark on the two letters delivered to me last night and this morning by Colonel Charmilly. I certainly did feel and express much indignation at a person like him, being made the channel of a communication of that sort from you to me. These feelings are at an end, and I dare say will never be excited towards you again. If M. Charmilly is your friend, it was perhaps natural for you to employ him, but I have prejudices against all that class, and it is impossible for me to put any trust in him.”

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 felt no inclination to risk it; at all events, he was clearly incapable of dispersing partial obstacles in the pursuit of some great ultimate advantage. 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 evolution. Perhaps this might be true. The northern provinces are certainly barren enough, and we should doubtless have 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 heart 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 overrun.*

* The highly-talented author of “Annals of the Peninsular Campaigns,” speaking of Sir John Moore at this period says:—

“ But though,” continues his Lordship, “ our leader seemed in no way disposed 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 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 it never presented a more imposing appearance. How sincerely did all regret that the unhappy delay occasioned by Baird’s retrogression, should have kept such an army idle, even for a single day.” *

We must here beg to call the reader’s attention, not only to the last paragraph of the quotation from

“ In truth, the minds of Mr. Frere and Sir John Moore were of different mould and consistency. The one, ardent and enthusiastic, was disposed to rely with too facile a credence on the energy and devotion of the assertors of a noble cause. The other, too strongly disgusted perhaps with repeated proofs of ignorance and imbecility in the Spanish leaders, regarded the scene around him with the eye of a General. He felt little disposed to anticipate a fortunate issue to the resistance which popular enthusiasm might oppose to military skill, and highly disciplined troops. They beheld,” says this eloquent writer, “ the same events through different *media*. In the picture of the one, the sun was mounting in the horizon, and the landscape was bathed in a flood of prospective radiance ; in that of the other, the last rays of departing light had faded from the sky, and the face of nature lay hid in darkness.” Vol. ii. 25, 26.

* Lord Londonderry’s Narrative, pp. 187, 188.

Lord Londonderry's work ; but, as it appears a fitting opportunity for doing so, to an observation contained in the *Life of Napoleon*, by Sir Walter Scott.

Lord Londonderry speaks of "Baird's retrogression," as if the retreat, or the intention of retreating, had originated with him. The letter of General Moore, already given, dated December the 2nd, will sufficiently prove that Sir David Baird merely acted under the orders which that letter contains. So far as we are concerned, we think it our duty to refer to his lordship's narrative, in order to clear up a passage, which certainly admits of misconstruction.

With respect to the passage in Sir Walter's Scott's *Life of Napoleon*, we have only to call the attention of the reader to an extract from a letter written to Sir Walter by Colonel Sorell, and who subsequently published, with the same laudable view of correcting a mistake injurious to the fame and reputation of Sir David Baird, "*Notes on the Campaign of 1808-9*," from which we have already made several extracts.

At page 286 of the *Life of Napoleon*, this passage occurs.

"Yet he (Sir John Moore) finally ordered Sir David Baird, whose retreat upon Coruña *was already commenced, again to occupy Astorga*. It might," says Colonel Sorell, "naturally be inferred from this passage, that Sir David Baird had commenced his retreat on his own authority, and without instructions from his superior in command. This was not the case. Sir John Moore, immediately after

the dispersion of the Spanish armies, ordered Sir David Baird to retire forthwith to Coruña: to send back all the stores which had been brought forward for the use of the army when united, and to embark and proceed by sea to join him at Lisbon: himself at the same time intending to retire on Portugal.

“The retreat was commenced accordingly, and to reconcile the minds of the population to this retrograde movement, an address to the Spanish people was published, containing assurances, that it was in no way connected with an intention of abandoning the cause, but solely for the purpose of concentrating the British forces on a point where their services might be more generally useful. Sir David Baird’s head quarters had reached Villa Franca on the road to Coruña, when he received orders first to suspend his march, and afterwards to retrace his steps to Astorga, preparatory to a junction of the two divisions, with a view to the movement in advance, which afterwards took place.”

To the letter containing this correction, and the correction of another error (which we shall presently have to notice) Sir Walter Scott made no reply, nor did he even acknowledge it.

But to return from our digression to the narrative of passing events. Sir John Moore having on the evening of the 5th of December directed Sir David Baird to stop his retrograde movement, and hold himself in readiness to retrace his steps again to Astorga, despatched the following letter to Sir David in the course of the 6th.

Salamanca, December 5th, 1808.

MY DEAR SIR DAVID,

I wrote to you last night to suspend your retrograde movement. I now write to you to beg that you will put

to the right about, and return bag and baggage to Astorga. The people of Madrid, it is said, are enthusiastic and desperate, and certainly at this moment do resist the French. The good which may result from this it is impossible to say; I can neither trust to it, nor can I altogether despise it. If the flame catches elsewhere, and becomes at all general, the best results may be expected. If confined to Madrid, that town will be sacrificed, and all be as bad or worse than ever; in short, what is passing at Madrid may be decisive of the fate of Spain, and we must be at hand to aid and to take advantage of whatever happens. The wishes of our country, and our duty, demand this of us, with whatever risk it may be attended.

I mean to proceed bridle in hand, for if the bubble bursts, and Madrid falls, we shall have a run for it. Let your preparations (as far as provisions, &c. go) continue for a retreat, in case that it should again become necessary; establish one magazine at Villa Franca, and one or two farther back, to which let salt meat, biscuit, rum or wine, forage, &c. be brought up from Coruña. Send to me to Zamora two regiments of cavalry and one brigade of horse artillery, keeping one regiment of cavalry, and one brigade of horse artillery with yourself, and send on your corps by brigades to Benevente. The enemy have nothing at present in that direction, we must take advantage of it by working double tides, to make up for lost time.

By means of the cavalry patrols, you will discover every movement immediately near you, and I take for granted you have got other channels of information, and both you and me, although we may look big and determined to get everything forward, yet we must never lose sight of this, that at any moment affairs may take that turn which will render it necessary to retreat.

I shall write by this opportunity to the Marquis of Romana, and it would be satisfactory if you kept an officer

constantly with, or sent one occasionally to him, to judge his force and its state of preparation for service, to let us know how far we can depend upon it in action.

I remain, my dear Sir David, yours faithfully,

JOHN MOORE.

To Sir David Baird,

&c. &c. &c.

On the receipt of Sir John Moore's letter of the 5th, Sir David Baird of course made every arrangement for checking the retreat, and early on the morning of the 8th, he wrote the following letter to Sir John :

Villa Franca, December 8th, 1808.

MY DEAR SIR JOHN,

At a late hour last night I received your letter of the 5th instant. In compliance with your desire, immediate orders were sent off to halt the regiments in the different positions they occupied, and to suspend any farther preparation for re-embarkation. One brigade had reached within a day's march of St. Jago on the road to Vigo.

I trust long ere this letter reaches you, that you will have been joined by Lord Paget and the cavalry. I was induced to send the three regiments for the reasons I have already stated in two former letters.

It has frequently occurred to me that, in the event of our being obliged to adopt defensive measures, it might be more advantageous for the combined British army to cover Galicia and part of Leon, than, by my proceeding to join you at Salamanca, to abandon the defence of these provinces. The Asturias might be occupied by the troops of the Marquess de la Romana, and if you judged it proper, by a flank movement, to join us in the neighbourhood of Astorga, I entertain a confident belief that, by occupying the strong ground behind it, we should be able to cover

the country in our rear, and might wait until it is seen what efforts the Spanish nation is disposed and determined to make in defence of the national independence. The royal road from Coruña to this place and Astorga is remarkably good, although mountainous; and, with the sea open to us, we should be able to receive with facility such reinforcements and supplies as the British government might deem it proper to send. I do not think much difficulty would be experienced for a few months, from a want of provisions. The country abounds with cattle; bread, indeed, would be required; but flour might be obtained from England; and, in the mean time, Galicia would have an opportunity of arming under our protection; and our presence in Spain would furnish a rallying point, and act as a stimulus to the Spaniards.

I merely submit these points, my dear Sir John, to your consideration. I had before written a letter upon the subject to you, which I did not send, in consequence of receiving accounts of Castaños' defeat, at the moment I was about to despatch it.

Believe me, dear Sir John, yours faithfully,
D. BAIRD.*

Lieutenant General Sir John Moore.

In this place it becomes our duty to refer to the second correction by Colonel Sorell, of the second error made by Sir Walter Scott; and we shall have

* No copy appears to have been kept of the letter here mentioned by Sir David, but there is good reason to believe it contained a very minute and elaborate detail of Sir David's views and opinions upon the subject; indeed, the copy of the letter here published seems rather to consist of detached notes of the one sent to Sir John, which from what subsequently appears was more detailed, and at greater length.

recourse to the same mode of detail as that which we before adopted, namely, giving the passage *verbatim* as addressed by the Colonel to Sir Walter.

“ But,” says Colonel Sorell, “ in continuation from that part of his letter at which we before broke off, “ it is more particularly of your account of the subsequent retreat through Galicia, that I find reason to complain. So far from being ignorant of the strength or inattentive to the resources of that country, Sir David Baird wrote to Sir John Moore from Villa Franca (when the latter, intending to commence his retreat from Salamanca on Lisbon, had expressed his conviction that Spain once lost, Portugal could not be defended), to propose that he should make a flank movement to his left, and uniting the entire British force on the frontiers of Galicia, cover that province, supported by the remains of the army of Romana, strengthened by such reinforcements as might be organized in our rear.

“ The probable advantages of such a measure were fully pointed out. It was observed, that Galicia contained nearly one seventh part of the entire population of Spain, and consequently was capable of furnishing numerous recruits to the patriotic cause ; that from the strength of the country there could be little doubt of our ability to defend it ; that it would afford a sufficient supply of cattle to ensure our subsistence, and that by occupying a position on the confines of Leon, we should threaten the right flank of the French line of operation from the Bidassoa to Madrid, which must act as a favourable diversion, if it did not paralyze the exertions of the enemy in the southern provinces, whilst the port of Coruña being open in our rear, would enable the British government to reinforce or withdraw us, as it might seem most expedient, when it became fully acquainted with the real condition of Spain.

“ I need not add that this proposal was not acted upon, but the disorders which afterwards took place in traversing this country, most certainly did not arise from ignorance of its character to defensive purposes ; but principally from the unexampled rapidity of the retreat which exhausted the physical strength of the men, and prevented all possibility of keeping them with their colours. Neither had there been any want of attention to the formation of *depôts* on the road, but our means of conveyance were extremely limited, and the effects of this difficulty were greatly aggravated by the first order to retreat from Astorga ; in consequence of which, everything which was being brought forward on the line from Coruña to that place, was put in motion again towards the rear, to be re-embarked for Lisbon ; still a considerable magazine of forage and provisions existed at Villa Franca, which might have afforded a sufficient supply to the troops, had it been practicable to make a regular distribution ; but as at Smolensko and Wilna, in Buonaparte’s retreat from Moscow, as well as on many other similar occasions, more was wasted than usefully applied.

“ A desire,” continues Colonel Sorell, “ to speak with impartiality of the conduct of every individual noticed in the work—even when that individual has been the enemy of Britain—is so apparent throughout the ‘ Life of Napoleon Buonaparte,’ that I feel confident of the interest you will take in these explanations to extend the same principle of justice towards one of the best and bravest soldiers our country had the good fortune to possess in the days of trial and difficulty.”

Having now done justice to the knowledge and foresight of Sir David Baird, with respect to the province of Galicia, and to the honourable zeal of

Colonel Sorell, exhibited in the General's vindication, we resume our narrative.

On the 8th, Sir John Moore wrote to Sir David as follows:—

Salamanca, December 8th, 1808.

MY DEAR SIR DAVID,

Madrid still holds out, and I have some reason to believe that some efforts are making to collect a force at Toledo, and a still larger one on the other side of the Sierra Morena. As long as there is a chance we must not abandon this country. The conduct of Madrid has given us a little time, and we must endeavour to profit by it. My first object must be to unite with you, and then connect myself with the Marquess Romana.

I shall move a corps from this on the 10th to Zamora and Toro, to which last place I shall move head quarters. I should wish you to push on your people by brigades to Benevente.

Here follow some private communications to Sir David, which it is not necessary to quote. Sir John then proceeds.

In the mean time I am anxious to know the real strength and condition of the troops La Romana and Blake are assembling, and I will thank you to send an intelligent officer to Leon to see them, who is capable of judging without allowing himself to be humbugged.

You will of course order whatever troops arrive at Coruña to be immediately landed, and sent forward. I have sent Colonel Graham (90th regiment) to Madrid, and expect to hear from him this evening.

I remain, my dear Sir David, yours faithfully,

JOHN MOORE.

Sir David Baird.

In consequence of the directions contained in this letter, Sir David Baird despatched Colonel Symes to Leon, in order to ascertain, by personal inspection, the real state of the forces the Marquess de la Romana had at his disposal. Colonel Symes reached Leon in the evening of the 13th, and his report will be found under date the 14th in a subsequent page.

On the 10th of December Sir John Moore wrote to Sir David as follows :—

Salamanca, December 10th, 1808.

MY DEAR SIR DAVID,

Lord Paget, with the cavalry, is at Toro. His brother, the Lieutenant-General, with the reserve, marches tomorrow, and will be with it, with Beresford's brigade, on the 12th.

I shall also move Hope's and Fraser's divisions on the 11th and 12th, on the roads to Tordesillas and Valladolid, and should wish, with the whole of mine in this quarter, to proceed to the latter place, if you, with any considerable portion of yours, will be ready to join me there. You may send on yours by brigades to Benevente with safety, and from thence to Valladolid. Your march either by one or two brigades could be concerted with ours, so as to make it perfectly secure.

I am impatient to hear from you, to judge when to expect you at Benevente. Bring on a proportion of ammunition both for guns and musquets to Benevente.

I have written twice lately to the Marquess de la Romana, but have received no answer. Will you have the goodness to let him know my intention to move, in order to put myself in conjunction with him, and to concert what can best be done for the general good? As we shall occupy Zamora and Toro, he had better not interfere with us on that line.

Madrid has capitulated, but the people say that the Duke of Castlefranca and Don Morla have betrayed them, and they refuse to part with their arms. The French have the gates, the Retiro, and the Prado. Madrid thus continues to occupy a part of the French army. Saragossa still holds out, and they say they are endeavouring to collect forces in the south. They all cannot be directed against us, and we must try our hands."

On the 12th Sir David received the subjoined from Sir John, who was still at Salamanca.

MY DEAR SIR DAVID,

I have received both your letters of the 8th, in answer to mine of the 5th and 6th.

Lord Paget is at Toro, to which place I have sent the reserve to General Beresford's brigade. The rest of the troops from this are moving to the Duero. My quarters to-morrow will be at Alaejos—Hope's at Torrecillo—Frazer will be with me with his divisions on the 14th; on which day Lord Paget, with the cavalry and infantry from Toro, will move along the Duero towards us, so as to enable the whole to reach Tordesillas and its neighbourhood by the 15th, and Valladolid the 16th.

I have no answer from the Marquess de la Romana, to whom I wrote upon the 6th, and with whom it is my wish to form a junction, and to co-operate; but although I am disappointed in not hearing from him, and must forego every assistance from him; and though your corps will not be up in time, yet I think it an object with the troops. I have to march to Valladolid, from whence, according to the information I receive, I may move on to Placencia and Burgos, and thus threaten the enemy's communications, and may cause a diversion in favour of Madrid or Saragossa, or any movement which may be in contemplation from the south of the Tagus.

I shall at all events cover you while assembling at Astorga and Benevente, and may bring you on to me, or fall back upon you, as occasion requires; and in the mean time I shall be just as safe as at Salamanca or Zamora.

I think I shall call in to me, Colonel Craufurd with his corps, either by Toro or Medina de Rio Seco, of which I shall give you notice from Alaejos.

I have attached a brigade of artillery to each division of the army; whatever is over, is considered as reserve. To each division also there is attached ten rounds of musket cartridge per man, carried in carts, and four mules with pack saddles for the purpose of bringing up the cartridges from the carts to the troops when wanted; besides which, I am forwarding musket ammunition, and ammunition for guns to Zamora.

I think if you bring on with the troops two brigades of artillery, besides the two of horse artillery, one of which is with Lord Paget, this will suffice. Leave the other two at Astorga, ready to come forward when called for.

I wish you would make the same arrangement for carrying with your brigades and divisions ten rounds a man, besides the sixty in the pouches. I shall enclose a letter from Colonel Harding, commanding the artillery, explanatory of everything else. I consider Benevente as a place to have certain stores advanced to, the rest you should divide between Astorga and Villa Franca: all the money should be brought up to Villa Franca; we shall want it.

I am much obliged to you for your opinion upon the Galicias and Vigo, and it is that which now I shall probably follow, should such a measure become necessary. I am therefore most anxious that magazines should be formed on that communication. I have written home to direct that all transports, &c. should call at Coruña, and go to Vigo, unless otherwise directed. Coruña must be

the place for all supplies from England; the communication through Portugal is difficult and tardy.

Forward the enclosed to the Marquess de la Romana as soon as possible, and send me any letters which may come from him without delay. An officer will remain in Salamanca to forward letters to me. Should you not prefer the direct road by Toro to Tordesillas, or Valladolid, you will not think it necessary to have more cavalry with you while I am in your front.

I shall enclose a letter for Lord Castlereagh, which I shall thank you to forward to Coruña.

Believe me, yours sincerely,

JOHN MOORE.

On the 14th of December Sir John Moore received the long-expected despatch from the Marquess de la Romana, expressing his satisfaction at the measure now taking by the English army, and announcing his determination to use every effort in his power to effect a junction with him. On the very day, however, upon which Sir John Moore received this warm and friendly declaration of the Marquess' feelings and intentions, Colonel Symes, who had, at Sir John Moore's desire, been despatched by Sir David Baird to Leon, to examine into the state of Romana's army, forwarded the following report to Sir David.

Leon, 14th Dec. 1808.

SIR,

I have the honour to acquaint you that I arrived at Leon yesterday evening; the difficulty of procuring post horses greatly retarded my journey. Between Membabre and Maugenal I met a brigade of Spanish artillery, viz. two howitzers and six field-pieces. They were proceeding

to Pontefrada, for what precise purpose I could not learn, possibly to defend the passes of the mountains.

At a league north of Astorga I came on another brigade of Spanish guns, drawn up on a rising ground. These guns had only three or four men to guard them, and no regular sentinel. I was told that the gunners and cattle were in the neighbouring villages. I examined the state of the guns and the ammunition as closely as I could without giving offence. They appeared very defective. The men said they came from Leon fifteen days ago, and knew not when or whither they were to proceed.

At Orbigo, four leagues from Leon, I found the place occupied by a numerous body of troops, I was told four thousand, under Major-General Don Tenaro Figador. There were five regiments; three of the line—El Rey, Majorca, and Hibernia, and two of militia, the Maldonado and another. The equipment and appearance of these troops were miserable. I had an opportunity of inspecting the arms of the general's guard, which were extremely defective. The springs of the locks do not often correspond; either the main-spring or the feather-spring too weak to produce certain fire from the hammer. I tried sixteen; of this number six only had bayonets, and these were short and bad; the ammunition pouches were not proof against rain. The clothing of the soldiers was motley, and some were half naked. They were in general stout, fine young men, without order or discipline, but not at all turbulent or ferocious, and nothing like intoxication was observable. Soon after I left Orbigo I met the regiment of Vittoria, on its march from Leon, destined, as I was told, for Pontefrada. The men were wretchedly clad and armed.

I got to Leon early in the evening, and waited on the Marquis Romana. He had not heard of the capitulation of Madrid; expressed himself vaguely on the subject of

moving; stated his forces at twenty-two thousand infantry and three hundred cavalry; complained much of the want of officers; had intended to form his army into five divisions, but could not find officers to put at their head; he therefore meant to divide his army into wings, one under General Blake, and the other under himself; that his force was daily increasing, by the return of fugitives. He expressed hopes that we had light troops to oppose to those of the French, who were very expert; and added, that he was training six thousand of his men to that species of warfare.

There was a general review the next day, at which I expressed a desire to have the honour to attend his Excellency.

In the morning I waited on his Excellency, and pressed him, as far as I could with propriety, on the subject of joining Sir John Moore; to which he evaded giving any more than general assurances. He does not think that the forces of the enemy in the north exceeds 10,000 men in all, and that there is no danger to be apprehended of their penetrating into Asturias. He recommends to Sir John Moore to break down all the bridges between Toro and Aranda, four in number; that Zamora be fortified, and made a depôt, and that magazines be formed at Astorga and Villa Franca; again regretted his want of cavalry; expressed a wish to procure 2000 English firelocks, and shoes for his army. When I asked *him* for 100 draft mules for General Baird's army, he replied, it was impossible, he had not one to spare.

Whilst we were talking, a courier brought an account from Benevente of the repulse of the French at Madrid. It may be true, but it seems at present to stand in need of confirmation.

I attended the review. The troops were drawn up in three columns; each might perhaps consist of 2500 men.

The Marquis, on horseback, addressed each column separately. When that was over, the troops formed into line; the right wing was badly armed and worse clothed; the left was better, being chiefly provided with English firelocks, and a corps of 1000 men in uniform, who, I was informed, were light troops, might be called respectable.

The movement from column into line was very confusedly performed, and the officers were comparatively inferior to the men. There was only one brigade of artillery in the field, and I doubt whether there is more in Leon. The guns were drawn by mules. No ammunition-waggons were brought for inspection.

On the whole, from what I have been able to observe since I came here, and from the tenor of my conversations with the Marquis, I am disposed to doubt his inclination of moving in a forward direction to join Sir John Moore; I suspect he rather looks to secure his retreat into Galicia, unless the aspect of affairs alters materially for the better; and if he were to join Sir John, I doubt whether his aid would prove essentially useful.

My reasons for these conclusions are as follow:—If the Marquis meant to advance, why send his artillery and roops into the rear, and why, as he is assured of the time when Sir John Moore intends to be at Benevente, decline to fix any precise day to make movement? I do not know what communication he may have with you through Captain Doyle, or by letter to Sir John Moore, to whom he says he has written fully; but to me he has certainly given no cause whatever to suppose that he will move in concert with your army, or that of Sir John Moore. I hope I may be mistaken.

My motive for doubting whether the aid which he might bring would be of any importance, arises from a sense of the inefficient state of his arms, and the want of discipline in his men. It is morally impossible that they can stand

before a line of French infantry. A proportion of at least one third of the Spanish musquets will not explode, and a French soldier will load and fire his piece with precision three times before a Spaniard can fire his twice. Men, however brave, cannot stand against such odds.

As to charging with the bayonet, if their arms were fit for the purpose, the men, although individually as gallant as possible, have no collective confidence to carry them on, nor officers to lead them. They will therefore disperse, probably on the first fire, and can never be rallied, until they voluntarily return to their general's standard, as in the case of the Marquis Romana's present army, almost wholly composed of fugitives from the battles of the north.

A striking instance of this is given by the Marquis himself, who assured me that the Spaniards did not lose above 1000 men in their late actions with the French, a proof, not of the weakness of the French, but of the incapacity of the Spaniards to resist them. In fact, the French light troops decided the contest; the Spaniards fled before a desultory fire. They saved themselves, and now claim credit for having escaped.

By a repetition of such flights and re-assemblings the Spaniards may in the end become soldiers, and greatly harass the enemy, but as *we* cannot practise that mode of warfare, our allies are not calculated to be of use to us on the day of battle, when we must either conquer or be destroyed.

I do not mean to undervalue the spirit of patriotism of the Spaniards, which I highly respect, and which may in the end effect their deliverance, but they are not now, nor can they be for a long time, sufficiently improved in the art of war to be coadjutors with us in a general action. We must therefore *stand or fall through our own means*, for if we place any reliance on Spanish aid for success in the field, we shall, I fear, find ourselves egregiously deceived.

I think the Marquis Romana should immediately be called upon to say on what day he will march, and on what day and at what place he will join Sir John Moore.

I have thought it my duty, Sir, thus to enter at length into the subject, with a view to prevent hereafter any disappointment in a matter of such high importance.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

With the greatest respect,

Your most obliged faithful servant,

MICH. SYMES, *Lt.-Col.**

Lt.-Gen. Sir David Baird.

This letter, it must be confessed, was little calculated to increase the anxiety which Sir John Moore felt for a junction with the Marquess Romana. Events, however, speedily occurred which gave an entirely new turn to the course of proceedings.

* Lieutenant Colonel Symes very shortly after the date of this report, that is to say, immediately after the battle of Coruña, died on board the *Mary* transport, as he was returning to England. The causes of his death were the extraordinary exertions and fatigues he underwent during the campaign.

He was a gentleman whose civil and military qualities and accomplishments were equally conspicuous; and in all the private relations of life he was universally esteemed. He was twice Ambassador at the Court of Ava; and of his first mission there, the account he published obtained for him considerable literary reputation. His remains were interred in the church of St. Margaret, Rochester, and were attended to the grave by a long train of relations and friends, anxious to pay the last tribute to departed merit, virtue, and valour.

CHAPTER X.

FRESH INTELLIGENCE RECEIVED BY SIR JOHN MOORE—CHANGE OF PLANS CONSEQUENT THEREUPON—DESPATCHES FROM MR. FRERE—SIR JOHN MOORE MOVES TO CASTRONUOVO—SIR DAVID BAIRD TO BENEVENTE—AFFAIRS WITH THE ENEMY—GALLANT CONDUCT OF ENGLISH CAVALRY—FORWARD MOVEMENT DECIDED UPON—ABANDONED—RETREAT COMMENCED.

It now becomes our duty to explain the nature and character of the intelligence, which effected the sudden and total alteration of the pre-determined arrangements of Sir John Moore, immediately after his arrival at Alaejos on the 13th of December. The following letter from Sir John to Sir David Baird will best answer the purpose :

Head Quarters, Alaejos, 14th of December.

MY DEAR SIR DAVID,

I received last night your letters of the 10th and 11th instant. It was my intention to have moved to-morrow on Valladolid, but a letter from Buonaparte to Marshal Soult at Saldanha, which we have intercepted, (the officer who carried it having been murdered by the peasantry,) has induced me to change my direction, and shall be to-morrow, with all the troops I have, at Toro and its immediate neighbourhood. It appears that Marshal Soult, Duc de Dalmatie, has with him two divisions at Saldanha, besides one under the Duc d'Abrantes, which is collecting at Burgos, and another under the Duc de Treviso, which has received

orders to march on Saragossa, but which of course may be recalled. Madrid has submitted and is quiet, and the French from thence are marching upon Badajos. Their advanced guard was at Talavera la Reina on the 10th instant. My object is now to unite the army as soon as possible, you at Benevente, and I at Toro, from whence, either by a forward or flank movement, the two corps can be joined. I shall direct all my stores from Zamora to be forwarded to Benevente. The arrangement with respect to yours, which I communicated to you in my letter of the 12th, may go on, by which we shall have a certain portion at Benevente and the rest at Astorga and the rear. It appears from the intercepted letter, from deserters, and from prisoners we have taken, that the French are in complete ignorance of our present movements, and think we have retreated. As they will now know the truth, what change this may make in their march on Badajos, I know not, but Marshal Soult will certainly be checked in his intended operations, which were projected upon the supposition that he had nothing but Spaniards to oppose him. Every arrangement which I before directed with a view to enable us to live in the Galicias, should be strictly attended to, for though in the first instances, we may not have opposed to us more than we can face, it will be in the power of the enemy to increase their force far beyond our strength.

I have received a letter from the Marquess de la Romana, and I expect an officer from him every hour. Whatever I determine with him shall be communicated to you. In the mean time I shall thank you to let him know that I have changed my intention of going to Valladolid in consequence of information, and that I am collecting the army at Toro and Benevente.

Believe me, my dear Sir David,
Yours faithfully,
JOHN MOORE.

On the 16th of December, Sir David Baird arrived at Benevente, and on the same day, Sir John Moore reached Toro: from Toro on that day he addressed the following letter to Sir David.

Toro, 16th December 1808.

MY DEAR SIR DAVID,

Upon my arrival here yesterday, I received from the messenger your letter of the 12th. To-morrow I purpose to march to some villages, which I understand will hold all the corps, within two or three leagues of Benevente. I shall then be so near to you as to give perfect security to the assembling of your corps at that place. I shall also be able to have the pleasure of meeting you.

I cannot help again pressing you to take every measure for the forming of magazines at Astorga, Villa Franca, and on the road to Coruña, for though we may do something here, we must always look to a retreat on Galicia. For the present, while the army united is so near, I do not see that any corps of the enemy can attempt to disturb the passage of our stores by Astorga, or endeavour to place himself between us and the pass into Galicia. They have no corps at present at hand, that when united we should hesitate to attack.

I have not yet seen the officer from the Marquess de la Romana. If he goes to Zamora he must hear of my being here. Be so good as to inform the Marquess of my march to this place, and of my anxiety to see the officer he promised to send me.

The messenger who carries this, proceeds to England, and will take charge of any letters you wish to send. I have written to Lord Castlereagh to send every transport to Vigo, and to call at Coruña for orders. Be so good as to inform Broderick that all empty transports so sent are to

rendezvous at Vigo, and there wait ; and whatever troops arrive are to be disembarked, but the transports kept.

Believe me ever sincerely,

JOHN MOORE.

Head Quarters on the 17th will be at Castronuovo ; Frazer's division at St. Martin de Villardiga and Villardiga. The cantonment will be extended on the right, but when upon the spot it can be closed in next day.

The intercepted letter mentioned the other day, states, that small craft are ordered from France to St. Andero, to take to France from that place merchandize and guns. It will perhaps be right to give this notice to the Admiral at Coruña.

While Sir John Moore was at Toro, it appears that he received a despatch from Mr. Frere again, most earnestly remonstrating against the conduct he was pursuing ; but, of course, aware of the alteration which had so recently taken place in Sir John Moore's arrangements and plans, he urges upon him the vast responsibility which he incurs in adopting a measure, the immediate result of which must be the final, if not the immediate ruin of our ally, and the indelible disgrace of the country, with whose resources he was entrusted.

Mr. Frere adds :—

“ I am unwilling to enlarge on a subject on which my feelings must be stifled, or expressed at the risk of offence, which, with such an interest at stake, I should be unwilling to excite ; but thus much I must say, that if the British army had been sent for the express purpose of doing mischief to the Spanish cause, with the single

exception of not firing a shot against their troops, they would, according to the measures now announced, or about to be pursued, have completely fulfilled their purpose."

In this letter, Mr. Frere enclosed one from the Supreme Junta addressed to himself, in which they express their decided hostility to the measure of retreat; at the same time assuring Mr. Frere, that if Sir John Moore would immediately engage the enemy, he would find that the enthusiasm of the Spanish people had not been at all diminished by the defeats of their armies, and promised that he should be immediately joined by 14,000 men from Romana's army.

As Sir John Moore had not himself seen that army, and had, therefore, not such an opportunity of judging of the benefits to be derived from so great an accession of its force, as Colonel Symes had, the proposition might have had some effect; but Mr. Frere's letter came too late. Sir John's plans were decided; and as may be seen through the whole of the correspondence which we have submitted to the reader, the subject of his constant contemplation was the probable necessity of retreat. With this apprehension strong upon his mind, it appears that at this period he declined the offer which was made him of the chief command of the Spanish armies.

The plan of operations which Sir John Moore communicated to Sir David Baird, in his letter of the 14th, from Alaejos, was, therefore, adhered to; and having ascertained that Marshal Soult occupied Saldanha and the line of the river Carrion, he deter-

mined, if possible, to make a dash at his detachment, in the hope of beating him before any other force could come to his support ; the head of the British columns were, therefore, directed on Sahagun and Mayorga. On the 18th, Sir John Moore moved on to Castronuovo. Sir David Baird's head-quarters on that day were at Benevente, forty miles distant. On the 19th, the march of the army was continued on Villalpando and Valderas ; and on the 20th of December the long-anticipated junction of the armies of Moore and Baird was effected at Mayorga.

At this time, the total effective amount of the combined armies is said to have been twenty-three thousand infantry, and two thousand five hundred cavalry : about one thousand seven hundred were on detachment, and four thousand in hospital.

It was while the head-quarters of the combined army were at Mayorga, that those brilliant skirmishes with the enemy occurred, which first decided the question of the superiority of English over French cavalry ; but although they were of the most gallant and heroic character, they were not calculated to produce any result adequate to the mischievous effect they produced, by injuring the efficiency of that most important arm. Amongst other disadvantages arising from the rapid and desultory nature of these enterprizes, was the consequent impossibility of attending to the shoeing of the horses, which suffered dreadfully in consequence of the inevitable carelessness upon that point, as well as from exposure to the inclemency of the seasons.

Lord Londonderry, then Major General Stewart, had distinguished himself in several gallant affairs of this nature previous to this period. One in particular at a small town called Rueda. "Having caused it to be reconnoitred," says his Lordship, "and finding that the French seemed quite ignorant of our proximity, I determined to surprise them if possible; and at all events to bring them to action. With this intention, a squadron of the 18th 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 had not retreated."*

While head quarters were at Mayorga an affair of a more serious character occurred at Sahagun. That place was occupied by General Debelle, with the 21st regiment of French dragoons. On the night of the 20th of December Lord Paget moved on Sahagun with the 10th and 15th hussars, in advance of Sir David Baird's division, and finding on approaching it, just before daybreak of the 21st, that it was in possession of the enemy, he ordered the 10th to proceed direct on the town, whilst with the 15th he made a circuit round it, for the purpose of cutting off their retreat.

According to these instructions, General Slade,

* Lord Londonderry's Narrative, p. 191.

following the course of the river Cea, proceeded towards the town; but Lord Paget had not advanced any great way before he fell in with a picket of the enemy. The picket was charged, and the whole of it, with the exception of one man, was either cut down or made prisoners. "But," as Lord Londonderry observes, "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 reach the place the enemy were prepared to receive them. Their force was mounted and under arms near the road leading from Sahagun to Carrion.

For some time the two corps moved parallel to each other in columns, the nature of the intervening ground making it impossible for the British to close with their opponents. At length, the ground although still difficult, becoming more favourable, Lord Paget, who had rather headed the enemy by the superior trotting of our horses, wheeled the 15th into line, and immediately charged.

The French instantly halted, and forming six deep, received the charge of the British. The shock was tremendous—the result instantaneous—in a few minutes the whole body was literally overwhelmed, and scattered on the plain, which was covered with killed and wounded. Few of the French were sabred; they were absolutely borne down and unhorsed by the superior activity and weight of our hussars, and thirteen officers and 140 men were taken prisoners. Upwards of eighty of

the scattered horses were also secured and brought in, by the British dragoons, whose loss was comparatively trifling, although Colonel, now General Sir Colquhoun Grant, who commanded the regiment, and the adjutant, were both wounded. This rencontre was highly honourable to the 15th, as its strength at the time did not exceed 400 men, whilst the French were certainly 600 strong.

On the same day Sir David Baird's division occupied the town from which the enemy had been thus gallantly driven. The brigade of guards were quartered in its magnificent convent, under Major-General Warde. Here, too, Sir John Moore established his head quarters, and the troops were held in readiness to move against the enemy on the night of the 23rd, so as to reach their different points of attack by day-break on the following morning.

It was intended to make a demonstration, in the direction of Saldanha, where the head quarters of Marshal Soult were supposed to be, whilst the principal effort should be directed against the bridge at Carrion, which was the destination given to Sir David Baird's division.

It was at Sahagun that Sir John Moore received a despatch from the Marquess de la Romana, dated Leon, December 19th, in which he expressed his entire approbation of the forward movement of Sir John, and his immediate readiness to co-operate in the proposed attack upon Soult; but what appeared extremely strange in the letter, was the fact, that the Marquess appeared by its contents not to be aware of

the surrender of Madrid, which, as the reader will recollect, had taken place nearly twenty days before.

Another letter which Sir John Moore received the same day, informed him that Soult had about 10,000 men with him, of which 1000 were cavalry, and eight or ten pieces of artillery—these he had posted behind the Carrion. In his proposed co-operation, the Marquess de la Romana offered 10,000 of his best men, who should move forward the moment he received Sir John Moore's orders.

On the following morning Sir John Moore despatched a message to the Marquess, informing him that he should that night march to the town of Carrion, and the next day move on Saldanha. "If your Excellency," said Sir John, "would march from Mansilla, either direct on Saldanha or pass the river a little above it, while I march from Carrion, I think it would distract the attention of the enemy, and considerably aid my attack. My march from Carrion will probably be in the night. Any information of your movements I shall thank you to address to me at Carrion, where I shall be at daylight to-morrow."

This resolution taken, orders were given for an immediate advance. Again, every heart beat high with the anticipation of service and victory, and by eleven o'clock at night Sir David Baird's division, destined to move upon the bridge at Carrion, was formed in columns of march on the road leading to that place. The order to move forward was on the point of being given, when Sir David Baird was sum-