

FROM THE LONDON GAZETTE.

Downing-Street, September 2.

A dispatch, of which the following is a copy, was, on the 30th ult. received at the Office of Lord Viscount Castlereagh, one of his Majesty's principal Secretaries of State, from Lieutenant-General Lord Viscount Wellington, dated Deleytosa, 8th August, 1809.

Deleytosa, 8th August, 1809.

MY LORD.—I apprised your Lordship, on the 1st inst. of the advance of a French corps towards the Puerto de Banos, and of the probable embarrassments to the operations of the army which its arrival at Placencia would occasion; and these embarrassments having since existed to a degree so considerable as to oblige us to fall back, and to take up a defensive position on the Tagus, I am induced to trouble you more at length with an account of what has passed upon this subject.

When I entered Spain, I had a communication with General Cuesta, through Sir Robert Wilson and Colonel Roche, respecting the occupation of the Puerto de Banos and the Puerto de Perales, the former of which, it was at last settled, should be held by a Corps, to be formed under the Marquis de la Reyna, to consist of two battalions from General Cuesta's army, and two from Bejar; and that the Puerto de Perales was to be taken care of by the Duque del Parque, by detachments from the garrison of Ciudad Rodrigo.

I doubted of the capacity of the garrison of Ciudad Rodrigo to make the detachment to the latter, but so little of the effectual occupation of the former, that in writing to Marshal Beresford on the 17th July, I desired him to look to the Puerto de Perales, but that I considered Banos as secure, as appears by the extract of my letter, which I enclose.

On the 30th, intelligence was received at Talavera that 12,000 rations had been ordered at Fuente Dueños for the 28th, and 24,000 at Los Santos for the same day, for a French corps which, it was believed, was on its march towards the Puerto de Banos.

General Cuesta expressed some anxiety respecting this post, and sent me a message to propose that Sir Robert Wilson should be sent there with his corps.

Sir Robert was on that day at Talavera, but his corps was in the mountains towards Escalona, and, as he had already made himself very useful in that quarter, and had been near Madrid, with which city he had had a communication, which I was desirous of keeping up, I proposed that a Spanish corps should be sent to Banos without loss of time.

I could not prevail with General Cuesta, although he certainly admitted the necessity of a reinforcement, when he proposed that Sir Robert should be sent to Banos; and he was equally sensible with myself, of the benefit to be derived to the cause, from sending Sir Robert back to Escalona.

At this time we had no further intelligence of the enemy's advance, than that the rations were ordered; and I had hopes that the enemy might be deterred from advancing, by the intelligence of our success on the 28th, and that the troops in the Puerto might make some defence; and that, under these circumstances, it was not desirable to divert Sir Robert Wilson from Escalona.

On the 30th, however, I renewed my application to General Cuesta, to send there a Spanish division of sufficient strength, in a letter to General O'Donoghue, of which I enclose a copy, but without effect; and he did not detach General Bassecourt till the morning of the 2d, after we had heard that the enemy had entered Bejar, and it was obvious that the troops in the Puerto would make no defence.

On the 2d we received accounts that the enemy had entered Placencia in two columns.

The Marquis de la Reyna, whose two battalions consisted of only 600 men, with only twenty rounds of ammunition each man, retired from the Puerto and from Placencia, without firing a shot, and went to the bridge of Almaraz, which he declared that he intended to remove; the Battalions of Bejar dispersed without making any resistance.

The General called upon me on that day, and proposed that half of the army should march to the rear to oppose the enemy, while the other half should maintain the post at Talavera.

My answer was, that if by half the army, he meant half of each army, I could only answer that I was ready either to go or stay with the whole 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 Placencia, 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 Placencia.

This suspicion was confirmed on the night of the 2d, by letters received from Sir Robert Wilson, of which I enclose 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 enclose a copy.

The British army marched on the 3d, to Oropesa, General Bassecourt'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 Placencia at Naval Moral, whereby they were between us and the bridge of Almaraz.

About an hour afterwards, I received from General O'Donoghue the letters and its enclosures, of which I enclose 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 Placencia, 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 enclose a copy.

This unfortunately reached the General after he had marched, and he arrived at Oropesa shortly after day-light, on the morning of the 4th.

The question, what was to be done, was then to be considered. The enemy stated to be 30,000 strong, but, at all events, consisting of the corps of Soult and Ney, either united, or not very distant from each other, and supported; by Marshal Jourdan and Joseph Bonaparte, to be sufficiently strong to attack the British army, stated to be 25,000 strong, were on one side, in possession of the high road to the passage of the Tagus at Almaraz, 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 made known, and, after leaving 12,000 men to watch Vanegas, and allowing from 10 to 11,000 killed and wounded in the late action, this corps would have amounted to 25,000. 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 50,000 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 Arzobispo, 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 Oropesa, as we thereby left open the road to the bridge of Arzobispo 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 Arzobispo, 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 50,000 men disposable to oppose to the combined armies, and a corps of 12,000 men 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 Arzobispo, 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 is still at the bridge of Arzobispo.

About 2000 of the wounded have been brought away from Talavera; the remaining 1500 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 already 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 honor to be, &c.

(Signed) ARTHUR WELLESLEY.

DOWNING-STREET, SEPTEMBER 7.

Dispatches, of which the following are copies and extracts, were this day received at the Office of Viscount Castlereagh, one of His Majesty's Principal Secretaries of State, from Lieut. General Viscount Wellington, K. B.

Truxillo, August 20, 1809.

MY LORD.—I wrote some days ago a letter to the French Commander in Chief, which I sent to him by Lieut. Col. Walters, to request his care and attention to the wounded officers and soldiers of the British army, who had fallen into his hands, in return for the care and attention which I had paid to the French officers and soldiers, who had fallen into my hands at different times; and that he would allow money to be sent to the officers; and that officers, who should not be deemed prisoners of war, might be sent to superintend and take care of the soldiers, till they should recover from their wounds, when the officers should be sent to join the British army.

I received a very civil answer from Marshal Mortier, promising that every care should be taken, and every attention paid to the British officers and soldiers who were wounded; but stating, that he could not answer upon the other demands contained in my letter, having been obliged to refer them to the Commander in Chief.

Since the receipt of this letter, Mr. Dillon the Assistant Commissary has arrived from Talavera, having been taken prisoner near Cevolia on the 27th of July, previous to the action, and having been allowed to come away.

He reports, that the British officers and soldiers who are wounded, are doing remarkably well; and are well fed and taken care of; indeed he says preferably to the French troops.

I propose to send Colonel Walters with another flag of truce, to-morrow morning, and a letter to the Commander in Chief of the French army, requesting that a sum of money which I shall send may be given to the Officers, and I

shall endeavour to establish a Cartel of Exchange as soon as possible. I have the honor to be, &c.

(Signed) ARTHUR WELLESLEY,
Lord Viscount Castlereagh, &c. &c. &c.

Truxillo, August 21, 1809.

MY LORD.—When I marched from Talavera on the 3d inst. with a view to oppose the French corps which we had heard had passed through the Puerto de Banos, and had arrived at Placencia, Sir Robert Wilson was detached upon the left of the army towards Escalona; and before I marched on that morning, I put him in communication with the Spanish General Cuesta, who, it had settled, was to remain at Talavera. I understood that General Cuesta put Sir Robert in communication with his advanced guard, which retired from Talavera on the night of the 4th.

Sir Robert Wilson, however, did not arrive at Valada till the night of the 4th, having made a long march through the mountains; and as he was then six leagues from the bridge of Arzobispo, and had to cross the high road from Oropesa to Talavera, of which the enemy was in possession, he conceived that he was too late to retire to Arzobispo, and he determined to move by Venta St. Julien and Centinello towards the Tietar, and across that river towards the mountains which separate Castil from Estremadura.

Some of Sir Robert Wilson's dispatches having misled me, I am not aware by which of the passes he went through the mountains; but I believe by Tornavacas. He arrived, however, at Banos on the 11th, and on the 12th was attacked and defeated by the French corps of Marshal Ney, which, with that of Soult, returned to Placencia on the 9th, 10th, and 11th, that of Ney having since gone on towards Salamanca.

I enclose Sir Robert Wilson's account of the action. He has been very active, intelligent, and useful in the command of the Portuguese and Spanish corps with which he was detached from this army.

Before the battle of the 28th of July, he had pushed his parties almost to the gates of Madrid, with which city he was in communication; and he would have been in Madrid, if I had not thought it proper to call him in, in expectation of that general action which took place on the 28th of July. He afterwards alarmed the enemy on the right of his army; and throughout the service, shewed himself to be an active and intelligent partizan, well acquainted with the country in which he was acting, and possessing the confidence of the troops which he commanded.

Being persuaded that his retreat was not open by Arzobispo, he asked right in taking the road he did, with which he was well acquainted; and although unsuccessful in the action which he fought (which may well be accounted for by the superior numbers and description of the enemy's troops) the action, in my opinion, does him great credit.

I have the honor to be, &c.

(Signed) ARTHUR WELLESLEY.

Miranda de Castenar, August 13, 1809.

SIR.—I have the honor to acquaint you, that I was on march yesterday morning on the road of Grenadella from Aldea Neuva, to restore my communication with the Allied Army, when a peasant assured us, that a considerable quantity of dust which we perceived in the road of Placencia, proceeded from the march of a body of the enemy.

I immediately returned and took post in front of Banos, with my pickets in advance of Aldea Neuva, selecting such points for defence as the exigency of the time permitted.

The enemy's cavalry advanced on the high road, and drove back my small cavalry posts; but a piquet of Spanish infantry, which I had concealed, poured in on the cavalry a steady and well directed fire, that killed and wounded many of them.

The 200 Spanish infantry in advance of Aldea Neuva, continued, under the direction of Col. Grant and their Officers, to maintain their ground most gallantly, until the enemy's cavalry and chasseurs a-cheval, in considerable bodies, appeared on both flanks, when they were obliged to retreat.

The enemy's chasseurs a-cheval and cavalry advanced in great numbers in every direction, and pushed to our off the Legion posted between Aldea Neuva and Banos; but by the steady conduct of officers and men, the enemy could only advance gradually, and with a very severe loss from the commanding fire thrown on them.

The Merida battalion, however, having given way on the right, a road was laid open, which cut behind our position, and I was obliged to order a retreat on the heights above Banos, when I was again necessitated to detach a corps, in order to scour the road of Monte Major, by which I saw the enemy directing a column, and which road turned altogether the Puerto de Banos, a league in our rear.

At this time, Don Carlos Marquis de Estragne came up with his battalion of light infantry, and in the most gallant manner, took post along the heights commanding the road of Banos, which enabled me to send some of the Merida battalion on the mountain on our left commanding the main road, and which the enemy had tried to ascend.

The battalion of light infantry, the detachment of the Legion on his right continued, notwithstanding the enemy's fire of artillery and musketry, to maintain their ground; but at six o'clock in the evening, three columns of the enemy mounted the height on our left, gained it, and poured such a fire on the troops below that longer defence was impracticable, and the whole was obliged to retire on the mountains on our left, leaving open the main road, along which a considerable column of cavalry immediately poured.

The battalion of Seville had been left at Bejar with orders to follow me next day, but when I was obliged to return, and the action commenced, I ordered it to Puerto Banos, to watch the Monte Major road and height in the rear of our left.

When the enemy's cavalry came near, an officer and some dragoons called out to the Commanding Officer to surrender, but a volley killed him and his party, and then the battalion proceeded to mount the heights, in which movement it was attacked and surrounded by a column of cavalry and a column of infantry, but it cut its way and