

and soon after he sent most unaccountably for the remainder of his forces. It was on this plain that General San Martín manoeuvred, in March, 1818, to bring the Spanish General Osorio to battle; but the latter being inferior in numbers, retreated southwards to the same position in front of Talca, which Freire had just abandoned. Nothing could be more ill-judged or imprudent, as his army, which consisted of about 1,700 men, had only two weak squadrons of regular cavalry and four pieces of artillery, while that of Prieto, amounting to fully 2,200 men, had 800 veteran cavalry, and 11 or 12 pieces of artillery. The Chile cavalry is very formidable, the men being most expert riders, mounted on active and powerful horses, and generally armed with long lances, which they use with great dexterity. Prieto, observing this inexplicable movement, succeeded without difficulty in placing his troops between the constitutional army and Talca. In this manner its return to the town was completely cut off, and it had to fight in an extensive open plain with the enemy in front, the flanks unprotected, and the river Lireay, a tributary of the Maule, close in the rear. After a long engagement, Freire's cavalry, consisting of about 600 men, including militia and Indians, fled completely discomfited, and abandoned the infantry, composed of three weak battalions, to its fate. Their situation was now indeed desperate, as the ground was so favorable to cavalry, and the neighbourhood offered them no accessible place of defence or refuge. When they formed into squares to resist the hostile cavalry, they were mowed down by artillery; and, when they deployed into line, the cavalry was upon them. In this dreadful emergency they maintained the conflict for nearly an hour, with all the obstinacy of despair; and at length, in attempting to charge in column, they were completely broken. There are two lines by the immortal Byron so concisely, and yet so faithfully, descriptive of a similar last effort, that we cannot avoid transcribing them:

" One effort—one—to break the circling host!
They form—unite—charge—waver—all is lost!"

The loss in Freire's army fell chiefly on the devoted infantry, and included eighteen officers among the killed. The only officers mentioned as slain, in Prieto's hurried dispatch of the 17th of April, are Colonel Elizalde, chief of the staff; Colonel Tupper, and his gallant Major Varela, a young man of five or six and twenty. Colonel Tupper is said to have exhibited the most reckless valour during the day, and to have rallied his battalion several times. Having dismounted to encourage his men, he was unable, in the *mêlée* when all was lost, to find his horse; and the accounts of the manner of his death are so contradictory, that it is impossible to reconcile them. All agree, however, in stating that he was particularly sought