

trivial. The remainder of the burgher cavalry was in a great measure employed in carrying on the correspondence with the interior of the country, and particularly with those places where it was most probable the enemy would attempt to surround us. But it could not be expected from these brave people, nor even required of them, to make any great resistance in their present circumstances; besides this, their number was scarcely sufficient to communicate intelligence to and fro, and of course far from being able to resist.

The small remainder longed for their homes; the English proclamation had made an impression upon them, that the General could not remove. There still was left a small stock of provisions, which would have lasted for some days, but the forage for the horses was mostly consumed. The soldiers not having received any clothing for some time back, were in the most miserable state with respect to that necessary. Almost all the guns were now useless, and became a great burthen; and it was proposed, if the plan which the General had formed could be found practicable, to destroy them altogether; for which purpose the necessary preparations were making. In order to be in some measure safe, it was absolutely necessary to have detachments of a sufficient strength in all those bays, and places where the enemy might land, not only on the coast, but also at any passes where it was likely they would endeavour to come through; but the smallness of the army did not permit this, and it was impossible to guess what the enemy's intentions were, as was proved from different correct reports received by the General. Some of the informers were well paid; but the best information came from honest, intelligent, and faithful farmers, attached to our Government.

Although a fine and numerous British force had approached at some distance in front of the Kloof, and of

Hottentot's Holland's mountains, no attack from that quarter was apprehended; but their numerous army, spreading their forces on all sides, and we having only a few men to oppose to them, it was not impossible but that by some efforts, executed at once at different points, they might be able to succeed in gaining the tops of the mountains. Several of the enemy's troops were embarked to be landed at the entrance of the Breede Rivier, Mossel bay, and different other places, which it is not necessary to mention, while one column was to march through the Roode Land's Cloof, and some other troops, except the waggon park at Fran-Sche Hoek, were to force through at different places. The position of our troops could, therefore, only be momentary, as we should be obliged to depend entirely on the enemy's mercy if a surrounding should be effected.

Our situation could therefore be but momentary, for the enemy having once surrounded us, we were entirely left to their mercy; to which is to be added, that an extensive tract of land was to be defended, and our cavalry, for want of water, were placed at too great a distance from our magazines, which were without covering, to be able to run to their assistance when attacked.

Small as our corps was, the situation of the interior parts did not at the present moment allow us to act with effect. The only plan, therefore, the General, upon a mature deliberation, found practicable, was to elect 200 volunteers from the wretched remainder of his troops, and to get rid of everything that could impede his motions. Every one of those was to have one horse allowed him, though it was not expected he should fight on horseback, a good musket or rifle, according to their fancy, with the necessary ammunition, and which was to be called the Governor's Legion, in order to keep the name of Governor still alive; but the ammunition wanted for this purpose

could not be carried by the men, and there was no prospect of having a supply of forage for some time to come. With this corps the General meant to march into the interior of the country, and although not able to do anything of importance, he could, notwithstanding, annoy the enemy for a considerable time before the last of his troops were destroyed, but to effect which it was requisite that almost naked men should not demand clothing, forget their daily pay, not think of receiving their rations, and, far from wishing for a house, not even a tent must be asked for. If all this could be effected, the result was, that the General hoped to incite some of the countrymen, who had formerly shown such an aversion to the British, to accompany him in his Arabian expedition.

But the legion being obliged to alter its position every moment, of course not one point could possibly be defended, and the whole country would in consequence be ruined. Such of the enemy as would be opposed to the legion neither could nor would have spared the property of those farmers who had assisted the General. The idea of the great misfortunes of the country might induce those who till now were attached to the Netherlands, to join the British, in order to preserve their family and property; and a great part of the Hottentots might, by a reward of money and liquor, and a prospect of unpunished licentiousness, be much easier procured by the British, who had abundance of everything, than by the unfortunate Dutch commander. If this plan would have effected the opposition of a considerable British force for any length of time, these considerations would, in that case, not have had much weight, but the country itself, with the assistance of a few English, would soon yield sufficient to destroy the legion, and the principal part of this numerous British army might easily be kept in a situation to oppose any European force that might come to assist us.

Acquainted with the situation of the country, the General returned to head-quarters without fear or illusion, and communicated to the officers of the staff as much as he thought necessary of his thoughts on the nature of their situation.

The General had the greatest interest in the case, and therefore perseverance would have been but a trifling merit in him. Certain it is, that some would have remained faithful to him and the Netherlands to the last extremity, whatever misery might have ensued; but few are possessed of such a degree of perseverance, for which not only a good mind, but also a strong constitution is required.

On the 15th Mr. Truter, late colonial secretary, arrived in the morning at eight o'clock. He had brought with him the capitulation on which Cape Town had surrendered, and confirmed the reports we had received with respect to the enemy's formidable strength; from which it appeared clearly, that on the battle of the 8th instant imagination had not exaggerated the number of the enemy; on the contrary, it had been estimated rather too short. The British, now in possession of the richest and most populous part of the country, had the means of procuring forage horses for their cavalry subsistence, and whatever they might further stand in need of, by which their strength was considerably increased.

The General having been informed of every thing he desired, though not fond of deliberation in military matters, resolved to take the opinion of the different commanding officers, the sharers of his fate. The General, to avoid unnecessary repetitions, represented to them the true situation of affairs, in the same manner as mentioned in this on the 14th, however, at the same time lightening, as much as possible, the appearance of the difficulties attached to their situation. The officers then present were: The General; Colonel Henry; Lieutenant-Colonel Harlingh; Lieute-

nant-Colonel Le Sueur ; Adjutant-General Rancke ; Commissary of War Deel ; Director-in-chief Dibbetz ; Captain Steffens ; Captain Thyssen ; Captain Contamine ; Captain Van der Voorn ; Captain Pelligriny of Dragoons ; Lieutenant Matern.

Those belonging to the staff, who were not consulted, were : The French Captain Ricard ; Pfeil, Lieutenant of Marine ; Auffmorth, Lieutenant and Adjutant ; Lieutenant Thirio ; Lieutenant Klapp. Lieutenant Matern of Waldeck was not consulted. From what happened to that battalion, he could not give but a desperate opinion.

In the annexed papers, the different opinions may be found, and although there is no doubt of the bravery of the officers, it clearly appears that they were unanimously of opinion to make an honourable capitulation.

The General, though not inclined to weakness, would not, however, merely for bombast, contradict the opinions of all the others ; he only observed, that the best capitulation, how honourable soever it may be, is always disagreeable and humiliating ; but that, if such was to be the case, in order to soften the disagreeable feelings which must ensue from the surrender of the colony, they should stipulate in the capitulation for a free retreat ; for the army to retain their arms and property, and, without being prisoners of war, to be transported to the Republic free, and without any expense to them ; that for this purpose he would go and meet General Beresford, but at the same time promised, upon no account whatever to bind himself to anything decisive, and also give them previous information of his conference, and what the enemy would agree to, and what they would reject.

Secretary Truter was sent back to appoint the time for the meeting of the two Generals.

The volunteers for the Legion were now called for, and

noted down, and the General receiving a letter from Mr. Truter, departed that night, accompanied by the Director of the Hospitals, Dibbetz, who acted as his secretary.

The meeting took place in a house where the roads from Hottentot's Holland, Stellenbosch, and the Cape Town cross each other.

On the 16th, at seven o'clock in the morning the Generals met, and after the usual ceremonies, the negotiation began immediately. As no diplomatic forms or false representations could be of any use, the Dutch General began to state the case just as it really was, openly acknowledging his apprehensions, but at the same time strongly urging the damages and disadvantages he could yet occasion. His opinion was, that the colony becoming British, the interest thereof became of course the interest of that Government; but he soon discovered the great difference between the sentiments of a foreign Government and those of the mother country. The preservation of peace and happiness to the country people must, in its consequences, be equally favourable to the British troops and fleets; but the British General Beresford was of opinion that some sacrifices on our part ought to be made for the safety and happiness of the country people, as their only concern was merely to hold the place in order to prevent it from coming into the possession of a stronger enemy. The British insisted on the delivery of the arms; and this was the most essential point to us, in case the colony must be surrendered, as the remainder who still carried them had carried them till now with honour. The British said, that the honour of their arms required it; in answer to which we observed, that honour was acquired by victory, and would be increased by generosity to a small army like ours; but our observations proved fruitless.

After a troublesome and serious conversation of some

hours, the result was still the same. The Dutch General delivered to the British General his preliminary demand, consisting of two articles.

The British General then delivered in his demand, in writing, which he called the ultimatum.

They parted without having come to any terms. The Dutch General declared that he could not desist from his demand, and that he would inform his fellow soldiers of what had passed; and if any new proposals were to be made, they should (without binding the British in anything) be immediately forwarded to Stellenbosch. On taking leave, the British General was so kind as to ask for what length of time we wished to have a suspension of arms, which in a very polite manner we declined entirely.

At four o'clock in the afternoon the General came back to his head quarters, and at six all the officers that had assisted at the conference of the former day were again assembled.

The General having represented the true state of affairs, gave the three following points into their consideration.

1st. Whether everything should be refused; all unnecessary ammunition, cannon, &c. destroyed; and everything risked, as had been conditionally proposed at the last conference.

2nd. If any further proposals should be made to the British General, and what they ought to be.

3. In case these further proposals should be refused by the British General, whether others should be made.

Everybody having given his opinion on these points, it was unanimously resolved to make a new proposal, containing an offer to give up the ammunition and some of the cannon, &c. provided we should be allowed to retain all the arms made use of in the battle of the 8th instant; in compensation for which the officers offered to give up all the private property they had with them. (A copy of the

records of this day shows the particular opinions of Colonel Henry and the Commissary of War.) Although the whole of them concurred in forwarding the above-mentioned proposals to the British commanders, several seemed inclined, in case of necessity, to accept of the English proposals as they now were.

The General had examined and considered upon the list of volunteers for the Governor's legion. The number, excepting the officers, was very trifling; and as it was natural to conceive, many of them had offered themselves more from a principle of duty than from real inclination; and moreover Colonel Henry, with others, had observed that many of the soldiers who had volunteered had done so more for the sake of getting a horse into their possession, for the more easy execution of their particular projects, than from true attachment to the cause, demonstrating the truth of their arguments by the circumstance of some of the volunteers having deserted last night.

In the evening the acting secretary, R. de Klerk Dibbetz, departed for Stellenbosch, with a letter for the British General Beresford.

At four o'clock of the morning of the 17th the enemy was discovered at a certain distance from our advanced posts, consisting of one Scotch regiment, two pieces, and about fifty dragoons, all mounted, where they remained, and in the afternoon pitched their camp.

At break of day the General came to the Kloof, and from thence reconnoitred the movements of the enemy; and comparing this circumstance with the information received last night, that a strong column of the enemy had penetrated Fransche Hoek and further; and also of ships steering towards the entrance of Breede River, Mossel Bay, &c. he easily guessed what the enemy could and would do, which was the very thing that would be the most detrimental to us. He went along the mountains, through

the whole position, and addressed the officers and men of each different corps in the following manner:—"That it was not impossible to come to an honourable capitulation with the enemy. That the advantage or disadvantage depended entirely on the constancy and valour of the troops. That he believed he had foreseen what might happen, and assured them, that by obeying strictly the commands of their officers, so as they would obey his, the result would prove honourable to them, whatever the enemy might do. That in the event of an attack, which might be a general one, he would, as soon as the impossibility of making resistance appeared to him, immediately cause proposals to be made to the enemy then present, and that he would even do so as soon as they should have repelled with courage and bravery the first onset of the enemy, as it might naturally be expected they would constantly renew their attacks in greater force."

This measure unhappily became necessary, to prevent the total desertion of the men.

He further observed, "That he would give the soldiers one friendly advice, not to desert in consequence of want or fatigue, as in that case they would be obliged to enter into the enemy's service, who would send them on to Bengal, from whence they could not expect ever to return to their native country; whereas, by fidelity, they had the most certain prospect of going home."

The General had chosen a height in a valley, at a small distance from the chains of mountains, for his last retreat.

Although all the troops protested that they would strictly obey the General's orders, it was, however, easy to perceive that the not accepting of the enemy's proposals was not pleasing to some of them.

In the afternoon, between one and two o'clock, a burgher arrived with a letter from General Beresford, in answer to that which the Director of the Hospitals, Dibbetz, had

carried to Stellenbosch the day before, in which was inclosed a letter from the Director, and one from Secretary Truter.

If the situation of affairs was desperate on the day of the action, it had now increased every hour; the reports from the interior of the country proved that the owners of the ground which we occupied, from an apprehension of revenge, had ceased to assist us. Such of the officers as were present, who composed the former meeting, having been assembled for the last time, the result of their opinions was, that we were necessitated to yield to force, particularly as it appeared from the letter of the Director Dibbetz that some mitigations were offered.

The bitter draught was now to be drunk, and a letter was forwarded, to acquaint the British General, Beresford, that a capitulation would be entered into. All misfortunes now combined; the money sent to Zwellendam to be in safety, did not return till late in the night-time, which put it out of our power to make that use of it, which, had it arrived sooner, we might have done without any breach of faith.

After the arrival of the above-mentioned letter from the General, the Director Dibbetz arrived at head-quarters on the forenoon of the 18th, informing us that the British Generals were waiting at Hottentot's Holland, and that Secretary Truter would be at the foot of the mountains.

The General then repaired to an appointed place at Hottentot's Holland, in the afternoon, accompanied only by the Director R. de Klerk Dibbetz, when the capitulation was signed in the evening, with very great affection on the part of the Dutch. On several inferior points we did not meet with that indulgence we could have wished, for many articles more than have been mentioned were proposed, but as the answers proved very unfavourable, we thought it better to withdraw them.

In the night-time, between the 18th and 19th, the General returned to head-quarters, in that state of mind every true patriot must feel at a moment when an important and heavy loss happens to his country.

On the 19th the contents of the capitulation were put in the orders of the day. General Beresford paid a visit at head-quarters, and the ammunition and other necessaries which we did not intend to carry with us on our march, were given up to the English.

Orders were sent to Major Horn, commanding at Zwelendamb, in consequence of the capitulation, to join head-quarters.

Early in the morning of the 20th the British took charge of the different posts in the Kloof, and at six o'clock we marched to Hottentot's Holland. The British General had the good feeling to keep his troops at some distance, probably to soften our unpleasant situation.

On the 21st the General repaired to Cape Town, in order to arrange several matters, leaving Colonel Henry in the command; and, agreeable to the arrangement with the British commanders, despatched an order for the troops to come to the neighbourhood of Cape Town, instead of marching to Simons Town, as they were to be embarked in Table Bay.

On the 22nd the troops came as far as Eerste River, and on the 23rd they pitched their camps at the Liesbecks River, where they had been encamped a year before, with much better prospects than at present.

After the General's arrival in town he was constantly occupied in making the necessary arrangements for his embarkation, and that of the troops. Many more, and still greater difficulties than he could have foreseen, occurred, with respect to other affairs, which will be stated to the first magistrate of the Republic, but are not material in this narration.

On this day, the 27th, it appears, from the worthy sentiments of the British General, Baird, that part of the above-mentioned difficulties will be removed.

Colonel Prophalow, who had the command of the town, having this day sent in his report, we hereunto annex a copy thereof, and of the documents accompanying it, and as his surrendering by capitulation, without having made any defence, may make an unfavourable impression, the General thinks that he would act very wrong in hesitating to declare "that it was impossible for this commander to make any defence, and in consequence could not but act so."

The British General now sending on some despatches. the General has been permitted to send home his by his aide-de-camp, Captain Verkouteren, of the dragoons, who still suffers from his wound.

This worthy officer the General may in confidence recommend, with some other brave ones, to the protection and attention of Government.

That honourable, clever, attentive, and unwearied Commissary of War, J. Deel, did as much as under those troublesome circumstances, and even more than could be expected from the most celebrated administrators; grown old in the execution of the duties attached to that station, the returns hereunto annexed, will show, that if the embarkation of the troops does not immediately take place, the remainder of them will soon disappear by desertion.

After the misfortune which has befallen us, the General does not wish to make his own apology; the only thing he wishes for is, that every Dutchman, and particularly those by whom they are governed, may be thoroughly acquainted with all the particulars of his actions and conduct from the day of his arrival in this colony till the moment of his unfortunate removal.

(Signed) J. W. JANSSENS.

Castle of Good Hope, 27th January, 1806.

This document affords a striking illustration of the character of Sir David Baird; for even at the moment in which General Janssens is describing the sad results of his victory, we find him paying the highest tribute to his humanity, generosity, and good feeling.

No. II.

The following is a copy of a letter from the late Joseph Marryat, Esq. Chairman of the Committee of the Patriotic Fund, enclosing certain resolutions of that body.

London, April 16th, 1806.

SIR,

I have the honour to inclose you the resolutions passed at a General Meeting of the Committee for managing the Patriotic Fund, on taking into consideration your official despatches, relative to the Cape of Good Hope. They consider this event as of the highest importance to the security of the British empire in India; and as accomplished under circumstances peculiarly honourable to the commanders and forces employed on the expedition, from the great local difficulties which attended the disembarkation, and from the superior number of the enemy being such as encouraged him to contest the victory in the open field, till, in your own animated language, the British bayonet bore down all opposition.

I also inclose you a copy of the resolutions passed by this committee, in consequence of the late glorious victory obtained off Cape Trafalgar, to which the present resolutions allude.

The gratuities voted to several of the officers under your command, the nature of whose wounds was not specified in the returns, were founded on the idea of their being slight; one of them being mentioned as *severe*, which it is pre-

sumed was intended to be contra-distinguished from the others. Any mistake in this respect, will readily be corrected upon more particular information; and in making out the returns of the privates, you will have the goodness to request the surgeons to divide them into three classes:—slightly wounded, severely wounded, and those whose wounds are attended with disability or loss of limb.

From the cordial unanimity, as well as talent, which have marked the operations of this expedition, the same favourable consequences which have attended its first steps, may be expected to crown its future progress; and I trust this presage will be fulfilled, by a series of successes, equally honourable to yourself, and advantageous to your country.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

JOSEPH MARRYAT, *Chairman.*

Major-General Sir David Baird.

Lloyd's, 15th April, 1806.

At a General Meeting of the Committee for managing the
Patriotic Fund held this day,

JOSEPH MARRYAT, Esq. in the Chair,

Read from the London Gazette of the 28th of February, letters from Major-General Sir David Baird, and Commodore Sir Home Popham, with an account of the capitulation of the town and garrison of the Cape of Good Hope to His Majesty's forces under their command; also the London Gazette of the 8th instant, containing an extract of a letter from Major-General Sir David Baird, relating his subsequent operations against the Batavian forces, commanded by Lieutenant-General Janssens, which terminated in the subjection of the whole colony.

Resolved—That a vase of the value of £300, with an appropriate inscription, be presented to Major-General Sir David Baird, for the gallantry with which he effected a

landing in the face of a superior force of the enemy, and achieved this important conquest.

Resolved—That a vase of the value of £200, with an appropriate inscription, be presented to Commodore Sir Home Popham, for his zealous, able, and spirited co-operation in this arduous service.

Resolved—That relief be afforded to the widows, orphans, parents, and relatives depending for support on the officers, seamen, and marines killed; and that gratuities be given to those wounded, on the same scale of distribution as that adopted towards the sufferers in the late glorious engagement off Cape Trafalgar.

Resolved—That letters signed by the Chairman be written to Major-General Sir David Baird, and Commodore Sir Home Popham, requesting they will communicate the foregoing resolutions to his Majesty's forces under their respective commands, and furnish the committee with the names of the killed and wounded, together with such particulars as can be collected respecting the families of these brave men who have fallen in the service of their country on this occasion.

J. P. WELSFORD, *Sec.*

Extract from the Minutes.

No. III.

The following is a copy of the letter addressed by Colonel Sorell to Sir Walter Scott.—While these sheets were at press, that illustrious man was taken from us— we nevertheless print the letter; because as Sir Walter Scott *never made any reply to it*, it does not appear to be an act of injustice to give it publicity now.

Tours, October 1827.

SIR,

My absence from England, and other accidental circumstances, have prevented me from having an opportunity of

reading your "Life of Napoleon Bonaparte" until lately. Having learned that you are preparing a second edition for the press, I feel anxious to bring under your notice some passages in the work, which appear to have been written on very imperfect information.

I allude to your account of the campaign of 1808-9, in the north of Spain, under the late Sir John Moore, in which I had the honour to serve as military secretary to Sir David Baird, the second in command. The few remarks I am about to offer will, therefore, be founded either on personal observation or on the authority of original documents still in my possession.

I must, however, first observe, that the only copy of the work to which I have had access, is, of an edition published in English on the Continent by Treuttel and Wurtz, at Paris, and Strasburgh. This may occasion some little confusion in referring to the *numbers* of the pages.

The first passage to which I shall refer is at page 278, vol. vi. chap. 10, where you state, that "to accomplish the purpose of Government, Sir John Moore deemed it most convenient to divide his forces. *He sent* ten thousand men under Sir David Baird, by sea, to Corunna, and determined to march himself," &c. &c. This paragraph is full of errors. Sir John Moore was in Portugal, in command of the British force in that country. Sir David Baird was sent, with about 11,000 men, *direct* from England to Corunna, with instructions to put himself in communication with, and under the orders of Sir John Moore, on arriving in Spain. The general plan of the campaign was framed by the British ministry in London, under the advice of the Marquis de la Romana. The two British Generals were to form a junction at a point to be determined on by Sir John Moore, each moving separately on that point with his division of the army. Some want of information certainly prevailed at Lisbon, as to the state of

the roads between that city and Salamanca, which induced Sir John Moore to send his cavalry and artillery by a very circuitous route ; but no similar doubts were experienced by Sir David Baird in advancing from Corunna to Astorga, as the road was known to be excellent, from the report of British officers who had been sent in advance to examine it. The Spanish authorities insisted, that the troops should move in small bodies, under a pretence of ensuring subsistence, and to prevent unnecessary inconvenience to the inhabitants ; and, indeed, threw a thousand vexatious difficulties in our way ; but none arose from a want of knowledge of the nature of the country we had to pass through, as it had been sufficiently reconnoitred before we advanced.

At page 284 you state : “ Amidst the accumulation of disasters which overwhelmed the Spanish cause, Sir John Moore arrived at Zaragossa. This, probably, is a mere typographical error, from which the London edition may be free. For Zaragossa *read* Salamanca.

Page 286. “ Yet he finally ordered Sir David Baird, *whose retreat upon Corunna was already commenced*, again to occupy Astorga.” It might naturally be inferred from this passage, that Sir David 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 Corunna ; 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 inten-

tion of abandoning their 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 Corunna, 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.

But 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 operate as a diversion in favour of, if it did not paralyse the exertions of the enemy in the southern provinces; whilst the port of Corunna being open in our rear, would enable the British Government to reinforce or to withdraw us, as it might

deem most expedient, when it became fully acquainted with the real condition of Spain. I need not add, that this proposal was not acted on; but the disorders which afterwards took place in traversing this country most certainly did not arise from ignorance of its character for 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 the 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 Corunna 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 have made a regular distribution; but, as at Smolensko and Wilna, in Buonaparte's retreat from Moscow, as well as on every other similar occasion, more was wasted than usefully applied.

A desire 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; and of your disposition to extend the same principle of justice towards one of the best and bravest soldiers our country had the good fortune to possess in her days of trial and difficulty.

I have the honour, &c.

T. SORELL.

Sir Walter Scott, Bart.

&c. &c. &c.

We submit the following extract from Colonel Sorell's notes on the campaign, supplementary to our own details.

I shall now proceed to offer a few observations on the advanced movement which followed the concentration of the army.

It is a maxim in war, which ought never to be departed from, that the object in view should be adequate to the risks to be incurred in endeavouring to attain it.* That the object was not worth the risk in the present instance, in the opinion of Sir John Moore himself, is evident by his letters.† 'The advance was originally intended as a diversion in favour of the southern provinces (for Madrid was

* Perhaps the Duke of Wellington's campaigns in the Peninsula furnish the best practical illustration of this principle upon record.

† See various passages in the extracts from Sir John Moore's letters already given. See also his letter to Lord Castlereagh, dated Astorga, 31st of December.

"From a desire to do what I could, I made the movement against Soult. As a diversion, it answered completely; but as there is nothing to take advantage of it, I have risked the loss of the army for no purpose."

"— This army, I have no doubt, would have distinguished itself, had the Spaniards been able to offer any resistance; but from the beginning it was placed in situations in which, without the possibility of doing any good, it was itself constantly risked."

Also his letter to Lord Castlereagh, dated Coruña, 13th of January, 1809.

"— Your Lordship knows that had I followed my own opinion as a military man, I should have retired with the army from Salamanca. The Spanish armies were then beaten. There was no Spanish force to which we could unite."—*Moore's Narrative*, Appendix, pages 128, 129, 130, 132.

known to have fallen), and to this object was subsequently added (in consequence of the intelligence obtained at Alaejos on the 13th of December,) the chance of successfully attacking Soult. Considered solely as a diversion, if it could have been made before the surrender of the capital, it might perhaps have been of some value. But after that "bubble had burst," there was nothing known to be in arms, to take advantage of it; and the risk was far too great to be incurred on vague rumours of troops being about to assemble in the south; the value of such rumours being well understood by the commander of the forces. In regard to the chance of defeating Soult, the consummate skill with which the movements of the French were directed, was too well known to justify us in calculating on the blunders of our enemy; and certainly it was too manifestly the interest of the French marshal to draw us on as far as we would go, to make it reasonable to suppose that he would not have gradually retired as we advanced, to give time to a superior force from the south, to intercept our retreat, and cut us off from Galicia.

In a despatch from Mr. Canning to Mr. Frere, dated Downing Street, 10th of December, 1808, Mr. Canning observes:

* "You will recollect that the army which has been appropriated by His Majesty to the defence of Spain and Portugal, is not merely a considerable part of the disposable force of the country: it is, in fact, the British army. The country has no other force disposable. It may, by a great effort, reinforce the army for an adequate purpose, but another army it has not to send.

" — You are already apprised, by my former despatch (enclosing a copy of General Moore's instructions), that the British army must be kept together under its own

* See Appendix to Colonel Napier, page 73.

commander ; must act as one body for some distinct object, and on some settled plan.

“ It will decline no difficulty, it will shrink from no danger ; when, through that difficulty and danger, the commander is enabled to see his way to some definite purpose ; but, in order to this, it will be necessary that such purpose should have been previously arranged, and that the British army should not again be left, as that of Sir John Moore and Sir David Baird have recently been, in the heart of Spain, without one word of information, except such as they could pick up from common rumour of the events passing around them,” &c.

This despatch was written under a supposition that Sir John Moore had continued his retreat on Portugal ; and could not have reached Mr. Frere in time to have had any influence on the events of the campaign ; but it refers to former instructions, breathing a similar spirit ; and yet Mr. Frere thought himself justified in urging the commander of that army to hazard its fortunes and safety upon the most loose and uncertain information.

It is much to be lamented that Sir John Moore did not feel himself fully at liberty to follow the dictates of his own excellent judgment, instead of yielding to suggestions and opinions which, being founded on false data, scarcely merited serious attention. When the British minister at Madrid urged him to advance, he was himself deceived and deluded. He grounded his advice on statements respecting the strength and success of the Spanish armies, which the commander of the forces knew to be erroneous. The advice thus given, under false impressions, ought not perhaps to have had any influence, but the situation of Sir John Moore was one of great and almost unexampled difficulty.

Perhaps it is to be regretted that the suggestion thrown out in Sir David Baird's letter of the 8th of December

from Villa Franca was not adopted, as an alternative between the dangers of an advance, and the inconveniences of a retreat.

Had the British army been collected on the frontiers of Galicia about the middle of December, there can be little doubt that it would have been able to have maintained itself, at least during the winter; and, long before spring, the face of affairs was completely changed by the departure of Napoleon, and of the force which followed him, to the Austrian war. The question of a defence of Galicia was very different at the time when the letter alluded to was written, from what it became when we were retiring rapidly through the country, with an enemy pressing upon our rear. When the suggestion was offered, our strength was unimpaired, our equipment perfect, and the great body of the French was occupied with Madrid. Between the 8th of December, when the letter was despatched from Villa Franca, and the 29th, when we retreated through Astorga, much might have been done to improve our situation; besides, the enemy, in the hope of intercepting our retreat, were drawn on us, in consequence of our advance, earlier than would otherwise have been the case. In the breathing time which probably would have been allowed us, Lugo and other points might have been fortified, positions taken up and strengthened, depôts established, and, by a judicious disposition of our force, the danger of being turned by the road through Orense, and by those from the north of Portugal and the Asturias, might have been sufficiently guarded against. The road which passes through Orense is particularly difficult, and had been reported to Sir David Baird, by the officers he sent to examine it, as susceptible of defence by a very inferior force. The others are still more impracticable; and were, at the time, almost impossible from the season and the snow.

The kingdom of Galicia contains upwards of a million

and a half of inhabitants (perhaps nearly one sixth of the whole population of Spain). The army of Romana might have recruited itself under our protection; and I very much question whether the presence of a British force on the frontiers of that province (particularly, considering its geographical position on the right of the French line of communication from the Bidassoa to Madrid,*) would not have operated more effectually, as a diversion in favour of the south of Spain, than our momentary irruption into Castile.

I see no reason to suppose that we should have experienced any serious difficulty in subsisting the army. Salt provisions might, if necessary, have been drawn from the provision ships which accompanied our division to Coruña; and although the mountains of Galicia are barren, the valleys are fruitful, and amply stored with cattle. Indeed, a country that feeds a population of fifteen hundred thousand souls, cannot want the means of supporting thirty or forty thousand additional individuals, particularly when the latter possess the power of enforcing requisitions.

* The opinion of Buonaparte on the influence which the occupation of Galicia by an enemy to France might have had on the war in Spain, is recorded in a letter which was written under his direction to General Savary, at Madrid, a short time before our arrival at Coruña. In speaking of the relative importance of the operations of the different French corps, and in alluding to that commanded by Marshal Bessieres, who was acting against the army in Galicia, the Emperor says: "Enfin, le moindre insuccès du Maréchal Bessieres intercepte tous les communications de l'armée, et compromettrait même sa sureté: le General Dupont se bat pour Andujar, et le Maréchal Bessieres se bat pour les communications de l'armée, et pour les opérations les plus importans aux affaires d'Espagne," &c.—See *Colonel Napier*, Appendix, page 32.

But the situation of the enemy in our front would have been very different. Colonel Napier says, at page 474, that, "sweeping the rich plains of Castile with their powerful cavalry, they might have formed magazines at Astorga and Leon; and from thence been supplied in abundance, while the English were starving."

I do not think it probable that the French, at that season of the year, could have formed magazines any where near the entrance of the mountainous districts of Leon and Galicia; and to have remained in force for any considerable time in the gorges of the mountains would have been impossible. Indeed, it does not appear that the French have ever formed magazines to any extent in Spain, or have been able to keep a large army concentrated in that country for any considerable length of time. In the progress of his work, Colonel Napier will have more than one occasion to notice the inflexible firmness with which the Duke of Wellington maintained his defensive positions on the confines of Portugal, in face of a very superior force, until the want of provisions compelled the enemy to separate, which became a signal for offensive operations on his part.

That Sir John Moore thought favourably of the plan in question, is apparent, both from his letters to Sir David Baird of the 12th, 14th, and 16th of December, already referred to; and from a passage in a despatch he addressed to Lord Castlereagh from Salamanca, almost immediately after he had received Sir David Baird's suggestion. In this despatch, dated the 12th of December, he observes: "If am I forced to retreat, it will probably be on the Galicias. The road is good, and the country is capable of being defended. In this case we shall want flour, as the country produces only cattle in abundance."* Thus repeating the information Sir David Baird had communicated on the subject.

* See Moore's Narrative, Appendix, page 92.

It only remains for me to notice the retreat. In alluding to it generally, it must certainly be admitted that much disorder prevailed, and that many irregularities were committed by the troops. This always has been, and ever must be the case, where soldiers are required to make greater efforts than their physical powers are calculated to support; especially when under those feelings of moral depression which always attend a retreating army. Similar scenes have occurred on every similar occasion; and if examples were necessary to prove the truth of this remark, they would be furnished by what has happened under the two greatest commanders of the age: in the retreat from Burgos in 1812, and in the almost total disorganization of the French army during Napoleon's retreat from Moscow.

The question then seems to be,—to what cause ought principally to be ascribed the disorders and losses which attended the retreat to Coruña? Did they proceed from any defect in the character and composition of the army? from a want of proper attention to their duties on the part of the officers? or from the force of the circumstances in which the army was placed?

A retreat in the face of a powerful and active enemy, is always an operation of infinite difficulty; but various unfavourable circumstances combined with the rapidity with which the one in question was conducted, to render it peculiarly disastrous. I do not mean to question the necessity which dictated this speed, but it may fairly be urged in extenuation of the charges which have been brought against the army. Colonel Napier admits that the conduct of the troops was excellent during the advance: I see no sufficient reason to suppose they would not have continued to merit the same praise, had not their discipline been impaired by over-exertion. When the moral and physical powers of the officer are exhausted by fatigue, it is fruitless to expect that he can be attentive to the conduct of

the men ; and when the soldier is worn down by constant marching and want of food, he becomes deaf to the voice of his officer, and indifferent to every thing but to a sense of his own immediate necessities.

Sir John Moore wrote to Lord Castlereagh from Benevente on the 28th of December, shortly after the commencement of the retreat :*

“ Since I had the honour to address to you, on the 16th, from Toro, the army has been almost constantly marching through snow, and with cold that has been very intense. The weather within these few days has turned to rain, which is much more uncomfortable than the cold, and has rendered the roads almost impassable.” And again, from Astorga, on the 31st : † “ It is impossible to deny that its (the army’s) discipline has been affected by the late movements : the shoes and necessaries are destroyed ; and for some time after it reaches the coast, the men will be in the worst state.” And this was said when the army had still two hundred miles to march, and before the commencement of our most formidable difficulties !

A reference to dates, and to the map of the country, will show the length of the marches which the army performed. But it was not the length of the marches, so much as their almost incessant continuance, the nature of the country they had to traverse, and the inclemency of the season and weather, which prostrated the strength and depressed the moral energies of both officers and men. Compelled to move on one road, carried in many places over, or along the sides of stupendous mountains, and completely broken up by the constant passage of heavy carriages, the progress of the column was necessarily very slow. To the difficulties of the road were added the ob-

* See Moore’s Narrative, Appendix, page 121.

† Moore’s Narrative, Appendix, page 130.

stacles caused by the fall of horses, and other accidents to the train of guns and artillery-waggon which accompanied the troops. These broke the order of the march, and occasioned numerous delays, more distressing by far to the soldier than a continued progress; as he remained, without the power of resting or sheltering himself, exposed to the violence of frequent storms of snow and hail. The men's shoes were worn out, or lost in the snow and mud: some died from fatigue and cold; and what greatly added to the distress of the scene, many women and children had accompanied their husbands and fathers on the advance. Most of these unfortunate beings now perished; and their sufferings furnished pictures of human distress and misery which it would be difficult for the imagination to colour too highly.

This is not an overcharged representation of what the army endured: I am confident it will be confirmed, in its fullest extent, by every officer in Sir David Baird's division who witnessed the march over the mountain near Nogales, the night march from the position in front of Lugo to Guiteritz, and that of the succeeding night, from Guiteritz to Betanzos.

I own I feel jealous for the honour of the army which served in Galicia. Much was expected from it by the country, and much I think it would have done to merit its approbation and gratitude, had the course of events been more favourable to a development of its energies. Although the difficulties by which it was environed made it impossible that it could acquire renown; perhaps, if circumstances had permitted its commander to follow the principles which guided Fabius, it might at least have been sufficiently fortunate to have escaped reproach.

At page 476, Colonel Napier says, "The reserve and the cavalry marched during the night to Bembibre. On their arrival, Baird's division proceeded to Villa Franca;

but the immense wine vaults of Bembibre had such temptation, that many hundreds of his men remained behind inebriated," &c.

Sir David Baird's division left the banks of the Ezla on the morning of the 29th of December. It reached Astorga, a distance of about twenty miles, on the evening of the same day. The town was fully occupied by other troops, including the Spanish army of Romana. Much difficulty was consequently experienced in getting the men under cover; and before that could be effected, and a very scanty supply of provisions procured, the night was far advanced. As early as four o'clock on the following morning (30th of December) the division was on its march for Manzanal (a village in the mountains, on the road towards Coruña), where it was intended to bivouac for the night. The weather was most severe, and the snow deep on the sides of the road; the road itself a mass of mud, from causes which have already been explained. The column reached Manzanal towards the close of a winter day. There was little cover for the men; but they skreened themselves as well as they could from the wind, under banks and inequalities of the ground. Provisions were wanting; but, after considerable delay, some bullocks were procured and slaughtered; and the men were preparing their meal, when orders were received from the commander of the forces to proceed forthwith to Bembibre (another long march towards the sea), and the whole was in motion by ten o'clock the same night. A large portion of the men had not had time or means to prepare their food: yet, thus fasting, they proceeded on their way; and it was six o'clock on the following morning (the 31st) before they reached Bembibre, worn down by fatigue and want of sleep. The inhabitants closed their houses, and refused admission to the soldiers: the consequence was, that some were broken into; and as, when open, the men poured into them in

search of food and rest, many of the wine-cellars were entered, and much intoxication was the consequence; the effect of the wine being evidently increased by the exhausted state of the soldiers.

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, 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.*

At Cacavellos, and in the neighbouring villages, the troops were quartered for the night, and moved on the following day, through Villa Franca to Herrerias. At Villa Franca the division only halted to receive rations. A considerable depôt of provisions and forage had been formed in that town: but much had been consumed or wasted by the divisions which preceded us. This evil did not arise from a want of exertion on the part of the commissariat:

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

it was an almost inevitable consequence of our situation, and must always occur, to a certain extent, where sufficient time cannot be allowed to preserve order, or to make the requisitions and distribution with regularity. As appears to have been the case at Smolensko and at Wilna, on Buonaparte's retreat from Moscow, the soldiers crowded round the magazines, and the provisions disappeared as soon as produced, without regard to weights and measures: and thus a store, which was calculated to have subsisted the whole army several days, yielded, under our unfortunate circumstances, only a partial and irregular supply.

It may naturally be asked, why were not impediments thrown in the way of the advancing enemy, to retard his progress, as proposed, in the event of a retreat through Galicia, in Sir David Baird's letter to Sir John Moore, of the 21st of November? It was one of the fatalities we were doomed to experience, that an order which was given by Sir John Moore at Astorga, to destroy the intrenching tools, on account of a deficiency in the means of transport, was too literally interpreted, and too largely applied. The consequence was, that the engineer officers who were employed to mine two or three bridges, could not procure the instruments which were necessary to form the mines properly, and they therefore exploded partially, without producing their full effect. This was no fault in the officers, but arose, I believe, entirely from the cause I have mentioned.*

No. IV.

The following letter is here inserted because it was accidentally omitted where it ought to have appeared in the Memoir according to its date.

* Notes on the Campaign, pp. 39 to 50.

Astorga, 29th Nov. 1808.

MY DEAR SIR JOHN,

I had the pleasure of receiving your letter of the 27th instant, this morning, and in compliance with your wishes have made arrangements for bringing everything forward as speedily as possible. With respect to the money, Bathurst has already written to have 500,000 dollars, out of the additional sum expected from England, brought on by the way of Orense, as soon as it arrives.

Although it certainly is not my province to offer an opinion as to the measures it might be most advisable to adopt in the present state of affairs in this country, yet the very critical situation in which we are placed, prompts me to submit to your consideration a few ideas and remarks, which have occurred from the observations I have made, and the intelligence I have been able to obtain.

Should the British army unite at Benevente, Zamora, and Toro, it might become a question, as to what should be its future object. The enemy are in force at Potas; the Junta of Oviedo fear for the province of Asturias; perhaps their fears may be groundless; but by the city of Leon being left open to them, the enemy, when in possession of that place, might push immediately by the rear of Astorga, near Bemibre, into Galicia, where, by occupying the passes, the communication to Corunna would instantly be cut off, and in a very short time Galicia, gone as far as the British army is concerned. Thus, the two posts of re-embarkation, Corunna and Vigo, together with all the stores, money, &c. are lost, and the British army, when concentrated, can look no longer to that kingdom. In its present state, Leon seems to be safe, with the Marquis de la Romana, and his 5 or 6000 men; Galicia, the Asturias, and probably part of Leon, might be preserved, were the British troops to keep the line of Astorga and Leon, rather than to advance, where in a short time the principal

part of the enemy's force, in all probability double its number at least, might be brought to act against it. The British army seems likely to be left entirely to itself as soon as the French have either dispersed Castanos' force, or so far driven it away as to care no longer about its interference. Therefore it should be well considered, before the British army by its movements gives up all these advantages, what the object should be, and whether by so doing it is not going exactly into the trap the enemy, with a long hand, is preparing for it. Of the possibility of the retreat of an army of 30,000 men by the high road of Ciudad Rodrigo, I do not presume to judge. That such a retreat will be eventually necessary, appears but too probable, should the enemy, as he is accustomed to do, and considering the means in his power, bear down with concentrated force, caring little about his flanks, and bring to oppose the British army 70 or 80,000 men. Provisions he cannot want; the country they pass through, and the means they use to procure them, ensure their supply; and they have had the fertile province of Alava and Irun in their rear, to obtain them from, and probably water-carriage to bring them forward, not to mention the immense magazines they are said to have formed at Pampeluna and St. Sebastian's. Their object will be a fixed one, the annihilation of the British army, with immense means, or the forcing it to make a precipitate and disadvantageous retreat. The question is, how this army can be so placed as to avoid this; and whether, should the enemy even push for Lisbon, the British troops, by embarking at Corunna or Vigo, or at both these places, might not be sooner there than they could possibly be.

The united British troops, together with the Galician force, and that of the Marquis de la Romana, might, it is to be presumed, keep a good part of the Asturias, all Galicia, and part of Leon, which is said to be a fertile country.

But when the left flank of the army is turned by the enemy, little or no option will remain. Galicia we know to be strong, and her 30,000 British troops, aided by the peasants, might probably defy all the efforts of the enemy; the roads too, are remarkably good, and might afford greater facilities for bringing up supplies to the position that might be chosen, than Portugal could offer; and in a short time, perhaps, it might be better seen what the army could do, according as circumstances arose.

The line of the river Esla is said to be strong, and supposing our junction to be practicable, might probably be defended for the present. It is likely that the enemy may not be sufficiently advanced or prepared, to prevent us from uniting. Besides, he may rather wish to see the British army collected, and moving forward, as he would then have only one specific object respecting it.

Under these circumstances, I am induced to suggest, whether it might not be more advisable, that, by a flank movement of your corps, the junction should be formed on my right, rather than that I should proceed towards Salamanca, and thus uncover Galicia, and abandon the protection of the Asturias.

I had an interview with the Marquis de la Romana yesterday, at a village half way between this and Leon. He does not appear to have the least intention of proceeding to Madrid at present. He talked of being able to join me in eight or ten days with about 10,000 men and twelve pieces of cannon. I am, however, assured that he has not at present more than 5 or 6,000 men with him, and these are completely disorganized, and in want of almost everything; indeed, from a letter which he wrote to the Marquis de la Valeadez, who was here, and which was not perhaps intended to be shown to me, he avows, that without he should be able to procure refitment for his troops, the whole of them will disperse; at the same time that he

made the confession, he assured me that in a few days he should be able to assemble 20,000 men.

I sent a few days ago Captain Carrol to Oviedo, for the purpose of reporting any movement the enemy might be making in that province; as, however, I understand his health is very bad, I have despatched another officer, Captain Miller, of the 95th, to that place to-day.

I inclose copies of two letters from Rear-Admiral De Courcy, upon the subject of the ports of Corunna and Vigo. I also transmit a newspaper, and beg to call your attention to a paragraph marked with a star.

I remain, my dear Sir John,

Most faithfully and truly yours,

Lieut.-Gen. Sir John Moore, K.G. &c. D. BAIRD.

No. V.

The following account of the defeat of General Blake's army, transmitted by that highly distinguished officer, Captain, now Colonel Pasley, C.B. was also omitted in its proper place.

Astorga, the 17th Nov. 1808.

SIR,

I took an opportunity of reporting to you before I left England, that after being appointed to serve in the expedition then preparing under your orders, I was ordered to proceed to Spain, and put myself under the command of Major-General Leith.

I was at Santander with General Leith at the time that the army of the left was so often and so warmly engaged with the enemy. On the 11th and 12th instants great numbers of fugitives, officers as well as men, had come into Santander by various routes, giving most gloomy accounts of the fate of the army; but nothing authentic or official in regard to the military operations subsequent to the 7th

instant being known, Major-General Leith ordered me to proceed to General Blake's head quarters, and remain there, reporting without delay every movement and operation.

I reached Reynosa at 2 A.M. on the morning of the 13th, and presented myself to General Blake, with whom I had a conference some hours afterwards. He told me, that his loss in the various actions, though severe, was of little consequence, but that the dispersion of his troops had reduced the force he then had with him to a handful of men, on whom he could not for the present depend, until they recovered from their panic. That it was therefore his intention, the moment he heard of the enemy's approach, to fall back by way of Leon, on the British army, but, as long as he was not pursued, he would keep his position, and collect the fugitives and stragglers. He seemed of opinion that he would be unmolested for some days; I therefore wrote to Santander, by his desire, to forward some provisions, for the use of the army, to Reynosa.

General Blake had been engaged with the enemy five several times in the short space of twelve days; on the 31st of October, and on the 5th, 7th, 8th, 10th, and 11th days of November. Captain Jones, of the Engineers, was present in the action of the 31st October; Captain Birch, of the same corps, in that of the 7th of November, in which he was wounded; and Captain Carroll (Lieutenant-Colonel Spanish service) was with the army in all its operations. Without entering into details, which those gentlemen will be able to give, I think it right to lay before you a general view of those affairs, which reduced the army of the left to its present unfortunate condition.

In consequence of a plan of operations, agreed upon by Generals Castaños and Palafox at Zaragosa, and in which General Blake was invited to co-operate, the army of the left was advancing by way of Bilboa towards Durango.

When they occupied the latter place, it was hoped that the communication with Castile being open, as well as the post of Bilboa, &c. they would be at no loss for provisions, the want of which, in a country at all times poor in bread, but then exhausted by the presence of the armies, was greatly felt. At the same time this position enabled the Lords of Biscay to assemble in order to send deputies to the Supreme Central Government, and take preliminary measures for arming their province.

All this was entirely frustrated by the action of the 31st ultimo, in which General Blake was attacked by General Lefevre, in his position between Zornosa and Durango, and, after an obstinate contest, obliged to retreat by way of Bilboa and Valmaseda, to Nava, where he was on the 4th instant. The Asturian corps, commanded by General Azevedo, and the 2nd division of the Galician troops, were not engaged, being posted near Orduña; and retreated by a different route, having no communication with the rest of the army for several days. It does not appear that the French army was equal to Blake's in numbers, but they contrived to bring a superior force against every point of attack. They were too roughly handled in the engagement, which lasted nine hours (commencing at daylight), to be able to harass the retreat, which was made in good order.

All the Spanish troops engaged are said to have behaved gallantly, but, what is extraordinary, those who were in reserve, and out of fire, got into confusion, and several dispersed, spreading, as is always the case with fugitives, the most gloomy and exaggerated accounts of the fate of the army.

Early on the morning of the 5th General Blake, having had previous intelligence that the two divisions which I mentioned before, were separated from the army, and were coming to join him, by way of Orantia, then in possession

of the enemy, attacked and dislodged the French from that place and Valmoseda, taking some prisoners, and two or three field-pieces, with ammunition; and the junction of the Asturians and second division, who arrived in time to share the honour of the victory, was happily effected. The French, who were commanded in this affair by General Viliat, had not the whole of their force present.

On the 7th General Blake made a second attack upon the enemy, who had retired and concentrated themselves near Guenes. He succeeded in turning their left wing, but his own centre giving way, he was obliged to retreat. A division which he had sent by the Portugalete road, to act against the enemy's right and in rear, was separated from the army, and took the coast road towards Santander. The action of the 8th was partial, and consisted merely in attacks on the rear guard.

About one o'clock P.M. on the 10th instant the French made a general attack on the Spanish army at Espinosa de los Monteros, which was obstinately resisted till after sunset, with doubtful success. The infantry of the division of the North, who had distinguished themselves wherever they were engaged, suffered most in this action. The brave Conde de San Roman, who commanded them, was mortally wounded, and is since dead, a man whose loss is much to be regretted in the present critical circumstances of his country. The Galicians and Asturians, the latter of whom are all peasants, officers as well as men, fought very well in this engagement.

At daybreak next morning the French renewed their attack upon the Spanish army, which still kept the same position. The left wing, posted upon an eminence, and which was principally composed of Asturians, gave way with little resistance. When the rest of the army saw this position, which commanded the road, in possession of the enemy, a panic seized them, and a precipitate retreat took

place, with much confusion, great numbers dispersing in various directions.

When it is considered that the greatest part of this army was composed of new levies, imperfectly disciplined, without uniforms or great coats, many without shoes, exposed in this situation for such a length of time to the inclemency of the weather, and that for many days together they were almost starving with hunger, having no rations of bread or biscuit, but subsisting entirely on the cattle they found on the mountains (meat without salt, a food so repugnant to the usual habits of the Spanish peasantry), it will rather be wondered at that the army kept together so long, than that it should at last melt away.

The officers, particularly the Asturians, were the first, I am sorry to say, that abandoned their colours. On my way to Reynosa I met more than twenty, *all unhurt*, who advised me to return to Santander, or I should certainly be taken. Of the three Asturian Generals, one (Luiros) was killed, and the others wounded, so that one cannot be surprised that the Asturians were so soon routed in the last action. Several hundreds of them were on their way home at the time I allude to. The Galicians were also making the best of their way towards their own province.

On the evening of the 13th, General Blake had intelligence that the French were advancing to attack him at Reynosa, at the same time sending from Burgos (from which they had driven the Estremadurans on the 10th) a corps to Aguilar del Campo, which rendered it impossible for him to retire according to his plan mentioned before. He therefore retreated into the valley of Cabueringa, in the province of las Montañas de Santander. His conduct in the whole of his operations is said to have been very cool and gallant. He personally shared the hardships of his army, exposed himself in every action, and was always with the rear guard of his army when obliged to retreat.

He had only about 7000 or 8000 men with him when he left Reynosa, but as there were at that time at Santander 5000 militia and provincials, who had never joined the army, and several thousands of the fugitives and stragglers, amongst others, a whole division that had separated before the last action, I have no doubt but that the Marquis de la Romana, who had been at Santander since the 9th, and was, when I left it, on the point of setting out to assume the command, would in a few days be able to collect more than 20,000 men (including the dismounted cavalry from Funen, who might be armed as infantry,) and if he retired into Asturias, which I have no doubt he would be able to effect, with the reserve of that province, 10,000 in number, and the many stragglers that might be collected, he might in a short time be at the head of more than 35,000. For it is to be observed, that all the deserters and stragglers, although without uniform, or anything to distinguish them from the body of the peasantry, carefully preserved their arms, which appears a proof of what they declared was their intention, not to give up the cause of their country.

The very severe actions they fought with the best troops of France, show how formidable the Spaniards may become. All that is wanting, is to ensure the soldiers their rations, and to make a few terrible examples of the officers and men (particularly the former) who abandoned their colours, with seasonable promotions of those who distinguished themselves. But if officers are allowed to abandon their regiments with impunity, when opposed to the enemy, under any pretext whatever, the cause of Spain is altogether hopeless.

Patriotism in every class is not wanting; but this is not sufficient to keep new levies firm in time of action, unless certain death and infamy are held out to those who misbehave. Unless the Spanish Government and Generals adopt this rigorous system, cowardice and desertion will

become so common as to cease to be held disgraceful. What is no less fatal, these fugitives of every description poison the minds of the people wherever they go, by false accounts of the enemy's force and the loss of the Spanish armies, which may produce a panic, terror, and despondency all over the country.

Having related what I know of the state of things, it remains to explain the motives that induced me to come here instead of remaining with the Spanish army, according to my orders. I knew that General Leith intended to send some other officer of his staff from Santander to meet the British army, to whom it appeared to me extremely important to give the earliest intelligence of the disasters of the Spaniards; but the moment that the enemy entered Reynosa, which we were informed took place the same night we left it, I was aware that it would be impossible for him to communicate from Santander. Under these considerations, I thought it best, for the good of the service, to embrace the opportunity (whilst it was not too late) of proceeding with the intelligence to the British army, as I also knew that General Leith could be at no loss in sending another officer from Santander in my place to the head quarters of the Spanish army, where Captain Carroll also remained.

I therefore, by General Blake's approbation, having written to Major General Leith the evening before, left the Spanish army at Soto on the morning of the 14th, and by way of the mountains, arrived at Cervera that night, passing near Aguilar del Campo, where the French were said to have 4000 men, who had taken some baggage and guns of General Blake's army there the night before.

By false information of the position of the British army, who were said to be at Segun and Carrion de los Condes, I was induced to take a circuitous route. At Saldaña next day I found Colonel Candano, of the Spanish artillery, who had retreated there from Aguilar del Campo

with the field train of General Blake's army, consisting of one 12-pounder, twelve 8-pounders, ten 4-pounders, and five 7-inch howitzers, with a proportion of ammunition complete, drawn by mules.

After communicating with me, he determined to retreat to Leon to meet the British army, and marched immediately for Sagun. The guard of this train consisted of 800 men of the regiment of Zaragosa, but one half of whom were raw recruits. Also, 1200 men of the regiment of Blandargues, but all, excepting 100, untrained.

At Sagun, where I arrived before the artillery, I found about 300 infantry of raw recruits, 400 Spanish cavalry, and some infantry, had marched out of the town that day for Mayorga.

At ten o'clock that night I had ordered post horses, and was preparing to set out, when an alarm was given, that detachments of French dragoons were patrolling in all the avenues of the place, and that two had been seen in the town, the Spanish troops at that time being all asleep, or at least, not on the alert.

On account of this alarm I was disappointed in horses, and obliged to walk with a guide by by-ways, to a village on the Leon road, with much anxiety about the fate of the Spanish artillery. I there got a horse, and travelling day and night, with little intermission, reached Astorga on the morning of the 17th, which very small progress, in proportion to the exertion used, will not appear extraordinary, as I was not able to travel post most part of the way, and two nights successively my guides lost the road.

At Mansilla, three leagues before I reached Leon, I heard that the French had entered Mayorga, but I suppose this alarm must have been occasioned by the appearance of the Spanish cavalry from Sagun.

From Soto, the first part of my way was by a wild mountainous country, but not so impassable as the frontier of Asturias. By a deep wooded ravine and stream the

road descends to Aguilar del Campo, and goes by a valley to Cervera. From Cervera the country is plain and open, and fit for cavalry, with few inequalities. From Sagun to Leon great part is a perfect level, with scarcely a tree, bush, or any object but the mud-built villages. The rapidity with which I travelled (great part of the way by night) prevented me from being very minute in my observations and inquiries. I hope that the steps I have taken since I left Santander will meet your approbation, and have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient humble servant,

CHARLES W. PASLEY,
Captain of Royal Engineers.

If I may be allowed to say anything in praise of the conduct of a superior officer, I ought to mention, that General Leith's seasonable supplies of money, arms, and provisions, to the troops from the North, as well as Blake's army, were of the most essential service, or they might have been obliged to fall back, or even disperse without a battle. But the rapid and uncertain movements of the troops after the 31st ultimo, rendered his supplies of provisions less effective than they would have been if the army had had a fixed position, though great activity was used in endeavouring to forward them where they could most readily reach the army.

THE END.

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EXTRACT
FROM THE
UNITED SERVICE JOURNAL
FOR AUGUST 1834.

Extracted from the United Service Journal for August 1834.

*The Life of Sir David Baird.—Mr Theodore Hook
in reply to Colonel Gurwood and the Quarterly
Review.*

MR EDITOR,—I take the liberty of requesting a small space in your Journal, under the following circumstances :

In the last number of “ The Quarterly,” there appears a review of Col. Gurwood’s collection of the Despatches and Military Correspondence of his Grace the Duke of Wellington—a compilation in which that gentleman has thought proper to question the authenticity of some of the details connected with the siege of Seringapatam in 1799, given in the life of General Sir David Baird, of which I had the honour to be Editor. Had Col. Gurwood confined himself to the expression of his opinions, even though couched in no very courteous terms, I should neither have troubled you, nor have been in the slightest degree troubled myself : but as that gentleman chooses to question facts, and as the Quarterly Review unhesitatingly adopts Col. Gurwood’s version of certain points of the campaign in question, in preference to the statements made by *me* in the Life of Sir David, I feel it due to the character of that gallant and distinguished officer to trespass upon you with a few words connected with the subject.

In the first place, with reference to those events, Col. Gurwood speaks of *my* statements and *my* assertions, as if I had ventured those statements or risked those assertions upon light grounds or vague information ; nay, he even alleges that “ some passages in General Harris’s letters have been omitted by Mr Hook, which in a great measure contain in themselves a refutation of the partiality and injustice of which General Baird complained.” It may, perhaps, be thought superfluous in me to answer this insinuation ; but I do so by stating that the letters, as they appear in the *Life*, were printed *from the originals themselves*, as received by General Baird from General Harris.

To the statement, that I have been misinformed upon certain points, (which I regret to see the Quarterly Review so readily admitting,) I must now, particularly in one instance, refer ; and therefore beg to call your attention to the passage in the “ *Life*,” with the observations of Col. Gurwood upon it, as it appears in the Quarterly.

“ On the 5th, the army approached Seringapatam, and took up a camp in front of the place ; and on that very morning an affair occurred to which we shall dedicate a little attention—not because it has been made the subject of cavil and insinuation against the Duke by some persons who are of the temper of those that could not bear to hear Aristides called blameless—but because it affords the *first* of the series of the Duke’s own letters and despatches, and seems to us to exhibit—though on a small scale and at his very outset—that peculiar military talent, the development of which has made him the first Captain of the age. The story, as related in Mr Hook’s ‘ *Life of Baird*,’ is, in substance, that Colonel Wellesley being ordered, on the evening of the 5th, to attack and occupy a certain *tope*, or grove, called the

Sultaun Pettah Tope, which lay in front of the camp between it and the wall of Seringapatam, failed in the attack ; and that when General Harris next morning orderd a larger force to attack the *tope*, of which he intended to give the command to Colonel Wellesley, this officer was not on parade, having, as it is said, fallen asleep in General Harris's tent, tired with the fatigues of the night,—that General Harris then desired Sir David Baird to take the direction of the intended attack—that Baird instantly mounted his horse and called his aide-de-camp—but a moment afterwards a generous feeling towards Colonel Wellesley (although he seemed destined to be his rival throughout the campaign) induced him to pause, and going back to General Harris, he said, ‘ Don't you think, Sir, it would be fair to give Wellesley an opportunity of retrieving the misfortune of last night ?’ General Harris listened to this kind and considerate proposal, and shortly after Colonel Wellesley appeared, who took command of the party, and at its head succeeded in getting possession of the *tope*.”—Hook's Life of Baird, vol. i. p. 192.

“ Upon this statement Col. Gurwood remarks, that having had access to General Harris's Private Diary, he thinks it right, although the affair is in itself of little importance, to set the matter in its true light.

“ ‘ There is little doubt (he says) that both General Harris and General Baird were capable of feeling and acting in the manner represented by Mr Hook ; yet, as General Harris does not make the slightest mention of it in his minute private diary, and as Colonel Wellesley does not allude to it in his several letters to General Harris on that and the following days, and—*until many years afterwards—never even heard of it (!)*, it is very possible that Mr Hook has been misinformed.’ ”—p. 25.

Upon this the Quarterly adds, “ *There is no doubt that Mr Hook was misinformed.*” To this I only reply in the words which I have used in the Life :

“ This plain statement, while it successfully vindicates Colonel Wellesley from any imputation but that of ill-success in a night attack upon the tope, establishes the magnanimity and honourable feeling of General Baird in the highest degree ; and it ought to be added, that it was with the greatest difficulty in after times General Baird could be brought to allude to the circumstance ; and it was only a mere absurd report connected with Colonel Wellesley’s conduct upon the occasion, that induced the General to explain the case, WHICH AS IT (this affair) OCCURRED ON PARADE AND IN THE FACE OF THE WHOLE ARMY, IT IS UNIVERSALLY KNOWN TO HAVE BEEN EXACTLY AS IT IS HERE DESCRIBED.”

All the proceedings noticed in Col. Gurwood’s book, and reviewed in the Quarterly, as to the government of Seringapatam, and the supersession of Sir David Baird, after his capture of that place, may be confused and mystified by notes and letters, and diaries ; but a circumstance which occurred in the presence of a multitude, can neither be distorted nor denied. Why it *should be* denied is difficult to surmise ; for the Quarterly, after having negatived the history, says,

“ But the statement, even if it were perfectly accurate, could do no injury to the character of Colonel Wellesley, while it did honour to the generosity of Sir David Baird. We, therefore, have no controversy with Mr Hook.”

Then why not suffer the generosity of General Baird, which we know to have been highly and thoroughly appreciated by those for whom both the Quarterly and Col. Gurwood have the greatest respect and veneration, to

be placed upon record without a question, raised merely upon the ground that Col. Gurwood—who has had “the good fortune to have access to General Harris’s private papers”—finds no note made of General Baird’s high-minded conduct in the General’s diary?

Deprecating in the highest degree any thing like controversy upon facts, I shall confine myself to one other observation of the Quarterly, (p. 407), which seems to me to require a brief notice. In alluding to General Baird’s return from the tope, described in the Life, the Quarterly Reviewer says, “We think that justice to Sir David Baird requires some explanation why he should have been so anxious to *march away* from the enemy; or why credit should be taken for a few prisoners made by mistake.”

The explanation is ready and obvious. The tope, as the Quarterly says, lay between the camp and the walls of Seringapatam; General Baird, with a small detachment, proceeded to the tope for the purpose of dislodging the enemy; but finding they had abandoned it, his next duty was of course to return to camp; instead of doing which, however, he missed his way, and, after leaving the tope, found himself marching with a handful of men directly *into the enemy’s lines*. Nobody takes credit for “capturing some of the enemy’s piquets by mistake.” The fact is simply stated, in order to show how much too near the enemy’s forces Sir David and his party had accidentally approached.

For myself, I can only say, in answer to the charges somewhat needlessly made against me in my character of biographer, by Col. Gurwood, that to the best of my humble abilities I fairly and conscientiously fulfilled the honourable task which was assigned me. I had no prejudices to indulge—no resentments to express—no point to gain—no personal feelings to gratify; and with respect to that particular portion of the Life which has

excited the activity of Col. Gurwood's criticism, I am enabled by the kindness, and I will add the magnanimity of Lady Baird, to submit to you and your readers my entire vindication from that gentleman's attack, in the following letter, which I have received from her Ladyship, with permission to make its contents public :

“ *London, 16th June 1834.*

“ SIR,—I have just seen the review of Col. Gurwood's publication in the last number of the *Quarterly*, which must not be permitted to pass in silence ; and I request you to state distinctly that it was from *myself* you received your information as to the circumstances which occurred at the siege of Seringapatam, so unceremoniously called in question.

“ To those who knew Sir David Baird, it will be sufficient to say that I had those particulars from his own lips. To others, it may be proper to add, that I can appeal to the testimony of officers now alive who were at that time with General Harris's army ; nay, that I appeal to the Duke of Wellington *himself* for the truth of the details as you have given them in the *Life*.

“ I remain, Sir, your most obedient, humble Servant,
“ A. C. BAIRD.”

“ *T. E. Hook, Esq.*”

This, I consider a complete answer to Col. Gurwood's observations, as far as I am concerned ; but I must add, that had it not been that I felt I had an important duty to perform to the memory of Sir David Baird, I should not, upon my own account, have troubled you or the public with the present explanation.

I remain, Sir, your obedient Servant,
THEODORE E. HOOK.

Athenæum, July 12. 1834.



