

tioned to attend Sir John Moore, who stated to him that he had just received information in a despatch from the Marquess de la Romana, that Buonaparte having become acquainted with the forward movements of the British, had not only turned against them the troops which were marching on Portugal, but was himself advancing from Madrid with an overwhelming force to cut off the English armies from Galicia ; that in consequence of this information, he Sir John Moore, had determined to abandon the proposed movement upon Carrion, and to lose no time in regaining the neighbourhood of Astorga, from whence the retreat of the troops would be comparatively secure.

The division was accordingly dismissed for the night, and on the following day preparations were made for retracing their steps towards Galicia. The disappointment and gloom which this new change of destination and new frustration of their hopes and wishes cast over the army, was deep and universal ; for although the reasons which dictated the measure might have been in the highest degree judicious, the officers and soldiers were ignorant of the causes of the alteration, and therefore were unable duly to appreciate the motives of the General in resolving upon it.

“ It would be no easy matter,” says Lord Londonderry, “ 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," continues his Lordship, "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 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 them at the highest; and he was extremely unwilling to commence a rapid retreat until 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, in the whole amounting to 7000 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."\*

It becomes our duty now to describe more particularly the movements of Sir David Baird's division,

\* Narrative, pp. 201, 202.

after the decision of Sir John Moore to abandon the "forward movement."

From the points occupied by the British army, two principal roads lead on Astorga. That, on the north, crossing the Eslar by a bridge at Mansilla de los Mulos, and passing through Leon, is the more direct line of communication; but that, as the reader, who is already aware of the movement of the Marquess de la Romana's division, was already occupied by that force, the amount and condition of which has just been described.

The southern line crosses the Eslar by the bridge at Castro Gonzalo, about a league in front of Benevente, through which town it passes. It was along this latter road that Sir John Moore and the principal part of the army began to retreat; whilst Sir David Baird was directed with his division to take an intermediate direction by cross roads, leading to Valencia de Don Juan, a town situated on the Eslar, about equidistant from the bridges before mentioned, at which place the river is passable by a large ferry-boat, and in a dry season at a ford in the neighbourhood.

Accordingly, on the 25th, (Christmas day,) he marched by the most execrable roads to some villages half way between Sahagun and Valencia de Don Juan, where he halted for the night, and moving at an early hour on the 26th, reached the Eslar in time to pass the entire division over that river considerably before night-fall, partly by means of the ferry-boat, immediately under the noble ruin

which gives its name to the town, and partly at the ford already noticed. But the rains which had recently fallen, had caused the river to swell greatly, and even while the troops were passing, the water rose so rapidly, that some lives were lost, and immediately afterwards the passage by the ford was abandoned.

After crossing, the division occupied the town of Villa Manian, and some villages close to the Esclar. Strong posts were placed on its banks, to defend its passage, and Sir David Baird immediately wrote to the Marquess de la Romana at Mansilla, urging him to blow up the bridge at that place.

At this period, the fact was unquestionable, that the English army was completely hemmed in by the French. Between the 20th and the 24th, Soult had been so powerfully reinforced, that his army alone was numerically superior to that of the British. Junot, with the army liberated by the memorable convention of Cintra, had reached Palencia; while Buonaparte himself, having left Madrid with whatever force he could avail himself of, had passed through Tordesillas, a town fifty miles from Benevente, on the day that the van of the English army quitted Sahagun; and Lefebvre, with a strong corps was marching on Salamanca; thus cutting off the retreat of the English into Portugal; so that in point of fact the whole force of the enemy was advancing from four or five different points upon the British army, as to the centre of a circle.

It is impossible, although we do not profess to

give a general account of the campaign, to pass over unnoticed one or two events which, although not immediately connected with the thread of our narrative, are so highly honourable to the British character. Buonaparte, when he reached Tordesillas, sent on strong detachments of cavalry as far as Villalpando and Mayorga. On the 26th, at the latter place, they were discovered in considerable force, drawn up on the brow of some rising ground, "apparently," as Lord Londonderry says, "ready to cut off any stragglers who might wander from the ranks." Lord Paget, who was at Mayorga, directed Colonel Leigh, at the head of two squadrons of the 10th hussars, to dislodge them.

Colonel Leigh, dividing his little band into two lines, rode briskly forward, one squadron leading and the other supporting, until he reached the top of the hill. Here the men were ordered to rein up, for the purpose of refreshing their horses after the ascent; they did so under a heavy fire from the French. But the horses had no sooner recovered their wind, than the word "charge" was given, and in a few minutes the French were overthrown. 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

When Sir David Baird had established himself in Villa Manian, it appeared to him to be of the first importance to hold the line of the Upper Eslar, till the march of Sir John Moore by the more circuitous route through Benevente was secured, most especially as the two nearest roads from the French position on the Carrion to Astorga lead through Mansilla and Valencia de Don Juan. Sir David felt that his division was a perfectly sufficient protection for the passage of the river at the latter place; but, as might have been expected, the Marquess de la Romana neglected to blow up the bridge at Mansilla, and the consequence would have been, that if the enemy had pushed on briskly, they would have reached Astorga before Sir John Moore, who would consequently have been placed between Buonaparte and Soult. Indeed, when Soult, after some unaccountable delay, did advance on Mansilla, the Spaniards, who had taken no precaution about destroying the bridge, abandoned it without even attempting to defend it.

Sir David Baird halted on the banks of the Eslar, on the 27th and 28th, in order that the main body of the army might have time to effect its passage of the river at Benevente. On the 29th he resumed

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."—*Lord Londonderry's Narrative*, p. 205.

his march upon Astorga, the road from Villa Manian to which city, crosses the river Orbigos at the bridge of that name. This place was occupied by the rear division of Romana's army, who had abandoned Leon on the first approach of the enemy. Nothing could be more deplorable than the appearance and condition of these troops, nor anything more unlike a military body, than the half-armed, half-clothed peasantry which composed the corps left in observation at the Puente d'Orbigos.

On the evening of the 29th Sir David Baird reached Astorga. The town was already occupied by the divisions of Generals Hope and Frazer, as well as by the Spaniards under Romana, except those left at the Puente d'Orbigos. The confusion which the concentration of so many men arriving from different points occasioned in a town of small extent, was inconceivably great. The streets and plazas were rendered impassable by the throng of soldiers who bivouacked in them, and by the guns and numerous carriages of all descriptions, which necessarily attend an army in the field. Only a small portion of the troops could find shelter in the public buildings and private houses. Sir David Baird resumed his former quarters at the Episcopal Palace, which received also the brigade of guards, the men of which absolutely covered the entire surface of its numerous galleries and corridors, as well as its large court yards.

At four o'clock the next morning the division was again on its march towards Manzanal, having been

preceded by those of Generals Hope and Frazer. The weather was severe, and many stragglers dropping behind, made it necessary very frequently to halt the columns. It was therefore late in the evening when it reached Manzanal, a small village seated in the midst of stupendous mountains deeply covered with snow.

Here it was intended to pass the night. The men had received a supply of bread from Astorga ; but owing to the shortness of their stay, and the confusion which prevailed, from the accumulation of so many troops in that place, it had been found absolutely impossible for the commissariat to make anything like a regular issue of provisions. At Manzanal some bullocks were procured, and immediately slaughtered ; but fuel was wanting, and unfortunately the miserable cabins of the inhabitants suffered in consequence. This irregularity was checked and severely reprimanded by Sir David Baird as soon as discovered.

The small surface round the village, and the depth of the snow in most places, led the men, who were infinitely too numerous to find a sufficient space clear of snow in the immediate neighbourhood, to establish themselves on the beaten roads in front and rear, as well as on the sides of the village, where they could obtain from the banks and inequalities of the ground some shelter from the piercing wind, which blew sharply and bitterly. When, therefore, an order was received, very soon after the column had halted, and long before the greater part



of the men had been able to dress their victuals, to proceed by a night-march to Bembibre, about twelve miles further on the road, it was a work of time and difficulty to collect and assemble the different corps.

The greater proportion of the men were yet fasting ; the greater part of the meat was yet uncooked ; when at ten o'clock at night the whole column was again in motion down the long descent, which extends for eight miles from Manzanal to the village of Torre ; a most trying and arduous service at that hour of the night, in that season of the year, and in the state of hunger and exhaustion in which our brave soldiers were.

The division reached Bembibre just as the morning of the 31st of December dawned. The place evidently could not afford shelter or cover to one third of the men. The inhabitants, roused out of their sleep by the heavy tramp of the coming column, were naturally averse from opening their doors to foreign troops at such an hour, and under such circumstances. All the houses were closed ; but the urgency of the case rendering the men deaf to refusals, they were speedily broken open ; the wine-cellars were immediately invaded, and the exhausted state of the men rendering them more obnoxious to the effects of the liquor, those who drank most, fell into a state of torpor, from which it was extremely difficult to rouse them when the march was again to be continued.

It was on the first of January, that Buonaparte reached Astorga, where only a day or two before,

the wreck of Romana's army had been consummated. His infantry became disorganized and separated, while he with his few cavalry and guns retired to the valley of the Mencia.

Buonaparte left Ney with eighteen thousand men to keep Leon in subjection, and directed Soult to continue the pursuit of the English. On the night of New-year's-day, so closely did the French press the British rear, that their patrols fell in with the pickets of the retreating army. At this period Buonaparte countermarched the rest of his army, and returned to France.

The repose Sir David Baird's division obtained at Bembibre was very short. Soon after its arrival, orders were again received to continue the retreat immediately to Cacavellos. The soldiers were therefore got under arms as quickly as their exhausted condition would permit. By ten o'clock, with great exertion, the division was formed immediately beyond the town. Sir John Moore had already arrived with the reserve, which continued to form the rear-guard of the army. Sir David Baird's division therefore pursued its route as far as Cacavellos, having thus marched upwards of fifty miles during the last thirty-six hours.\*

\* Colonel Sorell, in his "Notes," (p. 49,) has the following observations upon these events:—

"The halt at Bembibre was but for a very few hours: the early arrival of the commander of the forces with the reserve made it necessary to proceed; and before noon the division was again on the march to Cacavellos. The effects, however, of this unrelenting march were now becoming so apparent,

From Cacavellos the retreat of the division was continued the following morning through Villa Franca to Herrieras; and on the succeeding day, the 2nd of January, the tremendous mountain of Pietra Fita was passed, during some severe storms of wind and snow. This day's march was distinguished by the deaths of several of the women and children who accompanied the army. Some soldiers also sank under their fatigues, and altogether the division presented a scene of distress seldom to be met with, even in war. The snow on each side of the road on the upper ground and summit of the mountain was much higher than the points of the men's bayonets when carried fixed to their firelocks; and the road itself, which in the valleys was deep in mud and melted snow, was in these high regions frozen hard and slippery.

The men's shoes were totally worn out, and gene-  
that, previously to quitting Bembibre, I was sent by Sir David Baird to Sir John Moore (whilst the former was attending the punishment of some soldiers for their excesses in the town), to submit to the commander of the forces whether, under all the circumstances of the case, it might not be better to risk a loss of men by endeavouring to make a stand, than incur the certainty of diminishing our force and means by urging the retreat. The commander of the forces being, however, of opinion that circumstances made it necessary to proceed, the division moved to Cacavellos, where it arrived late on the evening of the 31st; having thus marched nearly sixty miles since the morning of the preceding day, during which period it had, with very short intervals, been constantly under arms.\*

\* I state the distance from recollection; but I think I have rather underrated the length of the march in question.

rally thrown aside, and the progress of the column was rendered slow and tedious by the constant falling of the horses employed in dragging the guns or other carriages, or by accidents to the carriages themselves.

In the long descent which leads to the town of Nogales, where the road runs along the edge of a mountain with a deep precipice on the one side and bold projecting rocks on the other, a remarkable accident occurred. An artillery-waggon, into which a number of women and children had been admitted, rolled over the precipice. Its descent was checked by trees and shrubs at some distance from the summit. Some of the horses which drew it were killed, but neither the women nor children were hurt. Poor ill-fated wretches, they were in all probability reserved to perish by the fatigues and sufferings they were destined to undergo in a more advanced period of the retreat.

On the 5th instant the division reached Lugo, having passed the night of the 3rd in the village of Constantinhos, and continued its march throughout the whole of the 4th. At Lugo, where it had been generally supposed Sir John Moore intended to try the issue of a battle, it enjoyed some short repose. On the 7th it moved on, and occupied the left of the position taken up by Sir John Moore in front of Lugo, for the purpose of carrying his long-meditated design of bringing Soult to action.

The French collected a force in face of this position on the following day, and towards evening some

very smart skirmishing took place between the advanced posts and pickets of the two armies, in which the enemy lost two or three hundred men. That night Sir John Moore issued an animating order to the army, pointing out that the troops must perceive the moment to have arrived which they had so long, and so ardently desired, of measuring themselves with the enemy ; that he had the most perfect reliance upon their valour ; and that all he thought it necessary to recommend to them was steadiness, and never to throw away their fire.

This appeal made the soldiers forget all their previous fatigues, and the night was passed in preparations for the expected combat. The state of the army was, however, beyond measure distressing ; the greater part of the men were not only without shoes, but without stockings, and the constant rains had completely saturated the clothes which yet clung to their backs.

The division bivouacked along the edge of a thin wood, which extends to the left of the main road leading from Lugo towards the enemy, who occupied a range of hills in front of the heights on which the British were posted. It rained heavily at intervals during the night, but not sufficiently to extinguish the numerous fires which blazed along the front of the two armies, and marked in flame the hostile lines.

Sir David Baird, with Major-General Manningham, passed the night at a small farmhouse immediately in the rear of the centre of his division. Long before daylight the whole line was under arms.

The morning broke heavily, with drizzling rain. Contrary to Sir John Moore's expectation, the French, whose numerical force evidently exceeded that of the English, made no movement, and evinced no disposition to attack. The decided superiority of the French cavalry (for a very large portion of the English horses had already perished) restrained Sir John Moore from becoming the assailant. It was evident that Marshal Soult was either waiting for additional reinforcements in our front, or for the effect of some flank movement, which might have been made by the 6th corps under Marshal Ney, which was following in his rear. At all events, the day of the 8th was passed by both in mutual observation; another excitement was followed by another disappointment, and towards evening orders were again issued to continue the retreat, after dark.

The description given by Lord Londonderry of the retreat of the main body of the army, ought, we conceive, to be quoted here as a parallel to that of Sir David Baird's division. His Lordship, in giving that description says, speaking of the road to Herrieras—

“ The country became from this point such as to render cavalry of no avail; it was universally steep, rocky, precipitous, and covered with wood, and where in the few spots it was otherwise, too much enclosed with vineyards and mulberry plantations, to allow even a squadron of horse to form up or act. The cavalry were accordingly sent on at once to Lugo, whither the infantry and artillery followed as fast as extreme exhaustion, and the nature of the road by which they travelled would allow; but they followed both painfully and slowly; for though as many as forty

miles were performed in one march, that march comprehended not the day only but the night also.

“This was more than men reduced to the low ebb to which our soldiers had fallen could endure. They dropped down by whole sections on the way-side; some with curses, others with the voice of prayer in their mouths. It was dreadful likewise to know that not only men, but women and children were subjected to this miserable fate.

“By some strange neglect, or the indulgence of a mistaken humanity, Sir John Moore’s army had carried along with it more than the too large proportion of women allotted by the rules of the service to armies in the field—and these poor wretches were now heightening the horror of passing events by a display of suffering even more acute than those endured by their husbands.

“Some were taken in labour on the road, and in the open air, amidst showers of sleet and snow, gave birth to infants which perished, with their mothers, as soon as they had seen the light; others, carrying perhaps each of them two children on their backs, would toil on, and when they came to look to the condition of their precious burdens, would find one or both frozen to death. Then the depth of moral degradation to which they sank—their oaths and cries uttered under the influence of intoxication were hardly less appalling than the groans which burst from them, as all hope of aid abandoned them, and they sat down to die.

“I am well aware that the horrors of this retreat have been again and again described in terms calculated to freeze the blood of such as read them; but I have no hesitation in saying, that the most harrowing accounts which have yet been laid before the public, fall short of the reality.”\*

\* Lord Londonderry’s Narrative, pp. 217, 218.

Disappointing as the order for the continuation of the retreat from Lugo, where Sir John Moore had always avowed his intention to offer battle, must have been, yet as the principal object he had in view was the safety of his army, and its re-embarkation with as little loss as possible, it certainly would have been out of the question to prolong a struggle for the defence of Galicia. If that had been decided upon, it must have been settled before the advanced movement on Sahagun was begun; every arrangement would then have been directed to that one object, and there would have been time to prepare a resistance, which in all probability would have successfully baffled every effort of the enemy; but the advanced movement on Sahagun had impaired the equipment and efficiency of the British army too seriously to leave the possibility of defending any portion of the country after the retreat had once begun.

The enemy who had now collected against the British were too numerous and too powerful to be resisted without previous preparation, and the selection and strengthening of the different points of defence, which the nature of the country affords. Besides, had no other consideration militated against the possibility of resistance, the actual want of provisions must have driven the English from Lugo. The store of bread was nearly exhausted, and scarcely enough remained to supply the men on the march they had yet to perform.

In expressing the disappointment felt by the



troops at the order to continue the retreat from Lugo, it is but just to state, that during the day, the English found several opportunities of displaying their valour. In the morning of the 7th, the enemy advanced four guns, covered by a few squadrons of cavalry towards the centre, and opened a sharp fire, which was returned by the British with such effect, that one of the guns was dismounted, and the rest were silenced.

The enemy, about an hour after this, made a feint on the right of the British line, to cover the advance of a strong column of infantry, and five guns on the left. Sir John Moore galloped to the spot, and believed the movement only the precursor of a serious and general attack; he arrived just as a considerable body of French troops began to mount the rising ground, and press upon the 76th, which had possession of it. The 76th fell back gradually till it joined the 51st, in which regiment Sir John Moore had been an ensign; he spoke a few words to that corps, stating the fact, and expressing his entire confidence in them. The appeal had a magical effect upon the brave fellows, who after a few volleys of musketry, charged the French with the bayonet, and drove them in utter confusion down the hill.

This however was the last manifestation of hostilities—the painful suspense of the next day we have already noticed, and on the night of the 8th the fires were again lighted along the heights to deceive the enemy, and the retreat was continued.

## CHAPTER XI.

POINT OF EMBARKATION OF THE ARMY CHANGED — PASSAGE OF THE BRIDGE OF OTERO DEL REY — DIFFICULTIES OF THE RETREAT — PRIVATIONS OF THE TROOPS — HALT AT BETANZOS — ARRIVAL BEFORE CORUÑA — PROCEEDINGS THERE — ATTACK OF THE FRENCH — DETAILS OF THE BATTLE — SIR DAVID BAIRD LEADS HIS DIVISION INTO ACTION — IS SEVERELY WOUNDED — SIR JOHN MOORE WOUNDED — SIR DAVID COMPELLED TO QUIT THE FIELD — PROCEEDS ON BOARD THE VILLE DE PARIS — HIS LEFT ARM AMPUTATED AT THE SHOULDER — COLONEL SOBELL'S DETAIL OF EVENTS — DEATH OF SIR JOHN MOORE — DESPATCH OF GENERAL HOPE TO SIR DAVID BAIRD — SIR DAVID'S LETTER TO LORD CASTLEBROUGH — ARRIVAL IN ENGLAND — SIR DAVID INVESTED WITH THE RED RIBAND.

It ought, perhaps, to be here stated, that it had been the original intention of Sir John Moore, when he commenced his retreat, to have re-embarked at Vigo, which had been recommended in preference to Coruña, by Admiral De Courcy, who commanded the fleet; because at Vigo the anchorage for the transports was out of the reach of shot from the shore, which was not the case at Coruña, where the whole of the harbour was commanded by the surrounding heights.

It was with this view, therefore, that the men-of-war and transports had been collected at Vigo; and

the light brigade, under Brigadier-General Craufurd, had been despatched from Astorga direct on that place, by the road of Fuencevadon and Orense.

Although, in a maritime point of view, it may readily be admitted that Vigo was a preferable post to Coruña, many very important military considerations combined to operate in favour of the latter, as a point of re-embarkation.

From Lugo, where the road to Vigo branches off, the distance is nearly double that which it is to Coruña; besides, Sir John Moore had received a report, which induced him to believe that the embarkation might be effected from the neighbourhood of Betanzos, on the river, or arm of the sea, which extends inland towards that town. Had this been in fact practicable, it would very considerably have shortened the distance which the men had to march; but, unfortunately, the report was incorrect and ill-founded, which is the more to be lamented, as it certainly had a strong influence on the determination which he subsequently formed to fall back upon Coruña shortly after he left Astorga, when instructions were forwarded to Vigo for the transports to proceed immediately to that place.

It was some time after dark on the night of the 8th, when the retreat again commenced; and at about ten o'clock, Sir David Baird's division moved from its position to the rear. The night was dark, gloomy, and wet: every barn or open building to which it was possible for them to find access, was filled with men of the divisions in advance, who had

lagged behind in the hopes of some little shelter and repose.

Sir David Baird, who rode in rear of the column, was indefatigable in his visits to these scattered buildings, and in his exertions to push the men forward,—a task of no small difficulty under the sufferings and privations to which they had by circumstances been reduced.

At Otero del Rey, the Minho is crossed by a narrow stone-bridge. The passage of this bridge by the troops, guns, and carriages of all descriptions, was, in the peculiar situation of the army, found in itself to be an operation of some hours: the stragglers, foot-sore, and, above all, heart-sore at the renewal of the retreat, were forced on by the greatest exertions; the staff and other mounted officers assisted Sir David in his unwearying anxiety to get everything across the river; but such were the inevitable delays and insurmountable difficulties, that the day broke before it was effected, and was far advanced by the time the division reached the Venta of Guiteritz, which had been fixed on as the halting-place.

The descriptions given of the state of the advanced part of the army during this day and night are frightful. After marching, jaded and half-famished, barefoot and knee-deep in mud, their fatigue was so excessive, that the men threw themselves down upon the ground, and lay sleeping for hours, exposed to the "pitiless pelting" of a heavy rain; and even then their slumbers were continually broken by the

cry of the "enemy;" and at every such alarm, the advanced guard of course fell in.

As to Sir David Baird's division, its sufferings were by no means less than those of the troops of the main body with Sir John Moore. The latter part of the road from the Vaámonde is scarcely practicable for carriages of any description: it is carried along a chain of rocky heights, through a bleak and desolate country; and during the whole of this night and morning, the rain blew strongly, and drove the falling hail and rain full in the faces of the men.

It was melancholy to see the brave soldiers, who feared no mortal foe, thus beaten by the elements, and crouching from their fury: they lined the ditches which border the road, creeping along under the dwarf banks and enclosures, to screen themselves from the cutting sharpness of the tempest;—the calls and exhortations of their officers unheeded and unattended to, not from any feeling of disrespect or insubordination, but literally and purely from animal exhaustion. The men came into the bivouack which surrounded the Venta of Guiteritz in small parties, as their waning strength permitted, but without anything like order or regularity. The different regiments were so entirely mixed and blended, that it was found wholly impossible to collect the men round their own colours.

The sufferings of the soldiers in Sir David Baird's division during this wretched halt, it is scarcely possible to describe: like those of the advance, they

lay scattered over a bleak and desolate heath, with nothing to protect them from the violence of the gusts of wind and torrents of rain and hail: many perished on the ground where they laid themselves to rest, and two brave fellows died at the gate of the Venta, close to Sir David Baird, before any relief could be afforded them.

Soon after dark, in pursuance of Sir John Moore's order to continue the retreat night and day (an order against which Sir David Baird had in vain remonstrated), the drum was beat to collect the men for another night-march to Betanzos. The rain had ceased, but the darkness was profound. The well-known sound of the drum was heard, but it was disregarded. In vain was every exertion used to rouse the wearied men quickly from their wretched slumbers; and even when this was partially effected, it was found nearly impossible to direct them to their respective regiments in the midst of the obscurity which prevailed. One most distinguished and gallant officer, commanding a remarkably well-disciplined regiment, came to Sir David Baird, and declared, under feelings of the greatest distress and anxiety, such as were natural to a zealous, good, and brave soldier, that he neither could collect, nor even find his corps, so entirely was it dispersed and mixed up with others.

Those who have not witnessed such scenes, may wonder how such confusion arose, and even go the length of criticising it after it had occurred; but the physical faculties of man have their limits, and upon

this sad occasion, the human power of endurance had been overstrained.

The head of the column necessarily commenced its march before the rear could be collected. Sir David Baird, however, with an invincible resolution to do his duty, never stirred from the rear until he had assembled and pressed forward the men. On arriving at Betanzos, some regiments brought very few with their colours; they, however, came in slowly, but surely, and as the division halted the whole day, it was again tolerably collected before night.

Another march yet remained to be accomplished; the distance was but sixteen miles, but in the then state of the army, a march of sixteen miles to be immediately undertaken, was a serious enterprize; they knew, however, it was the last; and they hoped and believed that they were not to be permitted to fly to their ships for shelter, without, at least, once in this ill-fated campaign, trying their strength with the enemy. These feelings had their effect, and when the column was formed in the morning, strength, firmness, and discipline, seemed to be in a great measure resumed.

The halt at Betanzos was marked by the loss to the army of a most gallant and accomplished soldier, Brigadier-General Anstruther. He sank under his fatigues, and to such a state of exhaustion was he reduced, that he found it impossible to mount his horse: he died shortly after at Coruña. Other brave and valuable officers had perished before him, and

many more carried with them to England the groundwork of disorders from which they never recovered. Amongst the number was Major-General Manningham, who never rallied from the fatigues of the campaign.

Sir David Baird's division, which had followed those of Generals Frazer and Hope during the greater part of the retreat, now moved into the town, where it rested until the morning of the 14th, when it marched out, and took the right of the position, in which Sir John Moore determined to await the arrival of the fleet from Vigo, no part of which had yet made its appearance. Here it was determined to give battle to the enemy if he pressed on and sought the contest. In the course of the day the fleet hove in sight, and came to anchor in the evening.

The ground in front of Coruña, although hilly, much broken, and intersected by enclosures, does not offer any good defensive position for covering the town, particularly to a force not exceeding 15,000 men, which was, at the period of which we are now speaking, the full amount of the British army.

The position selected by Sir John Moore is a rocky ridge, distant about a mile and a half from the city, which, terminating on the left at an arm of the sea leading to Borgo, where it is high and commanding, and where it is crossed by the royal road to Madrid, on which the army had retreated, gradually declines in height until it reaches the village of Elvina; there the ridge recedes, and the ground



suddenly sinks into the hollow in which the village is situated.

Along this ridge two divisions of the British army were posted ; that of Lieutenant-General Hope on the left, extending to the sea, and that of Sir David Baird on the right, with its extreme right, (composed of part of Lord William Bentinck's brigade,) thrown back along the receding part of the ridge, so as to front the village of Elvina, which was also occupied.

The division of Lieutenant-General Frazer was placed in the rear, and further to the right, covering the road called the Road of Portugal, which was formerly that also to Santiago, and protecting the right flank of Sir David Baird's division, which would otherwise have been much exposed and liable to be turned. The reserve under Major-General Edward Paget, was posted in reserve on the main road.

Immediately in front of the right, and beyond the narrow valley or hollow in which Elvina is seated, the ground suddenly swells into a bold and commanding hill, connected with a chain of other hills, terminating at the sea : through an opening in these hills, the road, already noticed as being the Road of Portugal, passes. The hill immediately in front of the English right, overlooking the whole position, and being considerably within the range of grape-shot, was in the first instance intended to be included in it, and was, therefore, occupied by a strong picket.

On the 14th, a large magazine, containing four

thousand barrels of powder, which had been brought from England, was blown up, lest it should fall into the hands of the enemy. The explosion was beyond conception tremendous. The whole city of Coruña was shaken to its foundations; huge pieces of timber and fragments of rock were hurled through the air, and several lives were lost by this necessary sacrifice to the immediate security of the army.

Sir David Baird established his head-quarters at a small quinta, or country-house, immediately in the rear of his division; but neither men, nor officers in general, could find shelter, except in a few sheds on the other side of the ridge. The troops were under arms, and formed on the top of the ridge an hour before daybreak each morning.

On the 14th, the enemy had collected a force in the front of the British line, and it was considered by Sir John Moore necessary to withdraw the picket posted on the hill in face of the right, as being too much exposed. Sir David Baird, in consequence of this determination, proceeded at daybreak of the 15th to the hill; and the sentries were about to be withdrawn, when they were attacked by the French light infantry. A slight skirmish ensued; but as it was not intended to maintain the post, the picket gradually evacuated it.

In the course of the day, a considerable body of French troops and artillery, under Marshal Soult, was perceived ascending the abandoned hill. Eleven guns or howitzers were placed upon its summit in battery, whence they enfiladed, and completely com-

manded the right of the English line. All the artillery belonging to the British army, excepting two pieces, had already been embarked; four or five Spanish cannon were added to these two, but as it turned out, their calibre did not agree with our shot: they were of no use whatever.\*

During these proceedings, Sir John Moore was actively employed in taking advantage of the arrival of the fleet on the 15th, and the women and children, the sick and the wounded, and such ammunition stores as could be spared, were all safely got on board. The artillery, as we have already said, was sent off to the ships, for the ground now occupied by our army was not adapted to their use; and the cavalry, after destroying their horses, had also embarked, so that in fact nothing remained except the most efficient of the infantry.

On the morning of the 16th the line was under arms before daybreak as usual; but everything appearing perfectly quiet in the enemy's position, the regiments were dismissed, and the last preparations for the conclusion of the embarkation were made. Orders were issued for the gradual retreat of the different divisions, and the boats of the fleet were collected in the harbour and along the beach to

\* "It was during this day, towards the evening, that Colonel Mackenzie, of the 5th, perceived two of the enemy's guns not far distant, and imagined that, by a sudden attack, he might surprise them—the attempt failed. Colonel Mackenzie was killed during the advance, and his party were driven back with loss."—*Annals*, p. 89, vol. ii.

receive the regiments on board as fast as they should arrive at the water's edge, so that during that night and the following morning the whole of the troops might be embarked; and such was the confident expectation that no farther attempt would be made to molest our forces in the retreat, that several officers went into town to get their effects and private property on board.

Shortly after noon, however, some movements were perceived in the enemy's line, and soon afterwards four strong columns of infantry, preceded by a cloud of skirmishers, were seen descending the hill, covered by a heavy fire of shot and shells from the eleven guns or howitzers posted on the height.

This happened just as Sir John Moore had given his final directions about the embarkation, and had mounted his horse to visit the outposts. Sir John expressed his high satisfaction at the intelligence, and consequent chance of action, which was corroborated by a deserter, who had just come in.

The left column of the French was directed against Elvina, and the right of Sir David Baird's division; whilst the other advanced against General Manningham's brigade. At the same time the left of the army was assailed by a third column, which advanced by the main road; but the weight of the conflict at its commencement fell chiefly on Sir David Baird's division. The enemy's object was evidently to turn and penetrate the British right, and by so doing, drive him back upon the sea. Sir John Moore, seeing the enemy's design, immediately galloped off to

that part of the field; and as the enemy's columns, which descended the hill to attack Sir David Baird's division, approached, Sir David asked Sir John Moore if he did not think it was time to move forward to meet them, inquiring also, if Sir John would give the word of command. He replied, "No, Baird; do you." The order was instantly given to advance, and the fire of musketry soon began.

The column which rapidly and impetuously advanced against the right, on approaching Elvina, lined the different enclosures which surround the village, and commenced a murderous fire upon Lord William Bentinck's brigade; whilst a part of it rushing into the village itself, was closely opposed by the 50th regiment, under Major Napier, who was severely wounded and taken prisoner, and the second Major, Stanhope, killed.\*

After a severe contest with the bayonet in the streets, the enemy were driven from the village, although the action had now become general along the line. The 42nd, after having received and returned several volleys, crossed bayonets, and, supported by a battalion of the guards, repulsed a strong body of the enemy, who had endeavoured to possess itself of the height on the left. It was in the act of watching and applauding this charge, that Sir John Moore was struck off his horse by a cannon shot.

But even previous to this, and very early in the

\* The Hon. Major Stanhope was brother of the present Earl Stanhope.

action, Sir David Baird, who was conspicuous by his activity and animation, had received a grape-shot in his left arm, at about an inch from the shoulder. He did not fall from his horse, but dismounted, almost stunned by the blow. On recovering his recollection, he made an effort to remount, but finding that impossible, he consented to retire to the rear, and accompanied by his aid-de-camp, Captain William Baird, was conveyed first to the quarters which he had occupied at Duke de Veragas' in Coruña, and thence on board the *Ville de Paris*, in which ship he had previously arranged to embark for England.

Notwithstanding the pain Sir David suffered, from a wound which had literally shattered the bone to pieces, his countenance and manner were so calm and unchanged, that several officers whom he passed as he was *walking* into Coruña, were perfectly unconscious that he was even wounded. Amongst others, Lord Charles Manners was not aware that he had received any injury, until he saw him acknowledge the salute of the guard with his right hand, and saw at the same time that his left arm was supported by his sash, which had been converted into a sling for the purpose. When he arrived on board the *Ville de Paris*, the surgeon of that ship, upon being called to him, and seeing the composed and tranquil state in which he was, expressed his opinion that he "should soon be able to set all to rights again."

This confident suggestion deeply offended the

gallant suffering soldier, who angrily asked the surgeon, if he imagined that he should have quitted the field for a trifling hurt.

On baring his arm, the surgeon was satisfied of the justice of Sir David's displeasure with him for the hasty opinion he had formed of the injury he had received—he at once expressed his conviction that amputation was absolutely necessary, at the same time observing, that the operation had better be deferred until the morning, as Sir David must naturally feel exhausted.

Sir David at first expressed a doubt as to the necessity for taking off the limb, but the surgeon of Sir Samuel Hood's ship, the *Barfleur*, who had in the mean time arrived on board, being in the cabin, Sir David calmly asked if it was their united opinion that such a course was indispensable, and upon their both declaring their conviction that it was absolutely necessary for the preservation of his life, he replied, that he was quite ready to undergo at the moment whatever operation was considered requisite.

Upon a closer inspection, it was found that the wound was so near the shoulder that the ordinary mode of amputation could not be adopted, since in all probability the bone was splintered close to the cap of the shoulder. It was therefore thought necessary to remove the arm out of the socket. The preparations for this painful, and at that period unusual operation, were immediately made; and during its progress Sir David Baird exhibited the

same firmness of nerve which so eminently distinguished him on every occasion through life. He sat leaning his right arm on a table, without uttering one syllable of complaint, except at the moment when the joint was finally separated, when one single exclamation of pain escaped his lips. The blow, however, was one of complicated danger and difficulty, for the shot, which shattered the bone of the arm to pieces, inflicted another severe wound in the side, from which Sir David suffered severely for many years.

It appears to us that the most satisfactory information, as regards the subsequent occurrences connected with this campaign, up to the arrival of Sir David Baird in England, and of the principal events of the action after he was compelled to quit the field, will be best conveyed to the reader by the following narrative of the highly-gifted officer of Sir David's staff, to whom we have already offered our sincere thanks for his valuable communications, and by a copy of the despatches forwarded to the Government of England on the occasion.

“ I remained,” says the gallant officer, “ on the field until the close of the action, at which time the enemy was completely repulsed, and our line considerably in advance of the ground it had occupied at the commencement of the contest, when being extremely anxious to ascertain the state of Sir David Baird's wound, I hastened into town, and passing the house to which Sir John Moore had been removed, I learned with inexpressible regret, that he had just then expired.



“ Proceeding to the hotel of the Duke of Veraga, in the upper city, where the head quarters of our division had been established during the two days we had remained in Coruña, I found Sir David Baird’s own man, who had just come on shore from the Ville de Paris, who told me that Sir David’s wound was seriously severe, and that he must lose his arm.

“ I immediately returned with him to the ship, and upon entering the General’s cabin, learned that the operation of extracting the limb had just been performed—indeed the surgeons were then applying the dressings.

“ Sir David received me in his usual affectionate manner, gave me his remaining hand, and expressed great pleasure at seeing me unhurt. He then made anxious inquiries respecting the events of the day, deeply lamenting the loss of Sir John Moore, at the same time advert- ing to the necessity of his resigning the command of the army, in consequence of his wound, the surgeons consider- ing it proper that he should be kept perfectly quiet after so severe an operation. I saw him placed on a camp-bed, which had been prepared in an adjoining cabin, and then left him for the night, which he passed tranquilly under the influence of a powerful opiate.

“ Early the next morning Sir David sent to desire me to come to him ; and having despatched his aid-de-camp, the Honourable Captain Gordon, to Lieutenant-General Hope to notify his situation, and to request a detailed report of the action, he directed me to write a letter to the Secretary of State, to accompany the report. The letter and the report being ready, he signed the former with his own hand, and they were despatched to England in charge of his nephew, the Honourable Captain Gordon, by His Majesty’s ship Slaney.

“ The embarkation of the army was completed on the morning of the 17th, and the same evening the fleet got

under way for England. The *Ville de Paris* had received on board upwards of sixty officers (several of whom were wounded) and above a thousand men of different regiments. The wind blowing a heavy gale from the south, the Admiral, considering Sir David Baird's situation, made a signal for the *Ville de Paris* to part company, in order that she might not be delayed by the heavy-sailing transports."

We now submit, as best with regard to the chronological arrangement of events, the letter of Lieutenant-General Hope to Sir David Baird, containing an account of the battle of Coruña, together with Sir David's letter to Lord Castlereagh.

*Ville de Paris, at Sea, Jan. 18th 1809.*

MY LORD,

By the much-lamented death of Lieutenant-General Sir John Moore, who fell in action with the enemy on the 16th instant, it has become my duty to acquaint your Lordship that the French army attacked the British troops in the position they occupied in front of Corunna, at about two o'clock in the afternoon of that day.

A severe wound, which compelled me to quit the field a short time previous to the fall of Sir John Moore, obliges me to refer your Lordship for the particulars of the action, which was long and obstinately contested, to the enclosed report of Lieutenant-General Hope, who succeeded to the command of the army, and to whose ability and exertions in direction of the ardent zeal and unconquerable valour of His Majesty's troops, is to be attributed, under Providence, the success of the day, which terminated in the complete and entire repulse and defeat of the enemy at every point of attack.

The Honourable Captain Gordon, my aid-de-camp, will

have the honour of delivering this despatch, and will be able to give your Lordship any further information which may be required.\*

Yours, &c.

D. BAIRD, *Lt.-Gen.*

The following is the enclosure to Sir David Baird from Lieutenant General Hope.

*Audacious, off Corunna, Jan. 18.*

SIR,

IN compliance with the desire contained in your communication of yesterday, I avail myself of the first moment I have been able to command, to detail to you the occurrences of the action which took place in front of Corunna on the 16th instant.

It will be in your recollection, that about one in the afternoon of that day, the enemy, who had received reinforcements, and who had placed some guns in front of the right and left of his line, was observed to be moving troops towards his left flank, and forming various columns of attack, and that extremity of the strong and commanding position, which in the morning of the 15th he had taken in our immediate front.

This indication of his intention was immediately succeeded by the rapid and determined attack which he had made upon your division, which occupied the right of our position. The events which occurred during that period of the action you are fully acquainted with.

The first effort of the enemy was met by the commander

\* By reference to the Gazette Extraordinary of January 24th, 1808, it will be seen that it is there stated that "the Honourable Captain *Hope* arrived late last night, with a despatch from Lieutenant-General Sir David Baird to Lord Viscount Castlereagh."

of the forces, and by yourself, at the head of the 42nd regiment, and the brigade under Major-General Lord William Bentinck. The village on your right, became the object of obstinate contest. I lament to say, that soon after the severe wound which deprived the army of your services, Lieut.-General Moore, who had just directed the most able disposition, fell by a cannon shot.

The troops, though not unacquainted with the irreparable loss they had sustained, were not dismayed; but by the most determined bravery, not only repelled every attempt of the enemy to gain ground, but actually forced him to retire, although he had brought up fresh troops in support of those originally engaged.

The enemy, finding himself foiled in every attempt to force the right of our position, endeavoured by numbers to turn it;—a judicious and well-timed movement, which was made by Major-General Paget with the reserve, which corps had moved out of its cantonments to support the right of the army, by a vigorous attack, defeated this intention.

The Major-General having pushed forward the 95th (rifle corps), and the first battalion of the 51st regiment, drove the enemy before him, and in his rapid and judicious advance, threatened the left of the enemy's position. This circumstance, with the position of Lieut.-General Fraser's division (calculated to give further security to the right of the line), induced the enemy to relax his efforts in that quarter; they were, however, more forcibly directed towards the centre, where they were again successfully resisted by the brigade under Major-General Manningham, forming the left of your division, and a part of that under Major-General Leck, forming the right of the division under my orders.

Upon the left the enemy at first contented himself with an attack upon our picquets, which however, in general,

maintained their ground ; finding however his efforts un-availing on the right and centre, he seemed determined to render the attack upon the left more serious ; and had succeeded in obtaining possession of the village through which the great road to Madrid passes, and which was situated in front of that part of the line ; from this post, however, he was soon expelled with considerable loss, by a gallant attack of some companies of the 2nd battalion, fourteen regiments under Lieut.-Colonel Nichols.

Before five in the evening, we had not only successfully repelled every attack made upon the position, but had gained ground in all points, and occupied a more forward line than at the commencement of the action ; whilst the enemy confined his operations to a cannonade, and the fire of his light troops, with a view to draw off his other corps.

At six the firing entirely ceased—the different brigades were reassembled on the ground they had occupied in the morning, and the picquets in advanced posts resumed their original station.

Notwithstanding the decided and marked superiority which at this moment the gallantry of the troops had given them over the enemy, who from his numbers, and the commanding advantages of his position, had no doubt expected an easy victory, I did not, on reviewing all circumstances, consider that I should be warranted in departing from what I knew was the fixed determination of the late commander of the forces, to withdraw the army on the evening of the 16th, for the purpose of embarkation : the previous arrangements for which had already been made by his order, and were in fact far advanced at the commencement of the action.

The troops quitted their position about ten at night, with a degree of order that did them credit. The whole of the artillery that remained unembarked, having been

withdrawn, the troops followed in the order prescribed, and marched to their respective points of embarkation in the town and neighbourhood of Corunna. The picquets remained at their posts till five of the morning of the 17th, when they were also withdrawn with similar orders, and without the enemy having discovered the movements.

By the unremitting exertions of Captains the Hon. H. Curzon, Gosselin, Boys, Rainier, Serret, Hawkins, Digby, Carden, and Mackenzie, of the royal navy, who, in pursuance of the orders of Admiral De Courcy, were entrusted with the service of embarking the army; and in consequence of the arrangements made by Commissioner Rowen, Captains Bowen and Sheppard, and the other agents for transports, the whole of the army was embarked, with an expedition which has seldom been equalled. With the exception of the brigades under Major-General Hill and Beresford, the whole was afloat before daylight.

The brigade of Major-General Beresford, which was alternately to form our rear guard, occupied the land in front of the town of Corunna; that of Major-General Hill was stationed in reserve on the promontory in rear of the town. The enemy pushed his light troops towards the town soon after eight o'clock on the morning of the 17th, and shortly after occupied the heights of St. Lucia, which command the harbour; but, notwithstanding this circumstance, and the manifold defects of the place, there being no apprehension that the rear-guard could be forced, and the disposition of the Spaniards appearing to be good, the embarkation of Major-General Hill's brigade was commenced and completed by three o'clock in the afternoon.

Major-General Beresford, with that zeal and ability which are so well known to yourself and the whole army, having fully explained to the satisfaction of the Spanish Government the nature of our movement, and having made every

previous arrangement, withdrew his corps from the land front of the town soon after dark, and was with all the wounded that had not been previously moved, embarked before one this morning.

Circumstances forbid us to indulge the hope that the victory with which it has pleased Providence to crown the efforts of the army, can be attended with any very brilliant consequences to Great Britain. It is clouded by the loss of one of her best soldiers—it has been achieved at the termination of a long and harassing service. The superior numbers and advantageous position of the enemy, not less than the actual situation of this army, did not admit of any advantage being reaped from success. It must be however to you, to the army, and to our country, the sweetest reflection, that the lustre of the British arms has been maintained amongst many disadvantageous circumstances.

The army which entered Spain amidst the fairest prospects, had no sooner completed its junction, than owing to the multiplied disasters that dispersed the native armies around us, it was left to its own resources. The advance of the British corps from the Duero afforded the best hopes that the South of Spain might be relieved; but this generous effort to save the unfortunate people, also afforded the enemy the opportunity of directing every effort of his numerous troops, and concentrating all his principal resources for the destruction of the only regular force in the north of Spain.

You are well aware with what diligence this system has been pursued—these circumstances produced the necessity of rapid and harassing marches, which diminished the numbers, exhausted the strength, and impaired the equipment of the army. Notwithstanding all these disadvantages, and those more immediately attached to a defensive position

which the imperious necessity of covering the harbour of Corunna for a time had rendered indispensable to assume ; the nature and undaunted valour of British troops was never more conspicuous, and must have exceeded what even your own experience of that invaluable quality so inherent in them might have taught you to expect.

When every one that had an opportunity seemed to vie in improving it, it is difficult for me in making this report to select particular instances for your approbation. The corps chiefly engaged were the brigades under Major-Generals Lord William Bentinck, Manningham, and Leith, and the brigade of guards under Major-General Warde. To these officers, and the troops under their immediate orders, the greatest praise is due. Major-General Hill, and Colonel Catlin Craufurd, with the brigades on the left of the position, ably supported their advanced posts. The brunt of the action fell upon the 4th, 42nd, 50th, and 31st regiments, with parts of the brigade of guards, and the 28th regiment.

From Lieut.-Colonel Murray, quarter-master-general, and the officers of the general staff, I received the most marked assistance. I had reason to regret that the illness of Brigadier-General Clinton, Adjutant-General, deprived me of his aid. I was indebted to Brigadier-General Slade during the action, for a zealous offer of his personal services, although the cavalry were embarked.

The greatest part of the fleet having gone to sea yesterday evening, the whole being under weigh, and the corps in the embarkation necessarily much mixed on board, it is impossible at present to lay before you a return of our casualties. I hope the loss in numbers is not so considerable as might have been expected. If I was obliged to form an estimate, I should say that I believed it did not exceed in killed and wounded from 700 to 800. That of



the enemy must remain unknown ; but many circumstances induce me to rate it at nearly double the above number.

We have some prisoners ; but I have not been able to obtain an account of the number, it is not however considerable.

Several officers of rank have fallen or been wounded, among whom I am only at present enabled to state the names of Lieut.-Colonel Napier, 92nd regiment ; Majors Napier and Stanhope, 50th regiment, killed ; Lieut.-Colonel Winch, 4th regiment ; Lieut.-Colonel Maxwell, 26th regiment ; Lieut.-Colonel Fane, 59th regiment ; Lieut.-Colonel Griffiths, guards ; Majors Miller and Williams, 81st regiment, wounded.

To you, who are well acquainted with the excellent qualities of Lieut.-General Sir John Moore, I need not expatiate on the loss his country and the army have sustained by his death. His fall has deprived me of a valuable friend, to whom long experience of his worth had sincerely attached me ; but it is chiefly on public grounds that I most lament the blow. It will be the conversation of every one who loved or respected his manly character, that after conducting the army through an arduous retreat with consummate firmness, he has terminated a career of distinguished honour, by a death that has given the enemy additional reason to respect the name of a British soldier. Like the immortal Wolfe, he is snatched from his country at an early period of a life spent in her service ; like Wolfe, his last moments were gilded by the prospect of success, and cheered by the acclamations of victory ; like Wolfe also, his memory will for ever remain sacred in that country which he sincerely loved, and which he had so faithfully served.

It remains for me only to express my hope, that you will speedily be restored to the service of your country, and to lament the unfortunate circumstance that removed

you from your station in the field, to throw the momentary command into far less able hands.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN HOPE, *Lieut.-General.*

*To Lieut.-General Sir David Baird,*

&c. &c. &c.

We cannot quit this part of our narrative without more particularly referring to the circumstances immediately connected with the death of Sir John Moore ; for although the details which have already been before the country are manifold and minute, we are enabled to adduce from the testimony of a principal actor in the scene, one or two facts worthy of record.

It will be recollected, that at the moment the 42nd Highlanders were making a splendid charge, he sent Captain (now Major-General the Right Honourable Sir Henry) Hardinge, to order up a battalion of Guards to the left flank of the Highlanders; upon which the officer commanding the light company conceived, that as their ammunition was nearly expended, they were to be relieved by the Guards, and began to fall back ; but Sir John discovering the mistake, said to them, " My brave 42nd, join your comrades ; ammunition is coming, and till it arrives, you have your bayonets." They instantly obeyed, and all moved forward.

" Captain Hardinge now returned to report that the Guards were advancing ; while he was speaking and pointing out the situation of the battalion, a hot fire was kept up, and the enemy's artillery played incessantly on the

spot. Sir John Moore was too conspicuous—a cannon ball struck his left shoulder, and beat him to the ground.”\*

The following letter from Captain Hardinge is most deeply interesting, and although it is to be found in Mr. James Moore's Narrative of the Campaign, we make no apology for inserting it here, inasmuch as it gives a vivid picture of the last moments of a British hero, and at the same time corrects an erroneous statement which has been widely circulated, and has even found its way into that generally accurate work, the Annals of the Peninsular Campaign.

“The circumstances,” says Sir Henry Hardinge, “which took place immediately after the fatal blow, which deprived the army of its gallant commander, Sir John Moore, are of too interesting a nature not to be made public for the admiration of his countrymen. But I trust that the instances of fortitude and heroism of which I was a witness, may also have another effect, that of affording some consolation to his relatives and friends.

“With this feeling, I have great satisfaction in committing to paper, according to your desire, the following relation.

“I had been ordered by the Commander-in-chief, to desire a battalion of the guards to advance, which battalion was at one time intended to have dislodged a corps of the enemy from a large house and garden on the opposite side of the valley; and I was pointing out to the General the situation of the battalion, and our horses were touching at the very moment, that a cannon shot from the enemy's

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\* Moore's Narrative, pp. 215-16.

battery carried away his left shoulder, and part of the collar bone, leaving the arm hanging by the flesh.

“ The violence of the stroke threw him off his horse on his back—not a muscle of his face altered, nor did a sigh betray the least sensation of pain.

“ I dismounted, and taking his hand, he pressed mine forcibly, casting his eyes very anxiously towards the 42nd regiment, which was hotly engaged; and his countenance expressed satisfaction, when I informed him that the regiment was advancing.

“ Assisted by a soldier of the 42nd, he was removed a few yards behind the shelter of a wall. Colonel Graham, and Captain Woodford, about this time came up, and perceiving the state of Sir John’s wound, rode off for a surgeon.\*

“ The blood flowed fast; but the attempt to stop it with my sash was useless from the size of the wound.

“ Sir John assented to being removed in a blanket to the rear. In raising him for that purpose, his sword hanging on the wounded side, touched his arm, and became entangled between his legs. I perceived the inconvenience, and was in the act of unbuckling it from his waist, when he said in his usual tone, and in a very distinct manner, ‘ It is as well as it is. *I had rather it should go out of the field with me.*’

“ Here I feel that it would be improper for my pen to venture to express the admiration with which I am penetrated in thus faithfully recording this instance of the invincible fortitude and military delicacy of this great man.

“ He was borne by six soldiers of the 42nd, and guards, my sash supporting him.

“ Observing the resolution and composure of his features,

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\* Colonel Graham, now Lieut.-General Lord Lynedoch, G.C.B.

I caught at the hope that I might be mistaken in my fears of the wound being mortal ; and remarked, that I hinted when the surgeons dressed the wound, that he would be spared to us, and recover. He then turned his head round, and looking steadfastly at the wound for a few seconds, said, ‘ No, Hardinge, I feel that to be impossible.’

“ I wished to accompany him to the rear, when he said, ‘ You need not go with me—report to General Hope that I am wounded, and carried to the rear.’

“ A serjeant of the 42nd, and two spare files, in case of accident, were ordered to conduct their brave General to Coruña, and I hastened to report to General Hope.

“ I have the honour to be,

“ H. HARDINGE.” \*

The prevalent error which this letter tends to correct is contained in the statement that the hilt of Sir John’s sword entered the wound, an error over

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\* Major-General the Right Hon. Sir Henry Hardinge, entered the army very young, and joined his regiment in Canada before he was fifteen years old. At the peace of Amiens, he returned to England; in 1804 he obtained the rank of Captain in the 57th, and entered himself student at the Military College, where having sedulously devoted himself to the more scientific branches of his profession, he was selected to fill a staff appointment in the expedition to Spain in 1807, under Sir Brent Spencer.

In 1808, the corps of Sir Brent Spencer was united with the army of Sir Arthur Wellesley, and Sir Henry Hardinge became actively employed in the campaign in which Junot was driven from Portugal, and was present at the battles of Roleia and Vimiera, in the latter of which he was severely wounded, notwithstanding which he was selected by Government to convey some important despatches to Sir John Moore; and was, as we see, at the battle of Coruña.

and over again repeated. Sir Henry Hardinge's statement gives the exact circumstances.

After the *Ville de Paris* parted from the fleet, Sir David Baird was but four days on his passage to England, "during which period," says Colonel Sorell, "I was almost constantly at his bedside. His mind constantly dwelt upon the events of the campaign; and his anxiety for the safety of the troops during the stormy weather which prevailed, was so intense as literally to endanger his recovery. On his arrival at Spithead he was met by his brother, General Joseph Baird, and on the following day was disembarked, and carried from the landing-place by sailors, on a litter, to the apartments which had been prepared for him at Portsmouth, amidst the sympathy of the populace."

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He then returned to England, where he obtained his majority, and went to Portugal with Marshal Beresford, by whom he was appointed Deputy Quarter-Master-General of the army. He served at the passage of the Upper Duero, and was afterwards present at the battle of Talavera.

In the campaign of 1810, under the Duke of Wellington, &c. he eminently distinguished himself at Badajoz, Busaco, and Albuera. In 1815 he was placed at the head-quarters of the Prussian army under Marshal Blucher, and at the Marshal's side during the battle of Waterloo, his left hand was carried away by a cannon shot. Sir Henry tied his handkerchief round the stump, and continued on horseback till the battle was over.

At the conclusion of the war he was returned to Parliament, and has successively filled the important offices of Secretary of State for Ireland, and Secretary at War. He is a Knight Commander of the Bath; of very many foreign orders; and a Privy Councillor.

On the 25th January the Ville de Paris arrived at Portsmouth, and we find the following particulars of the landing of Sir David Baird in the Morning Chronicle of January 28th and 30th of that year.

“*Portsmouth, Jan. 26th.* Sir David Baird has no fever. He is in good spirits. His appetite is good, and upon the whole he is wonderfully well. The boisterous weather to-day prevented his coming ashore from the Ville de Paris; he will to-morrow if it moderates. It is a wonderful fact, that the spirit, zeal, and energy of this officer enabled him to support himself in the field more than an hour after he received his wound, holding up his arm.

“When he was taken to the surgeon from faintness, he desired that the limb might be amputated instantly, if necessary. It was the wish of the surgeon to delay the operation a day, but Sir David Baird said, “No; I wish not to keep it longer if it is necessary to be done.” The ball struck him so high up, that the arm is not only taken out of the socket, but the upper part of the shoulder is much torn up.”

“*Portsmouth, Jan. 27th.* This morning Colonel Baird (brother of Sir David), Captain Gregory, and Dr. M'Grigor (who attends Sir David), went off to the Ville de Paris in her barge, to bring Sir David on shore.\*

“At noon Sir David was landed in a large cot, which is used for swinging ladies on board ship in. He was carried

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\* Dr. (now Sir James) M'Grigor, Bart. K.C.T.S. &c. &c. was the friend as well as medical attendant of Sir David Baird. The writer of this memoir takes this opportunity of making his acknowledgements for the kind attention and valuable communications connected with this work, which he has received from that eminent and valuable public officer.

in the arms of several of the crew of the *Ville de Paris* to Mrs. Bilstead's lodgings, in the High Street. A crowd of persons assembled, whose hearts seemed big with the sight. They were so affected as not to be able to utter a word. The huzzas which would have attended his landing, were repressed by the affecting appearance of Sir David, whose fine manly figure and countenance seemed worn with fatigue, anxiety, and pain. We are, however, happy to hear that he is as well as can be expected."

As soon as the state of Sir David's wound permitted, he removed from Portsmouth to London, where he had the advantage of the advice and attendance of the late Sir Everard Home, Sir James M'Grigor, and other professional men of eminence. Although the operation of removing the arm had been performed with considerable skill, its nature, and the unfavourable circumstances under which it took place, made it long before a perfect recovery was effected.

One of the first public duties Sir David Baird performed after he was able to quit his house, was to attend a levee of his late most excellent Majesty King George the Third, when he received the insignia and kissed hands, upon being appointed a Knight of the Bath.



## CHAPTER XII.

MOTIONS OF THANKS TO SIR DAVID BAIRD IN BOTH HOUSES OF PARLIAMENT—SIR DAVID'S REPLY—RETIRES INTO THE COUNTRY—CREATED A BARONET—MARRIES—REMOVES TO SCOTLAND—VISITS LONDON—PREFERS HIS CLAIMS TO A MILITARY PEERAGE—THEY REMAIN UNNOTICED—APPOINTED TO THE COMMAND OF THE ARMY IN IRELAND—LETTER TO THE DUKE OF YORK—SIR DAVID'S OPINIONS UPON THE STATE OF THAT COUNTRY—HE IS SWORN OF THE PRIVY COUNCIL—VISIT OF KING GEORGE THE FOURTH TO DUBLIN—SIR DAVID RENEWS HIS CLAIM TO THE PEERAGE—REDUCTION OF THE TROOPS IN IRELAND—SIR DAVID'S REMONSTRANCE—LORD WELLESLEY APPOINTED LORD LIEUTENANT—COMMAND REDUCED TO THAT OF A LIEUTENANT-GENERAL—SIR DAVID RETURNS TO ENGLAND—LETTER TO THE DUKE OF YORK—HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S ANSWER—LETTER FROM MR. PEEL—SIR DAVID MEETS WITH A SEBIOUS ACCIDENT—CONSEQUENT ILLNESS—APPOINTED GOVERNOR OF FORT GEORGE—ATTENDS THE KING'S LEVEE—RETURNS TO EDINBURGH—INCREASED ILLNESS—IS REMOVED TO FERN TOWER—TEMPORARY AMENDMENT—SUFFERS A RELAPSE—CONCLUDING DETAILS AND OBSERVATIONS.

ON the 25th of January, Lord Liverpool in the House of Peers, and Lord Castlereagh in the House of Commons, moved the thanks of Parliament to Sir David Baird, and the officers and troops under his command, "for their gallant conduct in repulsing a superior French force before Coruña."

In the debate which strangely arose out of this motion, Lord Moira arraigned the conduct of minis-

ters, as having marred the greatest opportunity that ever presented itself, and declared, that all hopes which might have been formed of establishing an alliance on the Continent had utterly vanished ; and his lordship, having declared that not a state in Europe would have anything to say to England, added, that nothing but the interference of the country itself could save it, by putting an end to a system of weakness and incompetence that was hurrying it into ruin.

Lords Mulgrave and Sidmouth ably defended the policy of the Government, and the latter noble lord, in repelling the gloomy forebodings of the noble earl, said, in eulogizing the conduct of the gallant officers concerned in the campaign, that when he considered the disadvantages under which the battle of Coruña was fought ; that it was after a rapid march of seventeen days successively, by routes hardly practicable, through a country affording no resources ; it appeared to him as one of the most noble instances of courage and patience that the military annals of any country could boast.

Lord Grenville, who, in common with all the noble lords who spoke, eulogized the valour and perseverance of the Generals commanding, and the gallantry of every individual composing the army, took a similar tone with Lord Moira :—" The conduct of the troops," said his lordship, " is above all praise. They discharged their duty to their country. The failure and slaughter through which they had passed to the last exhibition of their valour,