

British Army, but that I could not separate it. He then desired me to chuse whether I would go or stay, and I preferred to go, from thinking that the British Troops were most likely to do the Business effectually, and without Contest; and from being of Opinion was more important to us than to the Spanish Army, that to open the Communication through Plasencia, although very important to them. With this Decision, General Cuesta appeared perfectly satisfied.

The Movements of the Enemy in our Front since the 1st, had induced me to be of Opinion, that despairing of forcing us at Talavera, they intended to force a Passage by Escalona, and thus to open a Communication with the French Corps coming from Plasencia.

This Suspicion was confirmed on the Night of the 2d, by Letters received from Sir Robert Wilson, of which I inclose Copies; and before I quitted Talavera on the 3d, I waited upon General O'Donoghue and conversed with him upon the whole of our Situation, and pointed out to him the Possibility that in the case of the Enemy coming through Escalona, General Cuesta might find himself obliged to quit Talavera, before I should be able to return to him; and I urged him to collect all the Carts that could be got, in order to remove our Hospital. At his Desire I put the Purport of this Conversation in Writing, and sent him a Letter to be laid before General Cuesta, of which I inclose a Copy.

The British Army marched on the 3d to Oropeza, General Basscourt's Spanish Corps being at Centinello, where I desired that it might halt the next Day, in order that I might be nearer it.

About Five o'Clock in the Evening, I heard that the French had arrived from Plasencia at Naval Moral, whereby they were between us and the Bridge of Almaraz.

About an Hour afterwards, I received from General O'Donoghue the Letter and its Inclosures, of which I inclose Copies, announcing to me the Intention of General Cuesta to march from Talavera in the Evening, and to leave there my Hospital, excepting such Men as could be moved by the Means he already had, on the Ground of his Apprehension that I was not strong enough for the Corps coming from Plasencia, and that the Enemy was moving upon his Flank, and had returned to Santa Olalla in his Front.

I acknowledge that these Reasons did not appear to me sufficient for giving up so important a Post as Talavera, for exposing the combined Armies to an Attack in Front and Rear at the same Time, and for abandoning my Hospital; and I wrote the Letter of which I inclose a Copy.

This unfortunately reached the General after he had marched, and he arrived at Oropeza shortly after Daylight, on the Morning of the 4th.

The Question what was to be done, was then to be considered. The Enemy, stated to be Thirty Thousand strong, but at all Events consisting of the Corps of Soult and Ney, either united, or not very distant from each other, and supposed by Marshal Jourdan and Joseph Buonaparte, to be sufficiently strong to attack the British Army, stated to be Twenty-five Thousand strong, were on one Side, in Possession of the high Road to the Passage of the Tagus at Al-

maraz, the Bridge at which Place we knew had been removed, although the Boats still necessarily remained in the River.

On the other Side, we had Reason to expect the Advance of Victor's Corps to Talavera, as soon as General Cuesta's March should be known, and after leaving Twelve Thousand Men to watch Vanegas, and allowing from Ten to Eleven Thousand killed and wounded in the late Action, this Corps would have amounted to Twenty-five Thousand. We could extricate ourselves from this difficult Situation only by great Celerity of Movement, to which the Troops were unequal, as they had not had their Allowance of Provisions for several Days, and by Success in Two Battles. If unsuccessful in either, we should have been without a Retreat; and if Soult and Ney avoiding an Action had retired before us, and had waited the Arrival of Victor, we should have been exposed to a general Action with Fifty Thousand Men, equally without a Retreat.

We had reason to expect, that as the Marquis de la Reyna could not remove the Boats from the River Almaraz, Soult would have destroyed them.

Our only Retreat was, therefore, by the Bridge of Arco Bispo; and if we had moved on, the Enemy, by breaking that Bridge while the Army should be engaged with Soult and Ney, would have deprived us of that only Resource.

We could not take a Position at Oropeza, as we thereby left open the Road to the Bridge of Arco Bispo from Talavera by Calera; and, after considering the whole Subject maturely, I was of Opinion that it was advisable to retire to the Bridge of Arco Bispo, and to take up a defensive Position upon the Tagus.

I was induced to adopt this last Opinion, because the French have now at least Fifty Thousand Men disposable to oppose to the Combined Armies, and a Corps of Twelve Thousand to watch Vanegas; and I was likewise of Opinion, that the sooner the defensive Line should be taken up, the more likely were the Troops to be able to defend it.

Accordingly I marched on the 4th, and crossed the Tagus by the Bridge of Arco Bispo, and have continued my Route to this Place, in which I am well situated to defend the Passage of Almaraz and the lower Parts of the Tagus. General Cuesta crossed the River on the Night of the 5th, and he is still at the Bridge of Arco Bispo.

About Two Thousand of the Wounded have been brought away from Talavera, the remaining Fifteen Hundred are there; and I doubt whether, under any Circumstances, it would have been possible or consistent with Humanity, to attempt to remove any more of them.

From the Treatment which some of the Soldiers wounded on the 27th, and who fell into the Hands of the Enemy, experienced from them, and from the Manner in which I have always treated the Wounded who have fallen into my Hands, I expect that these Men will be well treated; and I have only to lament, that a new Concurrence of Events, over which from Circumstances I had and could have no Controul, should have placed the Army in a Situation to be obliged to leave any of them behind.

I have the Honour to be, &c.

(Signed) ARTHUR WELLESLEY.