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FROM FRIDAY, AUGUST 18, to TUESDAY, AUGUST 22, 1809.

DOWNING STREET, August 15, 1809.

Dispatches, of which the following are copies and extracts, were this day received at the office of the Lord Viscount Castlereagh, one of his Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, from Lieutenant-General the Right Honourable Sir Arthur Wellesley, K. B. dated Talavera, 29th July 1809.

*Talavera de la Reyna,
July 29, 1809.*

MY LORD,

General Cuesta followed the enemy's march with his army from the Alberché on the morning of the 24th, as far as Santa Olalla, and pushed forward his advanced guard as far as Torrijos.

For the reasons stated to your Lordship in my dispatch of the 24th, I moved only two divisions of infantry and a brigade of cavalry across the Alberché to Casalegos, under the command of Lieutenant-General Sherbrooke, with a view to keep up the communication between General Cuesta and me, and with Sir R. Wilson's corps at Escalona.

It appears that General Vanegas had not carried into execution that part of the plan of operations which related to his corps, and that he was still at Damiel, in La Mancha; and the enemy in the course of the 24th, 25th, and 26th, collected all his forces in this part of Spain, between Torrijos and Toledo, leaving but a small corps of two thousand men in that place.

His united army thus consisted of the corps of Marshal Victor, of that of General Sebastiani, and of seven or eight thousand men the guards of Joseph Buonaparte, and the garrison of Madrid, and it was commanded by Joseph Buonaparte, aided by Marshals Jourdan and Victor, and General Sebastiani.

On the 26th, General Cuesta's advanced

guard was attacked near Torrijos, and obliged to fall back, and the general retired with his army on that day to the left bank of the Alberché, General Sherbrooke continuing at Casalegos, and the enemy at Santa Olalla.

It was then obvious that the enemy intended to try the result of a general action, for which the best position appeared to be in the neighbourhood of Talavera, and General Cuesta having consented to take up this position on the morning of the 27th, I ordered General Sherbrooke to retire with his corps to its station in the line, leaving General Mackenzie with a division of infantry and a brigade of cavalry as an advanced post in the wood on the right of Alberché, which covered our left flank.

The position taken up by the troops at Talavera extended rather more than two miles; the ground was open upon the left, where the British army was stationed, and it was commanded by a height on which was, in echelon and in second line, a division of infantry under the orders of Major-General Hill.

There was a valley between this height and a range of mountains still farther upon the left, which valley was not at first occupied, as it was commanded by the height before mentioned; and the range of mountains appeared too distant to have any influence upon the expected action.

The right, consisting of Spanish troops, extended immediately in front of the town of Talavera down to the Tagus. This part of the ground was covered by olive trees, and much intersected by banks and ditches. The high road leading from the bridge over the Alberché, was defended by an heavy battery in front of a church, which was occupied by Spanish infantry. All the avenues to the town were defended in a similar manner; the town was occupied, and the remainder of the Spanish infantry was

formed in two lines behind the banks on the roads which led from the town and the right, to the left of our position.

In the centre, between the two armies, there was a commanding spot of ground, on which we had commenced to construct a redoubt, with some open ground in its rear.

Brigadier-General Alexander Campbell was posted at this spot with a division of infantry, supported in his rear by General Cotton's brigade of dragoons, and some Spanish cavalry.

At about two o'clock on the 27th, the enemy appeared in strength on the left bank of the Alberché, and manifested an intention to attack General Mackenzie's division.

The attack was made before they could be withdrawn; but the troops, consisting of General Mackenzie's and Colonel Donkin's brigades, and General Anson's brigade of cavalry, and supported by General Payne with the other four regiments of cavalry, in the plain between Talavera and the wood, withdrew in good order, but with some loss, particularly by the 2d battalion 87th regiment and 2d battalion 31st regiment, in the wood.

Upon this occasion the steadiness and discipline of the 45th regiment, and of the 5th battalion 60th regiment, were conspicuous; and I had particular reason for being satisfied with the manner in which Major-General Mackenzie withdrew his advanced guard.

As the day advanced, the enemy appeared in larger numbers on the right of the Alberché, and it was obvious that he was advancing to a general attack upon the combined army.

General Mackenzie continued to fall back gradually upon the left of the position of the combined armies, where he was placed in the second line, in the rear of the guards, Colonel Donkin being placed in the same situation fur-

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