

remained for some time at Salamanca, inactive and uncertain. Mr. Frere, the British ambassador, urged Moore to advance to Madrid. The clever schoolfellow of Canning, who wrote admirable burlesque, was not the best judge of a military operation, and took a sanguine view of what popular enthusiasm might effect in Spain. The people were ignorant and presumptuous; their rulers were either imbecile or treacherous. Madrid was soon in the hands of the French; and the delusion of Mr. Frere that the capital could be preserved was at an end, before Moore completely felt how hopeless an advance would be. He made a forward movement against the advanced corps of Soult; and then, learning that the French armies were gathering all around him, he determined to retreat. Some partial successes had attended the British general's advance; but an intercepted letter from Napoleon convinced him that he could only save the army by retiring. Sir David Baird had previously joined him. Moore had abandoned all hopes of defending Portugal, and had directed his march towards Corunna. He commenced his retreat from Sahagun on the evening of the 24th of December. On the 27th Napoleon wrote to Joseph, "If the English have not already retreated, they are lost; and if they retire, they will be pursued so vigorously to their ships that half of them will never re-embark."* On the 31st he wrote from Benevento, "The English are running away as fast as they can." † Running away is not exactly the term for a retreat during which the retiring army constantly turned upon the pursuers, always defeating them, and on one occasion capturing general Lefebvre. This exploit was one of several brilliant efforts in which lord Paget, afterwards the marquis of Anglesey, distinguished himself. But there were other dangers than that of the pursuing enemy. The winter had set in with terrible severity; the sufferings of the troops were excessive; disorganization, the common consequence of a retreat, added to their danger. Moore saved his army from destruction by an overwhelming force when he carried it across the Esla. The troops effectually destroyed the bridge by which they passed the swollen stream; at which foresight Napoleon affected great indignation: "The English have not only cut the bridges, but have undermined and blown up the arches; a barbarous and unusual use of the rights of war, as it ruins the country to no purpose." ‡ The destruction of the bridge of Castro Gonzalo delayed the advance of the French for two days. Moore thus saved his army from the attacks of fifty thousand French under Napoleon,

* "Correspondence with Joseph," vol. i. p. 387. † *Ibid.*, p. 388. ‡ *Ibid.*

who were hastening to overpower a force less than one third of the number which he led. But Moore could not save his men from their own excesses, which made enemies of the inhabitants of every place through which they passed. They murmured and were disobedient. The general, in his Orders, said, that "the situation of the army being arduous, called for the exertion of qualities most rare in military men. These are not bravery alone, but patience and constancy under fatigue and hardship; obedience to command; sobriety and firmness in every situation in which they may be placed."* Despondency had taken possession of the troops. At Astorga, Napoleon writes on the 2nd of January, "It is probable that more than half of the British army will be in our power; the English themselves think so." † Some of the newspapers of London, having experience of the failure of many warlike enterprises against the French, had become the most confiding believers that resistance to Napoleon and to his invincible armies was altogether vain. This was long the creed of Whig orators and writers—rational enough at first, but betraying a factious and petty jealousy when the bulk of the people had warmed into hope and confidence. Francis Jeffrey, in December, wrote to Horner, "Murray tells me that you have still hopes of Spain. I have despaired utterly, from the beginning; and do not expect that we are ever to see ten thousand of our men back again—probably not five thousand." ‡ The evil foreboding was not far from being realized. The French historians believe that the British army would have been wholly destroyed, if the emperor had remained to strike the final blow. At Astorga he received despatches which indicated that war with Austria was close at hand. He gave up the pursuit of Moore to Soult.

At Lugo, on the 7th of January, the British general halted his exhausted troops, determined to give battle to Soult. The conflict was declined; and on the British marched to Corunna. On the 11th, when they had ascended the heights from which Corunna was visible, there was the sea,—but there were no transports in the bay. The troops met with a kind reception in the town; and their general applied himself to make his position as strong as possible to resist the enemy that was approaching. On the 13th Moore wrote his last despatch to lord Castlereagh. The French, he says, "are now come up with us; the transports are not arrived; my position in front of this place is a very bad one. . . . It has been recommended to me to make a proposal to the enemy, to

* "Life of Moore," vol. ii. p. 188. † "Correspondence with Joseph," vol. ii. p. 3. ‡ "Life of Horner," vol. i. p. 438.

induce him to allow us to embark quietly. I am averse to make any such proposal, and am exceedingly doubtful if it would be attended with any good effect." On the evening of the 14th the transports arrived. The sick and wounded were got on board; and a great part of the artillery. Cavalry would have been useless on the broken ground where Moore took his position, so the men were dismounted, and the horses were killed. Fourteen thousand British remained to fight, if their embarkation were molested. The battle of Corunna began at two o'clock on the 16th of January. Soult had twenty thousand veterans, with numerous field-guns; and he had planted a formidable battery on the rocks commanding the valley and the lower ridge of hills. Columns of French infantry descended from the higher ridge; and there was soon a close trial of strength between the combatants. From the lower ridge Moore beheld the 42nd and 50th driving the enemy before them through the village of Elvina. He sent a battalion of the Guards to support them; but through a misconception the 42nd retired. Moore immediately dashed into the fight; exclaimed "Forty-second, remember Egypt," and sent them back to the village. Meanwhile, major Napier, who commanded the 50th, was taken prisoner. He, who was to be the conqueror of Scinde, would there have ended his career, had not a French drummer rescued him from the barbarity of the enemies who denied him quarter, after he had received five wounds. The British held their ground or drove off their assailants; and victory was certain under the skilful direction of the heroic commander, when a shot from the rock battery struck him on the left breast and shoulder, tearing away the flesh and breaking the ribs. He was dashed to the earth; but he continued calmly sitting surveying the battle at Elvina, until he was assured that his brave fellows were triumphant. Sir David Baird, the second in command, had also been carried off. Moore was placed in a blanket. His sword-hilt crushed against his terrible wound, and it was attempted to be removed; but he said that he would not part with his sword in the field. He was carried into Corunna; and endured several hours of extreme torture before he yielded up his great spirit. But he had the consolation of knowing that the battle was won, and he died expressing a hope that his country would do him justice. The command had devolved upon general Hope, who thought that his first duty was now to embark the troops. Had he known that the ammunition of the French was exhausted, the victory might have been more complete. Darkness came on. The troops were returning from the scene of conflict to be embarked that night. The sound of a few

distant guns was heard as their commander was laid in his grave, hastily dug, on the ramparts of Corunna. The noblest dirge that ever was written says—

"We carved not a line, and we raised not a stone,
But we left him alone with his glory."

Marshal Soult paid the tribute of a soldier to a soldier, and raised a plain monument on the spot where the English general had been killed. It bore this inscription:

"Hic cecidit Johannes Moore, dux exercitus, in pugna Januarii XVI. MDCCCIX.
contra Gallos, a Duce Dalmatiæ ductos." *

Soult paid a more ample testimony to the merit of his adversary. He said, in a letter to colonel Napier, on the 15th of November, 1824, that sir John Moore knew how to profit everywhere by the advantages which the country offered him to oppose an active and vigorous resistance, and ended by sinking in a combat which ought for ever to honour his memory. Jomini, a military historian generally impartial, has described the retreat of Moore as nothing more than a flight. A later military historian, who recognizes the greatness of our country's heroes in this crisis of her fate, protests against this assertion. An army composed of young soldiers, commanded by officers without experience, and which, during eleven days, sustained without being shaken the pursuit of an army superior in numbers, composed of veteran troops, and led by such chiefs as Soult and Ney,—which, in spite of the eagerness of this pursuit, marched fifty-six leagues in eleven days, of which three were days of rest—which, having reached the end of its march, maintained an obstinate fight and embarked in the presence of a superior enemy,—which, in fact, from the commencement of the campaign, had only lost, and left behind, 4033 men—such an army does not fly; it does not even make a precipitate retreat.† Happier was the lot of Moore than if he had returned to England, to be a mark for party virulence; to be the subject of a fierce controversy whether he ought to have marched to destruction under the advice of Mr. Frere, or tried to save his army by a retreat. The miseries of that retreat were in some degree a necessary consequence of the absence of that prevision which Moore had not the materials for forming. The great captain of the Peninsular war said he could only see one error in Moore's campaign—he should have considered his advance against Soult as a movement of re-

* Alison says that the tomb, since enlarged, bears this inscription: "John Moore, Leader of the English armies, slain in battle, 1809."

† Brialmont, "Histoire du Duc de Wellington," tom. i. p. 218.

treat, and have sent officers to the rear to mark and prepare the halting-places for every brigade. "But," says the duke of Wellington, "this opinion I have formed after long experience of war, and especially of the peculiarities of a Spanish war, which must be seen to be understood." Canning, in Parliament, spoke of the retreat and its precipitancy as a matter of deep regret. In private, he used stronger and less generous language. "Sir John Moore ought never to have been held up as an approved military authority for all he had done in Spain; for, if he had found the transports at Corunna, and returned without a battle, he must have been tried, and ought to have been disgraced."* Want of accurate information of the disposition of the people, of the geographical features of the country, of the means of communication, of the power of obtaining supplies, produced the indecision of the advance and the calamities of the retreat. But how much more reprehensible was the ignorance of the government at home—"Why," said Canning, should government be ashamed to say they wanted that knowledge of the interior of Spain, which they found no one possessed? With every other part of the continent we had had more intercourse: of the situation of Spain we had everything to learn." † This confession of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs was heard, says Southey, "with astonishment by the thoughtful part of the people, and not without indignation." The people, whether thoughtful or careless, felt the deepest commiseration for the sufferers in Moore's campaign, who came home to show what war was. There were nine hundred women landed at Plymouth who had followed the army. On board the transports they were separated from their husbands, and for the most part they were ignorant of their fate. The hospitals were filled with wounded and sick; and some of the troops brought back a pestilential fever. In their sorrow and pity the people forgot their indignation at what they were told had been the conduct of the campaign by the government; and whilst they gave a tear to the memory of the brave general who died at Corunna, they despised the attempts of some journals to load his character with obloquy. "The newspapers sounded the pulse of the public as to laying all blame on sir John Moore, but that nail would not drive." ‡

The Convention of Cintra and the Retreat to Corunna produced a national gloom and despondency proportioned to the sanguine

* Lord Colchester's "Diary," vol. ii. p. 179.

† Debate of May 9—quoted in Southey's "Peninsular War," vol. iii. p. 378.

‡ Lord Bulkeley to the marquis of Buckingham—"Courts and Cabinets," &c., vol. iv. p. 311.

hopes with which the first great popular resistance to Napoleon had been hailed. There was little public confidence in further operations in the same direction. And yet the Opposition in Parliament had no public support when they proposed to abandon Spain and Portugal to their fate; and to keep our troops at home to resist a probable invasion. The reasonable doubts of the success of any future military enterprise were carried to their height, when the country was suddenly startled by charges against the duke of York, which not only laid bare the vices and follies of his private character, but involved the certainty that he had unworthily bestowed his patronage at the Horse Guards. On the 27th of January, colonel Wardle's motion for an inquiry into the conduct of the Commander-in-chief with regard to promotions, exchanges, and appointments to commissions in the army, and in raising levies for the army, was referred to a Committee of the whole House. From the 1st of February to the 20th of March the almost undivided attention of the House of Commons, and of the country, was bestowed upon the contemptible details of the degradation of the king's second son, filling one of the most important offices of the State, in being the dupe of the artifices of an abandoned woman, Mrs. Mary Ann Clarke. The evidence that was given at the bar of the House of Commons occupies hundreds of pages in Hansard's Debates. It was a source of amusement in every society, from the saloons of St. James's to the pot-houses of St. Giles's. It was an occasion of disgust to every well-regulated mind. Wilberforce writes in his Diary, "This melancholy business will do irreparable mischief to public morals, by accustoming the public to hear without emotion of shameless violations of decency."* The Speaker gravely records an example of the universal interest in the ridiculous correspondence of the duke with his mistress—"The joke in the streets among the people is, not to cry 'Heads or Tails,' when they toss up halfpence, but 'Duke or Darling.'" † The Debates in the House are so necessarily coloured by party-feelings that we cannot arrive at any just conclusions from their perusal. There were, however, two men in the House, of singular fairness, whose private opinions during the course of the inquiry may be referred to. Sir Samuel Romilly has this entry in his Diary: "It was established, beyond the possibility of doubt, that the duke had permitted Mrs. Clarke, his mistress, to interfere in military promotions; that he had given commissions to her recom-

* Life, vol. iii. p. 402.

† Lord Colchester's "Diary," vol. ii. p. 174. The Speaker, not familiar with the slang of the streets, writes "Heads and Tails," &c.

mendation; and that she had taken money for the recommendations. That the duke knew she took money, or that he knew that the establishment, which he had set on foot for her, was partly supported with the money thus illegally procured by her, did not appear otherwise than from her evidence.* Sir Arthur Wellesley, on the 17th of February, wrote to the duke of Richmond, "The love-letters have created a terrible impression. They prove that the duke allowed Mrs. Clarke to talk to him on the claims and requests of officers, and that she had prevailed upon him to recommend Mr. O'Meara to the king as a preacher. . . . The impression is strong against the duke both in and out of the House. People are outrageous in the country on account of the immorality of his life, which makes no impression in town."† On the 19th sir Arthur writes, "I am convinced that he cannot continue to hold his office, and that if the present ministers endeavour to support him in it, they will be beat in Parliament."‡ On the 17th of March, Mr. Perceval moved, "That the House, having examined the evidence in the investigations of the duke of York's conduct, and having found that personal corruption, and connivance at corruption, had been imputed to him, are of opinion that the imputation is wholly without foundation." The motion was carried by 278 to 196. It was not such an acquittal—such a declaration of innocence, the duke deemed it—as would allow the Commander-in-chief to retain his office, in defiance of public opinion. On the 20th of March Mr. Perceval announced in the House of Commons the resignation of the duke of York. The king communicated to the minister that his son had resigned his office; but he added "that he must ever regret any circumstances which have deprived him of the duke of York's services, in a situation where his zealous and impartial conduct had been no less conspicuous than his strict integrity." All men were ready to admit that the Commander-in-chief had been assiduous in the discharge of his duties; and had done much to improve the condition of the soldier. Sir Arthur Wellesley wrote, "we shall be able to prove that the business of his office is conducted in the most regular manner." Of the nature of the corruption sir Arthur gives an emphatic opinion: "There has appeared in the last two days a general system of swindling, applicable to all the offices of the State, in which Mrs. Clarke has been most active, and a great gainer. . . . These transactions, which have deservedly created so much indignation, have been carried on by the scum on the earth."§ Colonel Wardle became a popular

* "Diary," February 13.

† "Supplementary Despatches," vol. vi. p. 575. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 579. § *Ibid.*, p. 567.

idol; but he quickly sank into contempt, when an upholsterer obtained a verdict against him of 2000*l.* for the cost of furnishing Mrs. Clarke's house.

The news of a great naval success came in April, to furnish some compensation for the disasters of the retreat to Corunna, and to inspire a confidence that Britain still held the empire of the sea. Thomas lord Cochrane was a popular favourite as Member for Westminster; and he was looked up to by the nation as one who by his extraordinary daring gave promise of being the true successor of Nelson. Although opposed to the government, he was chosen by the Admiralty to conduct a most difficult and dangerous enterprise, under the orders of lord Gambier. Serving with lord Collingwood, in the Mediterranean, he performed a series of the most brilliant achievements in the "Impérieuse" frigate. He was selected in 1809, to conduct an attack by fire-ships on the French squadron, which was blockaded in Aix Roads, by our Channel fleet. He performed this task in a way in which few commanders could have done so much by skill and intrepidity. Ten line of battle ships and four frigates, with a gun ship, were moored behind a boom, half a mile in length, in a deep channel, their flanks covered by a shoal on one side, and by batteries on the other. Cochrane went in with his fire-ships and frigates on the night of the 11th of April. The explosion vessel broke the boom and scattered terror and destruction through the French squadron. Four ships of the line were taken at their anchorage, and were blown up. The remainder slipped their cables and ran on shore. Captain Cochrane made signal to his admiral, when daylight came, that seven other vessels might be destroyed. Lord Gambier thought the attempt too hazardous. In Parliament lord Cochrane refused to concur in the vote of thanks to lord Gambier, who was consequently, in 1810, tried by Court-Martial and acquitted of neglecting or delaying to take measures for completing the destruction which his officer had partially accomplished. The charges against lord Gambier have been revived by the statements of lord Dundonald in his Autobiography; and the admiral has been defended in his Memoirs recently published. The controversy is of too professional a nature to allow of any examination here. The people of 1809 rejoiced that there was a seaman capable of such enterprises. The people of 1860, when lord Dundonald was borne to Westminster Abbey, after a long life of undeserved obloquy and neglect, lamented that the party feelings of a time of violent politics—perhaps something also of his own impetuous and independent character—should have made the exploit of Basque Roads the last of his services to his own country.

After the forces under Junot had evacuated Portugal according to the conditions of the Convention of Cintra, sir John Cradock was left in the command of the British troops in that country. Soult invaded the northern provinces from Galicia, and took possession of Oporto on the 29th of March. The Regency at Lisbon earnestly implored the aid of the British government; and it was determined to render that aid most effectual by entrusting the conduct of the war to the one general who appeared capable of coping with its difficulties. Sir John Cradock was removed to Gibraltar; and, on the 2nd of April, sir Arthur Wellesley was ordered to replace that officer, and to proceed without delay to Lisbon. When Napoleon suddenly gave up the pursuit of sir John Moore, on the receipt of intelligence of the disposition of Austria to renew the conflict with him, he lingered for a little while on the frontier, and then proceeded to Paris. Here he made ample preparations for another campaign in Germany. The German people were strongly excited by the resistance in Spain to the domination of France. It was probably difficult for the Austrian government not to go along with this popular spirit. On the 6th of April the archduke Charles issued a proclamation in which he said the liberty of Europe had taken refuge under their banners. On the 9th Austria declared war against Bavaria, the ally of France; and the Austrian armies crossed the Inn. Napoleon left Paris on the 13th of April. On the 17th he was at Donauwerth, on the Danube. The struggle instantly began, which was terminated by the peace of Vienna on the 14th of October. On the 22nd of April sir Arthur Wellesley landed at Lisbon. His work in the Peninsula was not done, till, in February, 1814, he had cleared Portugal and Spain from their invaders.

There was no delay or indecision in the movements of sir Arthur Wellesley from the day when he set his foot on Portuguese ground. His business was first to drive the French from Oporto. On the 9th of May he moved with sixteen thousand British troops from Coimbra. On the 11th he crossed the Douro. To take sixteen thousand troops across a river is not an easy task under any circumstances; but "how to pass a river, deep, swift, more than three hundred yards wide, and in the face of ten thousand veterans guarding the opposite bank,"—this is the question asked by the first of military historians. On the convent height stood "a great captain, searching with an eagle glance the river, the city, and the country around." Sir Arthur saw where he could force a passage, "his means being as scanty as his resolution was great, yet with

his genius they sufficed." * On the 12th the British obtained a victory, which compelled Soult to retreat from Oporto, leaving many sick and wounded. The conqueror published a proclamation calling upon the inhabitants to be merciful to the wounded and prisoners. The French in their retreat were harassed and killed by the people of the villages. The roads were strewn with the carcasses of horses and men who were put to death before the British advanced guards could save them. "This last circumstance," says sir Arthur, "is the natural effect of the species of warfare which the enemy have carried on in this country. Their soldiers have plundered and murdered the peasantry at their pleasure." †

Thus far had the British general accomplished his great task with surpassing skill. He told his story with his accustomed modesty, in his Despatch of the 12th of May. The praise is for his officers and his men: "They have marched in four days over eighty miles of most difficult country, have gained many important positions, and have engaged and defeated three different bodies of the enemy's troops." ‡ The Opposition in Parliament, with few exceptions, were, as they too long continued to be, so hopeless of success, and so unjust and ungenerous in refusing to recognize the merits of the commander who was opening a new career for the army of England as glorious as the triumphs of her fleets, that we can scarcely wonder at the vexation of sir Arthur Wellesley, when he read the parliamentary proceedings of the 31st of May. § On the 21st of June he writes from Abrantes to the friend who had sent him the newspaper,— "I am very indifferent what the opinion is of our operations. I shall do the best I can with the force given to me; and if the people of England are not satisfied, they must send somebody else who will do better." As to one charge he felt that it was an imputation upon his honour: "I see that Mr. Whitbread accuses me of exaggeration, which is, in other words, lying." || His system in describing his operations was entirely opposed to that of Napoleon. "To lie like a bulletin" was an art of war which he had no ambition to acquire.

In the days before steam-navigation, before railways, before electric telegraphs, the proceedings of statesmen and of warriors had to be regulated by the arrival of news rather than by the dates of occurrences in distant places which despatches recorded. In 1809, "the posts come tiring on." Rumour goes before, "stuffing the ears of men with false reports." Parliament rose on the 21st

* Napier.

† "Despatches," vol. iv. p. 344.

‡ *Ibid.*, vol. iv. p. 325.

§ See the Speeches of Mr. Whitbread and Mr. Ponsoby, in Hansard, vol. xiv.

|| "Supplementary Despatches," vol. vi. p. 292.

of June; and soon after came official intelligence, in rapid succession, of great events, on the Danube, on the Scheldt, on the Tagus. It is curious to compare the dates of arrival of intelligence in London, and the dates of the events. The Speaker writes in his Diary—"Whilst I was in the country, news arrived—

"July 21.—Of Bonaparte passing the Danube, and defeating the Austrians." The final battle of the campaign, Wagram, took place on the 6th of July. The armistice, which took place on the 10th, was known in London on the 27th.

"August 8.—Of the descent on Walcheren and investment of Flushing." The disembarkation took place on the 30th of July, the expedition having sailed on the 27th.

"August 16.—Of sir Arthur Wellesley's defeat of the French at Talavera." This victory was gained on the 27th of July. In narrating these events we shall see how the knowledge of them bore upon the measures of the English government; or ought to have borne. Each event had a distinct relation to the others. The course of history is like the progress of a well-conducted fiction, in which no incident is without its bearing upon the plot. But we shall also see what amazing changes have been wrought by the rapidity of communication in our own day. Had steam and electricity proclaimed to the English Cabinet in the middle of July the news of the armistice between Austria and France, it is clear that the most rash administration would not have ordered an expedition to sail on the 27th, as a diversion to Austria, when Austria's war was ended. Assuming that the sailing of the expedition had been countermanded, and the news of the battle of Talavera on the 27th of July had travelled from the Tagus to the Thames at the beginning of August, it is clear that the most supine ministry would have sent to Portugal a large proportion of those troops which were shipped for the Scheldt: the necessary weakening of the British army by the sanguinary battle might thus have been speedily repaired. When the news did come, the opportunity was gone. Earl Temple (afterwards duke of Buckingham) writes to his father,—“We have not the means of reinforcing Wellesley. If half the troops which are now knocking their heads against Flushing were available, an important blow might still be struck in Spain.”* The victory of Talavera, most men thought, would have no permanent results for good, because the French were too strong. Living in the times which knew of no such triumphs of science as we enjoy, the government could form no certain combi-

* “Court and Cabinets of George III.,” vol. iv. p. 353.

nations when they attempted large operations upon different points. They could only speculate upon results in detail, and they too often speculated wrongly. It was the folly of that day to attempt too much and too little; to make a show of activity in many quarters without directing a great effort upon one paramount object.