

"He's gone back to Villa de Conde; he asked after you most particularly; don't blush man: I'd rather back your chance than his, notwithstanding the long letter that Lucy sends him. Poor fellow! he has been badly wounded, but it seems, declines going back to England."

"Captain Power," said an orderly touching his cap, "General Murray desires to see you."

Power hastened away, but returned in a few moments.

"I say, Charley, there's something in the wind here. I have just been ordered to try where the stream is fordable. I've mentioned your name to the General, and I think you'll be sent for soon. Good bye."

I buckled on my sword and looking to my girls, stood watching the groups around me; when suddenly a dragoon pulled his horse short up, and asked a man near me if Mr. O'Mally was there?

"Yes: I am he."

"Orders from General Murray, sir," said the man, and rode off at a canter.

I opened and saw that the dispatch was addressed to Sir Arthur Wellesley, with the mere words, 'with haste,' on the envelope.

Now which way to turn I knew not; so springing into the saddle, I galloped to where Colonel Merivale was standing talking to the colonel of a heavy dragoon regiment.

"May I ask, sir, by which road I am to proceed with this dispatch?"

"By the river, sir," said the Colonel; a large dark-browed man, with a most forbidding look. "You'll soon see the troops you'd better stir yourself, sir, or Sir Arthur is not likely to be pleased with you."

Without venturing a reply to what I felt a somewhat unnecessary taunt, I dashed spurs to my horse, and turned towards the river. I had not gained the bank above a minute, when the loud ring of a rifle struck upon my ear: long went another. I hurried on however, at the top of my speed, thinking only of my mission and its pressing

haste. As I turned an angle of the stream, the vast column of the British came in sight, and scarcely had my eye rested upon them when my horse staggered forwards, plunged twice with his head nearly to the earth, and then rearing madly up, fell backwards upon the ground. Crushed and bruised as I felt by my fall, I was soon aroused to the necessity of exertion; for, as I disengaged myself from the poor beast, I discovered he had been killed by a bullet in the counter; and scarcely had I recovered my legs when a shot struck my shako and grazed my temples. I quickly threw myself to the ground, and creeping on for some yards, reached at last some rising ground, from which I rolled gently downwards into a little declivity, sheltered by the bank from the French fire.

When I arrived at head-quarters, I was dreadfully fatigued and heated; but resolving not to rest till I had delivered my dispatches, I hastened towards the convent of La Sierra, where I was told the commander-in-chief was.

As I came into the court of the convent, filled with general officers and people of the staff, I was turning to ask how I should proceed, when Hixley caught my eye.

"Well, O'Mally, what brings you here?"

"Dispatches from General Murray."

"Indeed: oh follow me."

He hurried me rapidly through the buzzing crowd, and ascending a large gloomy stair introduced me into a room, where about a dozen persons in uniform were writing at a long deal table.

"Captain Gordon," said he, addressing one of them, "despatches requiring an immediate perusal have just been brought by this officer."

Before the sentence was finished the door opened, and a short slight man, in a gray undress coat, with a white cravat and a cocked hat entered. The dead silence that ensued was not necessary to assure me that he was one in authority: the look of command, his bold, stern features presented; the sharp piercing eye; the compressed lip; the impres-