XVII.

Preussisch (sic) Eylau. [13 Février 1807.]

Monsieur Bongars se rendra sur Gros-Elauth pour remettre la lettre cijnointe au Grand Duc de Berg, qu'il est possible qu'il trouve en route. Delà il se rendra aux avant-postes auprès du Général Guyot. Il en apportera des nouvelles de ce qu'on sait des mouvements de l'ennemi et des bivouacs qu'on a apperçus cette nuit sur la gauche. S'il n'y a rien de nouveau, M. Bongars pourra passer la nuit aux avant-postes, et du moment qu'on apprendra quelquechose de nouveau dans la nuit, il reviendra m'en instruire : s'il n'arrive rien, il attendra jusqu'à la pointe du jour de demain pour m'apporter les rapports de la nuit. Il enverra un de ses chevaux en relai, afin d'arriver extrêmement vite m'instruire des mouvements des avant-postes.

N.

Preussisch Eylau, le 13 février 1807.

*Letters from Colonel William Napier to Sir John Colborne,
chiefly in connexion with his 'History of the War
in the Peninsula.'*

THE following letters, in the possession of the Right Hon. Lord Seaton, Beechwood, Plympton, are interesting, first in the light they throw generally on the character of Sir William Napier, and secondly in the information they give in regard to the manner in which he was led to undertake his *History of the Peninsular War*, the sources on which he relied, and his conception of the duties of an historian. Like everything else that proceeded from Napier's pen they display literary gifts of a high order, though they contain a few solecisms in grammar and spelling, which I have left uncorrected. It is needless to add that they show that unshaken admiration for the personal character and military talents of Sir John Moore which Napier shared with the great soldier to whom the letters were addressed, Sir John Colborne, afterwards Field Marshal Lord Seaton. Colborne, who with a brief intermission had been military secretary to Moore from 1807 to Corunna, was from 1821 to 1828 lieutenant-governor of Guernsey, and from 1828 to 1836 lieutenant-governor of Upper Canada. At the date of the earlier letters he held the rank of colonel, but became major-general in 1825.

I have appended extracts from four letters addressed to Sir John Colborne by Sir George Napier; they deal with William Napier's *History* and his review of Mr. James Carrick Moore's *Life* of his brother, Sir John Moore; also an extract from a letter of

Admiral Sir Graham Moore on Mr. Carrick Moore's book. These letters are also in the possession of Lord Seaton.

I.

184 Sloane Street: 30 Aug. [1821].

My dear Sir John,—I returned from my Scotch expedition upon the 26th, and I hasten to give you an account of my success.

The review¹ will appear in a few days. I had written it in a methodical manner, which I thought would render it clearer for the comprehension of general readers, but my friend informed me that it would not do so well for a review, and accordingly he shuffled the parts together, and has perhaps improved it, but I am doubtful. The matter remains the same, and Jeffray was very kind about it. He objected to the attack upon Jones, as he said it was brought in head and shoulders, but that, as I had expressed a wish to have all that related to Sir John Moore left intact, he had sent it at once to press, with the exception of the passage in which I say 'that every knave and every arrogant fool,' &c. &c., which he thought so personal upon Frere that he would not admit it, and, after all, it is not necessary, so I made no farther fight about it, although I feel as if I should have something instead that would gall Frere.

I had a conversation with Jeffray about Jones after the review had gone to press, in which I stated the matter at large. He said that I should have drawn a comparison between Sir John's retreat and Lord Wellington's from Salamanca. I differed with him, as it would be courting a quarrel with the Duke's friends. He said it might be done without that, and that Jones should be exposed and the truth known. I agreed with him, and proposed our intended joint review upon Jones's work, mentioning your name. He received the proposal graciously and encouraged me, so that you have no excuse, and I hope you will strike out some plan and give me instructions as to what part I can be of any use to you in. It is the more necessary as I see an insolent, blackguard attack on Moore has been published in a large French work called *Conquêtes, Victoires et Révers de l'Armée Française*, and it is supported entirely by quotations from Jones's book and relies entirely upon his authority. Although absurdly partial it is likely to be of great authority, as the writers are decidedly men of great military talents, and, when they choose to give it, of very accurate information. I should be glad to hear what you think of the review, and remain

Yours very sincerely,

W. NAPIER.

Sir John Colborne, K.C.B.,
Lieut.-Governor, Island of Guernsey.

II.

My dear Sir John,—You must have been considerably surprized at the apparent violence of my answer to Jones, not having read his attack,

¹ Napier's review of Jomini's *Traité des Grandes Opérations Militaires* appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* of July 1821. In it Napier defended Sir J. Moore from the criticisms of Colonel J. T. Jones in his *Account of the War in Spain* (1817):

which I forgot, by some odd accident, to enclose to you. You will now see that I have not used any but his own expressions, and that I have kept myself aloof from his scurrility and only given him back his own expressions as a sort of lesson to him. I am glad of the opportunity of telling you that I cannot find one single word in his first edition of the long paragraph which he queerly enough calls praise of Sir John Moore. This is the worst point of his defence of himself. I suppose he has put it in the 2nd edition, which I have not seen, but he gives the world reason to suppose that it is to be found in his first, which is not the case; at least I cannot find it.

I am glad to hear you intend to review his book in any way.³ It is astonishing how it is quoted as good authority in many works. The *Historical Tables* abuse Sir John upon the strength of his account of the retreat, as well as the *Conquêtes and Révers of the French Armies*. I have heard of others also, but have not seen them.

I can have your review put in without your name appearing at all, and I have not any doubt of its being well worth Jeffray's while to have it upon my terms.

Yours sincerely,

W. NAPIER.

III.

13 April [1822].-

My dear Colborne,—. . . I cannot pretend to let you have my opinion upon your review until the whole is before me, but, as I do not believe you are a relation of the Archbishop of Grenada, I shall not scruple to give it honestly when I do see it complete. At present it appears to me to be full of interesting information, but rather too long for a review, particularly in the quotations from Jones's work. Suppose that it requires altering, am I to send it back to you with remarks, or to let it take its chance with Jeffrey's scissors, or to alter it and send you the arrangement that I think would be better? I have just had a letter from Jeffrey, with a fee for my review and a request that I should review a work attributed to Jomini² upon the defence of Switzerland, called *De la Suisse dans l'intérêt de l'Europe*. It is as much political as military, and has created a great sensation in Switzerland. It was suppressed in France and Germany, its object being to prove that France cannot, consistently with her own interests, occupy Switzerland in the event of a war with Germany. At least this is the professed object, but it appears to me that the secret design is to convince the Piedmontese that, as France cannot expect ever to be successful on the side of Italy, that the best thing they can do is to remain quiet, as they are. It talks of the certainty of English, Austrian, and Piedmontese armies being always to be found together in Italy to oppose the French. Have you seen it? If you have, pray give me your opinion of it. Should it coincide with mine I will see Jeffrey d——d before I will write anything in favour of the project, although I shall be very willing to write a review exposing it, if that will suit him as well, which I suppose may be the case. I am

² I cannot find that Colborne's review was ever published.

³ He found afterwards that the book was written by Pictet. *Life of Sir W. Napier*, i. 243.

to see him on Wednesday next about it, as he is coming to town *with a friend*, I suppose to fight Walter Scot, as I see by the papers they have been held to bail in Scotland.

Yours sincerely,
W. NAPIER.

Sir John Colborne, K.C.B.,
Lieut.-Governor, Island of Guernsey.

IV.

11 July [1822].

My dear Colborne,—I was beginning to imagine that I had read *Gil Blas* without profit when your letter arrived and reassured me. I can well understand the disgust and impatience you feel upon each fresh perusal of Jones's work. When the only interest a book has is the mischief that its folly and presumption is likely to create, or has created, I do not know a more irksome and fretful task than a close examination of it. Nevertheless I rejoice that your courage is stout, as from the variety of new facts and the impartial view you take of them in your review a very keen interest must be excited in the minds of your military readers, as also of others, as I have been informed that many people, finding in my review an easy way to criticize generals, are commencing observers of warlike exploits, besides which it must always be gratifying to old soldiers to con over their exploits in print. For my own part I feel very sensibly the force and truth of Homer's description of Nestor's loquacity about his deeds gone by. I am satisfied that a great collection of facts, new ones if possible, but at all events facts, are what will pass most current in the world, and any innovation upon the established way of thinking relative to war will first excite surprise and then admiration. Nobody can do this better than you, and your presence with the Spanish armies upon so many important occasions gives a value to your writings which no other person's can have, because nobody with the same knowledge, impartiality, and character as a soldier was ever near their armies when acting alone against the French.

Jeffray had sent me the pamphlet upon Switzerland when he wrote to me to review it. He gave me only 18 days' time, and I finished it in that time, wherefore it cannot be very good, and I had not any opportunity of getting the Archduke Charles's own account of the campaign in that country, and also some other works which I wished to have.

I hope your friend of the *Encyclopædia* is not that famous learned man Sir Thomas Saumarez, who was, when I knew him first, writing down Sir Isaac Newton. He thought you were the author,⁴ by his speech, as I have been told that you were so several times, information which flattered me too much to contradict it.

George is very well now, but he had a severe fall from a chaise the other day. He has taken a house called Serge Hill, near King's Langley, Herts, where he and my sister Emily live together. Mrs. Napier sends her kind remembrance to you, and I, with every wish for the success of the Island of Barataria, remain

Yours most sincerely,
W. NAPIER.

⁴ Apparently of Napier's review.

P.S.—I was aware of the danger of the funds, but I am tied down in part to them. They are a mortgage upon government, and this is as good as a mortgage upon insolvent landlords.

M.-Genl. Sir John Colborne, K.C.B.,
Guernsey.

The next letter is interesting as telling us of Napier's impression of Southey's *Narrative of the War in the Peninsula*, and of his own intention to write on the subject. The connexion between the two facts was a close one. 'Early in the course of 1823 Colonel Napier was one day taking a walk with Lord Langdale⁵ in some fields, now built over and forming part of Belgravia. The conversation turned on Southey's late narrative of the war in Spain, and Lord Langdale was so much struck with Napier's remarks on the events of the war and the characters of the principal actors that he urged him to write a history of the war himself.' The account he himself gave of it to his daughter just a year before he died is as follows: 'It was all owing to Lord Langdale I ever wrote that history: he first kindled the fire within me . . . telling me I had powers of writing yet undeveloped; that the review proved it to him . . . and he urged me . . . so strongly, suggesting the late war as my province, that it began to make me think whether I would not try.'⁶

V.

[? 6 Jan. 1823.]

My dear Colborne,—I have just got the loan of Southey's *History*.⁷ His malignity exceeds that of any other writer who has yet attacked Sir John Moore, and, as the general opinion is that the Duke of Wellington has given him materials for his work, it will of course be proportionately mischievous. I know *from authority* that the Duke refused to give him any papers, and I can see that his *History* is despicable, being a compilation of all the absurd stuff he wrote in the *Edinburgh Annual Magazine*, and extracts from the inflated Spanish papers and the catchpenny publication of Doctor Neale,⁸ I think, and others whose froth was received in England at that time instead of good ale. I cannot write a review, because I have quarrelled with Jeffrey for mutilating my last review upon Swiss Politics, notwithstanding an express agreement to the contrary. I have, however, turned the affair over in my mind, and I think I see a good road to travel upon.

I propose to write a series of letters in the *Morning Chronicle*, and afterwards to have them collected and published in a volume, these letters to contain an historical criticism upon the Peninsula campaign, by which a good foundation may be laid for some historian worthy of writing a History of that war. But to make them really what I propose, I must

⁵ I.e. Mr. Henry Bickersteth, afterwards Lord Langdale.

⁶ *Life of Sir W. Napier*, i. 233-4.

⁷ The first volume of Southey's *History of the Peninsular War* had just appeared.

⁸ Dr. Neale's *Narrative of the Retreat from Corunna*, published 1809.

have assistance and information, and I will now detail to you the grounds I have for hoping to obtain both. In the first place *I trust to yourself*. Bunbury⁹ will, I am sure, be able and willing to get me a sight of official papers, and Lord FitzRoy,¹⁰ who I sounded about it, without telling for what precise purpose I wanted it, gave me a favourable answer as to his own papers, and even some hopes of getting information from the Duke. I have made an acquaintance with a Colonel d'Esmena,¹¹ who was on Ney's staff in Spain, and, as he is about something of the same kind, and is a very fair honest fellow, I have good hopes there also, but distant, as he is just gone to South America, and will not return before a year. He has, however, given me a warm introduction to Jomini, who is at Paris and from whom I hope to get something. Now if you think that it would be possible to get James Moore to do something to defend his brother, I know no reason why we might not make a work worth reading and useful in more ways than one.

The advantage of letters in the paper is that many men—James Moore, for example—who would not trust me with their documents would perhaps write something themselves and send it under the same signature. They would also come out by degrees and would not have so much an air of pretension, and hard hits might be given to Mr. Southey and others like him which need not be retained in the collective work. I should like also to prepare in a small compass a collection of anecdotes about Sir John during his military career, if his friends would furnish them. This would close the work and draw the attention of women, whose conversation is always the best defence against the backbiting of the petty blackguards who have so continually assailed Sir John. I am going to Paris the end of this month, and, if you write me a favourable answer to the proposition I have made, I should like to come home about the end of February or in March by Guernsey and consult with you about it. I hope you have been going on with your review; it will be of infinite use to the project. Pray give my respects to Lady Colborne, and believe me to be

Yours very sincerely,
W. NAPIER.

Write to me before I go to Paris.

Sir John Colborne, K.C.B.,
Lt.-Governor, &c.,
Guernsey.

Ere the date of the following letter the project of 'letters to the *Morning Chronicle*' has given way to one of a definitive history of the war.

VI.

Strathfield Say : 8 April [1824].

My dear Colborne,—I have put off writing to you from day to day for this last year, always intending to pay you a visit to confer with you upon the subject of my intended *History of the War*. My first plan was small, but, like discord, it has grown until its head reaches the skies, and I must

⁹ Colonel H. E. Bunbury, Napier's brother-in-law.

¹⁰ Lord FitzRoy Somerset, afterwards Lord Raglan.

¹¹ The name should be D'Esmenard, the translator of Godoy's Autobiography.

at present be content to give you some information by letter, and I hope to hear in return from you something to help me in my project. When I went to Paris ¹² I contrived to get into the Bureau de la Guerre, where I found all Buonaparte's weekly states and copied them. This Jomini would hardly believe when I told him. He said he had endeavoured in vain to get at them, and he believed I was the only person who ever had access to them. I managed through our old friend Brossard, who was delighted to see me, and asked very kindly after you. I also obtained a great many letters and several confidential reports of the *chefs d'état-major* of the corps relative to Salamanca, Talavera, and the battle of Victoria, but I found all the returns relative to Soult's corps very irregular at the time of the Coruña retreat. However I have a tolerably good account of numbers there also. It appears that Napoleon had 360,000 men in Spain at that time, of which 40,000 cavalry. About 70,000 came to Astorga. Soult's corps, about 27,000, followed to Coruña, and they had 18,000 (?) veterans, the remnant of Jena, Eylau, and Austerlitz. This answers *the fighting gentlemen*,¹³ and I think the manœuvring people may be as well answered. I showed some of my papers to Lord Wellington, and he found them curious and has given me many more, and has spoken of me as a person who was writing a History and likely to do it well, having many scarce documents. All this will be of great service in giving weight without party spirit to what I may write about Sir John Moore. I spoke to James Moore, who promised me all his papers, but seemed to say that there were *very few* which had not been published. Could you give me a list of what I ought to ask him for, as I think he cannot well refuse now? I am in hopes that I shall be able to see you, as I look to your assistance all through as my sheet anchor. Indeed I should like to divide the work with you, or to give you my material if I thought you would undertake it, my principal object being still the same, to place Sir John in the situation he ought to stand in the eyes of posterity, and this I know you can do better than myself.

These materials are certainly very rich, as, in addition to what I have stated to you above, I have nearly a complete series of Lord Wellington's dispatches, *public and private*, for the whole war, the morning states of the English and Portuguese troops, all Joseph's intercepted papers, and I am in correspondence with two historians in France, who have given me much information and promise me more. *Be secret* about the duke's dispatches; he does not know it himself.

Have you finished your review, and can you give me any idea about Sir John's opinion of the Vimiera business, as I only wait for a clear understanding upon that point to begin?

Pray give my respects to Lady Colborne and believe me to be

Yours very sincerely

W. NAPIER.

Direct to me under cover to Mr. Arbuthnott, Whitehall Place.

Sir John Colborne, K.C.B.,
Guernsey.

¹² February–April 1823.

¹³ *I.e.* those critics who say that Moore should have fought a battle earlier.

VII.

When you answer this direct to me at Sir Guy Campbell's, Strathfield Turgess, but under cover to Mr. Arbuthnott, Whitehall Place.

13 May 1824.

My dear Colborne,—I am much obliged to you for the promise of assistance, and the plans you tell me of I shall look after, but I have heard that they are not good. I have, however, a friend who will, I hope, be able to help me in that line.

I fear Murray's¹⁴ History will interfere with mine. Do you know if it is going on or not? and do you think he is a man who would help one to a good thing or would he keep it to himself?

I am here in a farm-house, for two reasons: first I avoid the cries of eight children, and secondly I am close to Strathfield Say, from whence I get books and maps; and, better than either, I have opportunities of talking to the Duke when he comes down, and, as he patronizes my undertaking, he gives me very exact explanations upon any point I choose to ask him about.

If you should recollect anything, tell me of it when you write, and I will have it ready for him when I next meet him. It is a great advantage that he has spoken in *Mr. Arbuthnott's* set of my undertaking with praise, as that will prevent any endeavour upon the part of Moore's enemies to hold it up as contrasting them as rivals, a point of much danger which they would eagerly seize upon.

My present object in writing to you is to ask your advice upon the plan of the work. I have been reading Southey again, and I am astonished at the mass of absurd stories and intrigues relative to Spanish politics which he has got together. Now I fear that he has drawn people's attention so much to these follies that the world will think that they are really the cream of the transactions in Spain, and that the military part is only a dry, uninteresting subject not worthy of the attention of men of genius, as all soldiers are stupid fellows. And yet if I once enter into that mass of *Balderdash*, there will be, I fear, no end, or rather no beginning, to my work, as it would take half a life to collect the materials.

My present idea is to give as short and as precise an account as possible of Napoleon's intention of seizing upon Spain and Portugal and his manner of executing it, as far as regards the military movements of Murat and Junot, without any comment upon the causes or propriety of the measure, leaving the facts to speak for themselves. The real political history I imagine to be only half developed as yet, and until all the truth is known the folly of writing about it is apparent. Besides which, the military transactions may be treated separately, I think.

Having put the king in Madrid and detail'd the forces and positions, and given some opinion upon what England might have done at this time, I shall narrate the movements and battles which took place up to the arrival of the Emperor with the Grand Army. This will, of course, include Vimiera and the Convention of Cintra, and will make, I think, a

¹⁴ Sir George Murray, quartermaster-general in the Peninsula, proposed to write a history of the war.

reasonable quantity of matter for the 1st book, or note of the transactions, for it is in this manner that I propose to arrange the work. I will give a careful narrative of events up to some remarkable period, and then give separately my own opinions upon what has taken place, and sometimes upon what might have taken place. The 2nd book would commence with Moore's campaign and finish with the winter quarters and sickness after Talavera. This would include Ocaña and Tamames. The siege of Saragossa and the affairs of Catalonia would be mentioned in a summary manner at the end. But the correspondence of the Duke with Cuesta and the Junta is so intimately connected with the military part that I must enter into that. Massena's invasion of and expulsion from Portugal, ending with the capture of Badajoz, will form the 3rd, including the Barrosa and Tariffa affairs. The Salamanca campaign will be the 4th, Vittoria up to the fall of Pampeluna the 5th, and the French campaign the 6th and last.

I will now give you an idea of the materials I possess, and then I hope you will give me your advice as to how far I ought to introduce politics and the Spanish movements independent of our own, bearing in mind that I have no wish to touch upon them farther than may be necessary to prevent the work from becoming a piece of dry military detail, uninteresting to general readers, which would defeat the object of putting Sir John Moore right with the world.

For the 1st book I have—

1. The published works, such as they are.
2. Joseph's intercepted correspondence, containing Napoleon's notes upon the plans of campaign for Bessières, Dupont, Gobert, Vedel, and Moncey's corps, Joseph's own plan after quitting Madrid.
3. Napoleon's notes upon it, with another traced out and the points of defence, such as Tudela, Burgos, &c., laid down in detail.
4. Observations upon what he calls *l'esprit de la guerre*, addressed to Savary, and the journal of the commandant of artillery of Dupont's corps relative to his operations and capitulation. This last I got in France, and I believe it is exact, never been intended for publication.
5. All the returns of the French armies during the whole war.

Together with several political papers of Aranza's and Urquijo's which I have not yet examined. I have notes of a conversation with the Duke about the battle of Vimiero and the Convention of Cintra, some private letters, and our morning states.

For the second book.

Notes of conversations with French officers, numbers of the French, the printed papers, your assistance, the General's journal promised to me by Sir Graham, James Moore's promises, and some faint hopes that an officer who was upon Soult's staff will, according to his promise, send me the journal of that corps, a curious anecdote told to me by Jomini relative to the manner in which Soult persuaded Ney to quit Galicia and move upon Placentia; the journal of the *état-major*, by General Semelé, of the 1st corps, relative to Talavera; a letter from Joseph to Soult describing the battle and movements; the Duke's despatches, *private* and public; notes of two or three conversations with

him ; some odd anecdotes of Cuesta and Cortes obtained from him, and Jourdan's plan, which was not followed, but which the Duke fairly acknowledged to me would have ruin'd him if it had been followed.

For the third.

I have innumerable private letters from the army, a complete series from Squires, whose general views are not so able as his individual ones, but whose spirit and devotion to his country are very conspicuous; he must have been a noble fellow. The Duke's public and private despatches to our government, and if it was not for Henry Fox's idleness I should have had Sir Charles Stuart's ¹⁵ papers also : some, however, I did see in which he threatens to return with the army if Principal Souza is not put down, and another where he calls the suggestions of the Portuguese government senseless absurdities, and regrets that the Spaniards ever fought a battle. This confirms Moore's views, as indeed the battle of Talavera does. The latter is a practical comment upon the former, and proves the justness of Sir John's opinions ; but more of that hereafter. I have a number of French anecdotes and published works, and I recollect a good deal myself.

For the fourth.

For Salamanca I have my own recollections, a great many conversations with the Duke, 2 curious letters of Napoleon's about it, several French papers, and the Duke's despatches *private*, many private letters, and the promise of more papers from the Duke, the exact loss of the French in men and guns from their own returns.

For the fifth.

The Duke's despatches, private letters, the journal of General Boyer, *chef d'état-major* of Reille's corps, from the beginning of the campaign to the arrival of the army in France, and many other authentic pieces relating to it which I forget at present.

For the sixth.

I have a great number of papers, English and French, which I have not yet arranged.

For the Guerrillas and Allicant affair, and Cadiz, Tariffa, &c., I have Leith's, Walker's, Douglas's, and other *great men* of that stamp correspondence, and General Campbell's, Governor of Gibraltar's, papers; the Duke's reports to Lord Liverpool and some of his correspondence with the Allicant army, together with his opinion of Blake's and Mahi's conduct at Valencia. He calls the first '*a fool*' and the 2nd '*a traitor*.'

I now close this long letter by hoping you will not find me very troublesome to you, and begging you to give Mrs. Napier's compliments

¹⁵ Sir Charles Stuart (afterwards Lord Stuart de Rothesay) as 'Mr. Stuart' had been *chargé d'affaires* in Spain in 1808 and in Portugal in 1810. When Napier wrote, he was British ambassador at Paris. Henry Stephen Fox, Napier's brother-in-law and a diplomatist, was probably also in Paris at this time. He was there during Napier's visit in the spring of 1823.

to Lady Colborne, and take *toll* from them yourself, as she begs to be kindly remembered to you.

Yours sincerely,
W. NAPIER.

VIII.

23 June¹⁸ 1824.

My dear Colborne,—I need not tell you that your opinions and views of all that relates to the affairs of the Peninsula are extremely useful and interesting to me. Your last letter opened a number of points of view which I have been considering ever since I read it. Of course it is impossible to decide at this early stage upon what shall or shall not be introduced into a work that must lick itself into form like a young bear. But there are some parts of your sketch for the composition of the work where I differ with you, and I will give you my reasons.

To introduce any disquisition upon the changes produced in Europe I must be better acquainted with the subject before I could reason with sufficient justness to make up for the want of any new materials, and I have only the publications which have already appeared without one new fact or knowledge of where to obtain one. Besides I think such observations belong more properly to a general history of the whole war than to any particular portion of it. Jomini also has seized upon the ground and is too strong to dislodge. That Napoleon's invasion was unjust, nobody can doubt, and he himself admits it in his memoirs; but it is impossible to take a fair, impartial, historical view of that affair without having his papers, and indeed it is impossible to know the true bearings of the case from the evidently interested papers of Cevallos and the other Spanish politicians, whose relations are the groundwork of all that has yet been written upon the subject. As for De Pradt, I look upon him as an ingenious fabulist whose authority is not worth a penny upon the most trifling fact. My intention has been to avoid attacking the French officers for the acts of outrage which they have, or are said to have, committed. Enough has been done in all conscience on that head to hand them down to posterity, if reprobation only is required. But my ideas upon the duty of an historian are very rigid. If I attack the French upon what I have heard, I must also assail the English upon what I have seen and heard, or the work would not be impartial, but I dare not do this for fear of the law of libel, and therefore I think it best to leave the whole alone, or at least merely to touch incidentally upon the worst cases upon both sides, such as Massena's retreat, St. Sebastian, &c.

The characters of the capacities of generals I have had in contemplation from the beginning, and indeed I have written some rough sketches of Moore, Romana, Blake, Soult, Massena, Ney, Junot and Suchet, Clauzel and Marmont. Beresford I have not any high opinion of and I shall show that in the work without any particular notice of him. The Duke will naturally occupy the principal situation in the work, and, as far as I can judge from the series of his letters which I have read, he may be safely called as sound, prudent, and clear-headed a man as ever commanded any army, but I do not think that his manœuvres display a very fertile genius. He seems seldom or ever to have committed a mistake and very

¹⁸ 'June' is deleted and 'August' added.

often to have exhibited astonishing sagacity; but the brilliant and astounding genius of Napoleon overshadows his, I think. But that he is a great general, independent of his fortune, I hold to be indisputable, nor do I perceive any person among the French marshals who can well be put in competition with him. Soult comes the nearest, but he wants the Duke's quickness of perception. The Duke also formed all his plans under the impression that any failure would cause the Ministers to give up the contest. This cramped his genius.

There are some papers come from James Moore, and among them two books of letters in your hand, which I am to send to you when I have done with them. Let me know by what channel they must go.

I had written thus far a long time ago, but I have been so ill for some time back as to be unable to attend to anything. I am now, I hope, getting better.

I have written extracts from the book of letters, and whenever you indicate the channel by which I am to send them they shall go to you.

I expect some papers from Marshal Soult soon, as I have sent him notice that I have many of Joseph's to Napoleon accusing him of all sorts of crimes and asking for the means of refuting the accusations. There are several points in Sir John's letters that require explanation, such as his constantly calling his army 85,000 men, when in fact, by the returns, he had at Sahagun only 23,500 fighting men. But I believe the best way will be to make out a narrative and send it to you, and when I get yours, make out a History from both.

What do you think of Llorente? Blanco White says he was a *tolerably good man* and not a *lyar*. Alava tells me he was 'one dam rascal and should be hang for a dam lyar.'

I saw General L'alemande and had a long conversation with him. He was 2nd in command of the cavalry, and after Colbert's death 1st in command on the pursuit of our army to Coruña. He considered Sir John's conduct as very creditable to his talents, and said that Soult made a mistake in not attacking at Lugo, as he was sure of support and the wounded of our army would have fallen into his hands or obstructed the retreat. Moore, he says, could not stop, as Ney was directed to turn him by the lateral roads, and he says that the Valley of the Sil was used by the French afterwards and found practicable for anything, although not good.¹⁷

I have sent all the questions relative to this point and others which I thought of to Soult's aide de camp, General Tholoie, who has promised to answer them.

Yours sincerely,
W. NAPIER.

Col. Sir John Colborne, K.C.B.,
Guernsey.

IX.

Strathfield Say: 23 Oct. [1824.]

My dear Colborne,—Mr. Arbuthnott is out of town, but I do not mind making you pay a postage for this letter, as I think it will give you

¹⁷ Marchand's division of Ney's corps marched by the Sil route as far as Orense during the pursuit of Moore.

a great deal of satisfaction. I had a regular set-to with Lord Wellington yesterday, and I asked him plumply about the first object of the expedition which he carried from Cork to Portugal, and also his opinion of Sir John Moore's movements. He said that there was no object at all for it, that Ministers had given up all intention of acting in South America, and that he had told Miranda so by orders of Government before the period of assembling that army. Anstruther he sent sloops to look out for and to direct upon his line of march; Spencer was to attack Lisbon, as Sir Charles Cotton had imagined that only 4,000 men were there.

As to Sir John, his words were as follows: 'I think Sir John could not have fought a battle: his army was not prepared for it, and it could have no object. That which he fought at Coruña was to get his army off; any other battle would have been absurd. No, I think he committed only one fault: when he marched to Sahagun he should have considered it as a movement of retreat and prepared everything with that view. He should have marked the places for stores, the day's marches for each column, and established regular *étapes* on the Coruña road. But, mind, this opinion which I now give is one of a man with a great experience in the practice of war, and particularly of that peculiar manner of carrying on war which is required in Spain, with which Sir John Moore could not be acquainted. It is founded upon my knowledge of the country, acquired by my own campaigns there, and it is *après coup*.' After this I think there can be little fear of our success in establishing the fact of Sir John's injuries and the injustice with which he has been treated, for you and I can prove that he did consider it a movement of retreat, although he did not arrange the manner of it so exactly as the Duke speaks of. He could not do that; no information about roads or positions were given to him that could be depended on, either by our government agents, the Spanish people, or the Spanish generals, and the officers sent by him had only just time to make their reports in time for him to decide upon making a movement, but never in time to arrange the means by which such a movement could be carried into effect in the best manner. Somebody has belied the Duke very much when he was represented as censuring Sir John's conduct. He seemed to be glad of the opportunity of shewing that he respected him and anxious that I should not imagine he was disposed to find fault.

Yours sincerely,

W. NAPIER.

Colonel Sir John Colborne, K.C.B.,
Lt.-Governor of Guernsey,
Guernsey.

X.

Tuesday, St. Steven's, St. Albans ¹⁹ [? January 1825].

My dear Colborne,—In pursuance of my promise I write to you. I was attacked in the knee during the passage,¹⁹ but it went off and I am here without harm. I am very much distressed to find that there is a chance of my youngest child's hearing being destroyed, like the two other children—it appears to me from the same cause, that of some humour which settles upon the ear . . .

¹⁹ The residence of his brother George.

¹⁹ From Guernsey apparently.

The day I arrived in London I met Sir Alexander Johnstone; he was just returned from Paris. He had dined several times with Soult at Lord William Bentinck's and heard him speak with great interest about my History, saying that he himself had intended to write, but that his wish was only to have the truth told fairly, and that instead of writing he had determined to send me all his materials, as he felt certain that they would come more usefully before the world from a person who had access to both sides than from him alone. This, I think, shews great fairness upon his part, and in all the papers I have yet received from him he is certainly correct as far as I have any means of judging by the intercepted papers, many of which are precisely similar to those he sends to me.

Pray remember me kindly to Lady Colborne, to whose care and kindness in mixing what she calls my cordial I owe the escape I have had from the gout this time.

Yours sincerely,
W. NAPIER.

XI.

[St. Stephen's: February 1825.]

My dear Colborne,—I am truly sorry for the cause of your long silence, and so far from feeling any impatience I would not have written this letter if I did not well know that the best succour in affliction²⁰ is to engage the mind in business as much as possible. Sorrow finds food for itself if the thoughts are not diverted by occupation. I feel the force of your remark upon the continual state of agitation from hope and disappointment, which, I may say, embitters life so much that I have long looked upon it as a duty rather than a pleasure to remain in the world. This may surprize you, but ill-health renders all the feelings doubly acute, and the scenes of war I have been engaged in when very young have left such a strong taste behind, that the calmer occupations, I am, in common with so many others, doomed to, have no attractions for me; neither can I look forward to the pleasure of seeing a son of mine distinguish himself in the world.²¹ But I am upon a disagreeable subject and will at once refer to business.

Sir G. Moore spoke to Gordon²² for me. The latter promised fairly, but he was very grand when I saw him, and talked absurdly about confidential public offices and the impossibility of letting me copy plans. However he referred me to Mr. Pawley, his lithographic director, who seems sensible and willing to assist me in earnest. I mean to write to Major Todd, when I obtain his direction, to ask him to assist me; he is able, I know, if he is willing. I have people looking out at Woolwich also, and Niel Campbell in Paris. Some stray plans of Coruña, Vimiero, and some others I have got, and these, with the French plans in their publications, I must, I am afraid, trust to, as I find it impossible to trust to promises, and the expense of journeys to look after them myself is ruin. The great difficulty will be to get them reduced to an equal scale. Mitchel, the drawer of the great plans for [Sir G.] Murray, promises to do this for

²⁰ Alethea Colborne, born 6 May 1824, died 6 Jan. 1825.

²¹ Napier's only son was deaf and dumb.

²² Sir J. Willoughby Gordon, Q.M.G. in the Peninsula 1811–12, Q.M.G. at the Horse Guards 1812–51.

me, but he has been so frightened by Murray lately that he will not speak even about Spain. I think that Murray *has written his book*, and that he waits until he is *free* before he publishes, as his opinions, from several circumstances, I believe to be rather unfavourable to Lord Wellington's operations.

Can you help me with any topographical memoir upon the country in which we operated? The course of the Douero and the Tagus it is important to be well informed upon, as the nature of the banks was part of the data upon which the campaign of Talavera and that of 1812 and 1813 were founded. Of course any other memoir will be of use, but those two rivers are indispensable to a right judgment of the operations.

I have shown the part I have written to Bickersteth, the clever man who dined with me when you were at my house, and he approves of it, and has even assisted me by corrections, which he promises to continue. When I have got some more done, I will send it to you to read.

Murray, the bookseller, hearing of my work, sent me an offer to publish it, and has promised to get any works I want and to lend them to me. He is, I am told, a catch, as he can always insure a considerable sale.

Can you tell me what Spanish works are worth looking at? for, with the exception of Nellerito, the Spanish and Portuguese authors appear to me to be romance writers, and it will be a waste of time to read them.

Southey has *made* his book up from the French official account in Goldsmith's *Recueil des Pièces*, &c., interspersing his own *phrases banales* and enlarging the siege of Saragossa from Vaughan's absurd book, and the massacre of Valencia from Caro's and Jacob's travels.²³ It is surprising how literally he follows the French account until he arrives at Moore, when he misrepresents everything, as you know. His vaunted private information is his correspondence with a few Spaniards of his own acquaintance, who have fed him with the same sort of food that they nourished their own vanity with, and he has swallowed it as kindly as a young hawk does raw flesh.

By-the-by I am afraid that I shall disappoint you about the Spaniards. They sink in my estimation every time that I consider the subject. Not that I underrate the merit of the peasants, or the patience of the soldiers, but that I cannot make out any real effort as a nation that they made. I am convinced that the French would have subdued the whole country in the first year if our money and troops had been spared, and in two years the conquest would have been settled tranquilly. Andalusia, Valencia, Catalonia, Aragon, Navarre, New Castille, Old Castille, and the Asturias were in fact conquer'd; Galicia was saved by our army in Portugal, Cadiz by our garrison, and all the rest of Spain produced after Ocaña but a few partizans and bands of robbers, which half a year would have sufficed to have destroyed, if the absence of our army had permitted moveable columns on an extended scale to be employed, and, even as it was, their arms and ammunition came from England. I would

²³ Caro, probably F. X. Caro, professor of the university of Salamanca, and a member of the Central Junta. A brother of his commanded part of the Valencian troops in 1808. By 'Jacob's travels' Napier means *Travels in the South of Spain*, by W. Jacob, M.P. (1811.)

not enter into the early insurrections at all, if I had not got some original notes and instructions of Napoleon's own, intended for the king of Spain and Savary's guidance. These enable me to shew the plan of the French operations as a whole, and they correct some details, but the latter part is very perplexing.

Writers should be very cautious. In my account of Dupont I praise Reding far more than Castaños. Your letter has altered my opinion of the men, but the latter is a gambler, and he was certainly gambling at Andujar during the battle, from whence I concluded he had no share in the conception of it and I gave all the credit to Reding.

I fear you will hardly understand this, for I am very unwell with a nervous headache which has troubled me a long time, and I write very confusedly, I find to my cost, as I am obliged to correct over and over again when I compose with this malady upon me.

Do you think I ought to give a sketch of the Portuguese insurrection against Junot? It is dangerous ground, and Thiebault has done it so ably that, if I correct his manifest falsehoods about the British part at Vimiero, it will be sufficient. How very beautiful his description of the march to Alcantara is!

Have you ever heard of a collection of Napoleon's bulletins? They were advertised in London three years ago, but I cannot get a trace of them now. If you have any jack-of-all-trades who gets you books from Paris, will you put him upon that scent?

Cannot your friend Colonel Kennedy give you any useful information about the assistance and measures we took to forward the insurrection in 1808 in the Asturias and Gallicia? I have some of his letters, but they are meagre.

Buonaparte's prudence in the arrangement of his army was very wonderful. He calculated his measures always upon the supposition that a great army was opposed to him, and guarded his own frontier and communications with as much care as if he was on the defensive. Southey's observation that in the beginning a British army sent to Biscay would have done wonders is a *vulgar error*. There was at no time less than 40,000 men to guard the line of communications, of which 24,000 men were in reserve at Bayonne. Generally there was as many as 50,000 capable of being collected on any point in a few days without counting the garrison of Madrid or the corps in Arragon and La Mancha.

Besides he was always anxious to secure St. Ander and to watch Bilbao. His instructions to his generals are full of recommendations to secure those ports from the English efforts. And how we were to effect a landing with a *large army* and commence regular operations under those circumstances, I do not know, though Southey does. I am right, I believe in thinking that Santona, St. Ander, and Bilbao are the only ports where an army could disembark on that coast. St. Sebastian secured Passages from any attempt on our part from the sea, as a few guns would have rendered the narrow entrance impracticable. But the book-makers know more of war than soldiers, and I must be very careful how I contradict Southey on a military point. Still I do not comprehend how large armies can move without means, nor how small armies can beat large ones except by

the help of that providence which protects fools. What do you think of it?

I am, my dear Colborne,
Yours very sincerely,
W. NAPIER.

XII.

St. Steven's: 21 Aug. [1825?]

My dear Colborne,—I have completed the account of Junot's affair in Portugal up to the appearance of Sir Arthur previous to Vimiera, but I find myself hampered by the difference between your observations in your review and what I find in Thiebault and Southey. I have followed your and my own information, as I heard the stories related in Portugal by impartial people who were not *Patrioticos*, but I wish for more direct assurance from you. You say 'that Loison's conduct was unjustifiable at Evora and the vicinity, but that Leite having imprudently assembled the peasantry, they fled at the first appearance of the French. The town being deserted, a few houses were pillaged and a priest was shot.' Southey is, of course, *raving and rabid*, but Thiebault describes a position, a reconnoissance, a plan and two battles, one in front, the other in the town, the same day: he talks of obstinate resistance in the streets, '*cruauté atroce*' of the Portuguese, and 'terrible reprisals: ' he says the allied Spanish soldiers suffered exceedingly and fired upon the Portuguese for offering to give in, and that the French lost 200 wounded, 90 killed. Southey calls the Spaniards volunteers or near it. As you were there in three weeks after the event, you must know if this is true. To me it appears that Thiebault took the boasting of the officers at the time for the truth, and, not having time or opportunity afterwards from the interruption of the battle of Vimiera and the Convention to rectify the accounts, he put them down as he remembered them. He probably never saw Loison from the time he returned until after his book was published, and in the hurry of the movements before Vimiera got very imperfect information. Loison probably gave in an official *lye* to impress terror upon the Portuguese, and never had an opportunity or perhaps never wished to correct his account, as Junot was no longer in a situation to exact it from him and the flaming puff gave him some *éclat*.

Thiebault's work is certainly very able and his lyes are very difficult to detect. I think the numbers of his own people in the battle of Vimiero is false, but I can only judge by calculation from the returns I have, which only extend to 28 May, after which the Spanish affair prevented him from sending them regularly.

Southey's is regular *gabble*; every blacksmith is a great general, and the assembly of 10 peasants with pitchforks, an historical event of great importance.

I believe I told you that Soult intends to send me *all* his papers, and give up writing himself. I have also got a promise of Sir Hew Dalrymple's. Are there any points you wish to get at in that quarter? If so, write quickly, as I am to see them in ten days at his house only. Hardinge has promised me Durban's account of the battle of Albuera.

A friend of mine has an opportunity of getting at Foy, and intends

to ask him for papers for me; he can do more than any man if he chooses.

Yours very faithfully,
W. NAPIER.

Pray tell Lady Colborne that her cordials are only just out, and I have had no fit of the gout, which *athributh*, as the Baily says, to her care of me.

Major-General Sir John Colborne, K.C.B.,
Lt.-Governor, &c.,
Guernsey.

XIII.

Warwick House, Tonbridge Wells: 20 Feb. [sic] 1826.

My dear Colborne,—I am glad to hear that you are coming over. I hope to be able to see you. If you send the books over by any person, my mother's home will be the place to have them left at—No. 40, Cadogan Place.²⁴

The number 335,223 is the effective of the French army, which includes the sick, wounded, and detachments. The other number is the [number] present under arms, actually with the corps or divisions at the moment when the state was made out. Of course it would be to under-rate the number to refer to the latter, because in the detachments are included foraging parties, escorts, and sometimes garrisons, all of which would be effective in a retrograde movement.

I have heard from Soult again, who has made an offer to get Mathieu Dumas, author of the *Précis des Evénemens Militaires*, to translate my History into French. This I have accepted as a great advantage.

My greatest difficulties continue to arise from the want of good plans. Without knowing the country accurately it is impossible to form a sound argument upon the movements. Do you think [Sir G.] Murray could be prevail'd upon to let me look at Mitchel's plans under a promise not to take any sketch from them? If I could just make a few notes in writing of the distances, the run of the principal ridges, &c., it would be of infinite use. I am now quite unable to ascertain whether the position of Roriça had the Sierra de Baragueda behind it, or the range of hills belonging to the lines, and if Laborde made his retreat by marching through the narrow pass which separates Baragueda from the lines, or by some other pass. This is of great consequence, because the sierra is impassable except near the point where it joins the Monte Junto, and if Laborde fell back by the narrow pass above spoken of, Lord Wellington had the means of keeping him and Junot separate and beating them in detail.

I cannot understand why Wellington did not march for Torres Vedras after the combat of Roriça, instead of Vimiero. It was surely a great error.

Subject to these corrections I have finished the Convention, which proves a tolerable thick volume. This is disagreeable, as I wish to get Sir John Moore and Talavera into the first publication if I can. It will

²⁴ Lady Sarah Napier died on 20 Aug. following.

never do to expose my 1st vol. to all the malevolence and disappointed vanity of people who expect to be taken notice of before the Coruña affair is completed. The first impression will be the most powerful, and I wish earnestly to get Sir John Moore well before the world and compact in argument before his enemies can attack the work.

Apropos. After ending the Convention, which also ends the 1st book, do you think that I had better begin with Moore, or give a view of the state of Madrid and the movements upon the Ebro up to the moment when Napoleon broke the Spanish line and marched upon Madrid? I am inclined for this latter arrangement, because I think it will show the difficulties he laboured under in a more powerful manner, and the reader will feel that nothing can be done by the English army. Whereas, if I commence with Sir John's march, it will appear as if the difficulties were only in his mind instead of being real. The object of the historian should be in this case to make the reader despond, and that can be best effected by bringing all the folly and weakness and cowardice of the Spaniards into direct opposition with the vigour, strength, and rapidity of the French, and then, when the field is desolate, to show the small British force wandering amidst the wrecks of that force which it was intended to aid. . . .

Present my respects to Lady Colborne and believe me

Yours very truly,

W. NAPIER.

Major-General Sir John Colborne, K.C.B.,
Lieut.-Governor of Guernsey,
Guernsey.

XIV.

London: 2 April [? 1826.]

My dear Colborne,—Your letter and parcel came when I was in bed with a slight fever.

Graham Moore told me yesterday of the intended review.²⁵ You are quite right. It was absolutely necessary to do something to stop that scoundrel's mouth. His reputation, however, is completely blasted by the 2nd vol. At Murray's, the bookseller's, I heard many people of all sides in politics speaking of it in terms of contempt and indignation. Murray himself said that it would not do, that it was so bad nobody could bear it. They all agreed that a venomous review was coming out in the *Edinburgh*, but whether Brougham has spoken of yours or that another is preparing, I cannot tell. I hope the last; he should be killed quite.

I feel fully the force of what you say about *divisions*, and I am recomposing every thing I have written with a view to shorten it, but I must know all about the divisional movements although I do not write an account of them. It is that which torments me.

I have read the manuscript of Foy's history, *i.e.* one half of it. The whole reaches only to Vimiera. It is eloquent in a false taste, insolent in tone, puerile in reasoning, and displays throughout a shallow, pre-

²⁵ Apparently a review by Colborne of Southey's history, of which the second volume had just appeared. See below, p. 746, note 30.

sumptuous mind and a virulence of party spirit quite incredible. He says the English soldier is stupid, ignorant, and drunken; that he is brave every time he eats, sleeps, and drinks; that he does not easily retreat, but that, if he does, he must be brought back to fight by blows of a stick, for that he is without honour or moral feeling; that he advances without *élan*, knows nothing, cares for nothing, and huzzas in a battle because, like a brute, that sound is his mode of expressing pleasure or approbation; that the Buenos Ayres affair has proved a truth that nothing has since disproved, *i.e.* that an English army is incapable of operations in the field without the assistance of Portuguese, Spaniards, Germans, or some other continental nation to assist them and to direct their stupid brutality. He says that a French army has never yet been defeated by an equal number of *any other* troops, and that they are incontestably the best soldiers in the world. At the same time his work is full of the grossest abuse of them, quite as bad as Southey himself. Among their *good* qualities which endear them to the people among whom they make war, he *gravely and repeatedly* enumerates the fact that they always debauch the women of the families under whose roof they reside. In short, he appears to me to have been a madman writing the wild dreams of his phrenzy. The most interesting part is an historical and critical essay upon the constitution of the French army from the time of the republic to the Emperor's days, explaining their mode of discipline, their attacks, and the classes in which the real force and merit of their army resides. It may be very false, but it is plausible and interesting.

Yours very sincerely,
W. NAPIER.

Charles Beckwith seems to think that Sir John Moore's fault was in having made night marches. He says that the French always overtook the army at 10 or 11 o'clock, and that we skirmished all day. Consequently nothing more could have happened if the march had been made in daylight. What do you think of this criticism? There appears to me some truth in it.

Major-Genl. Sir John Colborne, K.C.B.,
Lieutenant-Governor,
Guernsey.

XV.

[April 1826?]

My dear Colborne,—I have got your letter and the parcells of your writing, but I have not looked at them. I have been packing up my furniture and looking for a house to live in, having sold my own. I must quit it in a week. . . .

We are in distress. I am afraid that my youngest child cannot hold out; she is continually attacked by inflammation on the brain, and the anxiety Mrs. Napier suffers, together with the trouble and bustle of moving, has reduced her very much.

I have got a prospect of opening communication with Suchet, McDonald, and King Joseph since I last wrote to you. They are, however, uncertain. Suchet promises best. Gurwood is just come back. He says that, with the exception of Mexico, the new republics are a set of

wandering blackguards, and that their bonds and funds will not be paid except out of new loans. Bolivar is the stay of the whole; if he dyes all will break up. He says that the battle of Ayachuco was dexterously won by Sucre contrary to all probability, for that the army of the viceroy was more numerous and far better disciplined and provided than Sucre's; so that the independence of Peru was upon the point of destruction, and may be so again any moment. Hope you have no Peruvian or Colombian bonds.

Yours sincerely,
W. NAPIER.

Sir John Colborne, K.C.B.,
Guernsey.

XVI.

Battle House, Bromham, 3 miles from Devizes,
4 from Calne [? 4 July 1826].

My dear Colborne,—I am glad that I shall have an opportunity of seeing you, for my affliction²⁶ and moving and waiting for your papers have kept back the history sadly.

I wish much to shew you what I have written; it is rough and wants a great deal of alteration as to stile and some expressions which I find it hard to keep down at first writing, but which yours and Bickersteth's criticisms will effectually kill in time. I find that the anger or enthusiasm which one generates by the study of an infamous or great action is apt to extract strong expressions at the moment which upon after reading appear misplaced, and this I take to be the difference between oratory and writing: the first warms the hearers as well as the speaker, and that renders it safer to indulge in 'King Cambyzes' vein.'

By-the-by Mr. Moore, the poet, who lives close by here, tells me that Sir G. Murray's speech about flogging (which appeared to me very reasonable and sound, altho' a little in bad taste for the manner) has done him great injury in London, and that *the world of London* say that no good history can be expected from him. This is excellent logic, to be sure, but it convinces me that an able, scientific work will scarcely go down, and that I must not be surprized if that which I and you and some others consider the best part of mine should be called tedious and ill done.

Yours sincerely,
W. NAPIER.

Major-General Sir John Colborne, K.C.B.,
No. 3 Hanover Square,
London.

XVII.

15 Sept. 1827.

My dear Colborne,—You must have been surprized at my long silence, but I waited for an answer to my last letter, and this morning it arrived, dated in May, having been to Cephalonia in pursuit of Charles. Southey is a malicious, arrogant fellow who thinks that his bold ignorance is a proof of independence of mind. I expect to see the review out this coming number for September. You of course have seen Walter Scot's

²⁶ He had lost a child, Henrietta, in April at Tunbridge Wells.

folly about the General,²⁷ but he is so universally scouted that it is not necessary to make any remarks upon his writings.

I know you well enough to believe that you would rather the Duke was in office without you than that you yourself were in without him,²⁸ and therefore I congratulate you upon his return. Apropos, FitzRoy will frank my letters now.

I have finished all the 1st vol. now and I am daily correcting the stile and the arrangement, which is a greater difficulty than I apprehended. I think I have done the Coruña business tolerably well—not as it might be done, but it is so dependent upon the details for a fair explanation of the General's actions that it is impossible in the general history to do him full justice. I have interwoven your remarks, at least the substance of them, entire into the observations.²⁹ I hope to be able to shew it to you before I print; indeed I would rather send it to you by post than let it go to press without your corrections. You must, therefore, let me know what chance I have of seeing you between this and Christmas. It is very slow work. I wonder if this arises from dulness or accuracy or both, but I toil without perceptible progress. One thing pleased me, however. Bickersteth read the account I give of the Juntas previous to bringing Moore on to the stage, and, on my expressing my anxiety to make out his case well, said, 'I don't know how that may be until I read it, but you have laid a capital foundation for it in what you have written.'

Yours sincerely,

W. NAPIER.

The author of *Cyril Thornton*, whose name is Hamilton, has a history of the Peninsula war in 2 vol. in the press. I hardly think he can have very good information.

XVIII.

[? December 1827.]

My dear Colborne,—Bromham³⁰ is just the shabby fellow that I always thought him. I think that you ought to get the review out if possible, but through Allen is a bad way, because he is capable of putting in abuse of the General to please Lady Holland. He wrote a biographical memoir (for the *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*) of Mr. Fox, in which he satisfactorily explained the cause of Mr. Fox's secession from the Ministry in 1784 (*sic*). This explanation bore hard upon Lord Shelbourne, and Lord Holland, to please his friend Lord Lansdowne, made Mr. Allen erase it, and thus a stigma on his uncle is unjustly affixed through his means, and in a standard work, the quarter whence the memoir came being well

²⁷ His remarks about Moore in his *Life of Napoleon Bonaparte*?

²⁸ Mr. Canning's death on 8 Aug. 1827 upset an arrangement by which Colborne was to become military secretary to the secretary-at-war.

²⁹ Sir John Colborne's letter to Napier of 16 March 1827, here referred to, will be found in my *Life of F. M. Lord Seaton*, p. 383. It contains Colborne's diary of the retreat to Corunna.

³⁰ As he was writing from Bromham, this slip for 'Brougham' was a natural one. Brougham had apparently not accepted Colborne's review for the *Edinburgh*, and it seems never to have been published as a review. I have printed extracts from it in my *Life of Lord Seaton* (1903), pp. 100–8, 394–6.

known. *I saw* the two copies, the one with the explanation, the other without. They were shewn to me by Mrs. Fox.

Lord Londonderry's history is advertized. The author of the *Subaltern*³¹ wrote it for him. Your information is the first I have heard of George's intended visit to Guernsey: perhaps I can send the history by him: at all events you shall see it.

What do you think of war? You know, of course, that Bunbury's youngest son was wounded at Navarino;³² he lost his right arm. Poor little fellow, it is hard at 18 to be mutilated in the middle of peace. It is said that the ministers must go out. With all my heart. I like neither side and I do not despair to see a good host of honest men yet arrayed against both the factions, and determined to have a reform, be it great or little.

Yours sincerely

W. NAPIER.

XIX.

[December 1827?]

My dear Colborne,—I am much disappointed not to have the pleasure of seeing you and very sorry for the cause of your absence. I have waited until now before I answered you because I wished to see the Miss Starkies, who have just arrived from Guernsey, and I was in hopes might have known of some person returning there or to Southampton. Unfortunately they know of nobody and I am afraid of sending the vol. by the coach to Mr. Lefebvre, because it must go by a cross-coach and will likely enough be lost. This would ruin me entirely, for I have recomposed it and rewritten, or rather Mrs. Napier has rewritten, it from beginning to end, and I am quite broke down in mind by the labour and have no copy. I do not think I *could* get it up again if it were lost. It is not, however, yet ready. The authorities are not yet placed, nor the appendix selected and copied. Indeed, I wanted your assistance about selecting letters to publish. That is a task that a writer cannot well do himself, for he gets so used to his subject that many papers of the utmost interest to others appear to him unnecessary. It will be yet a month before I can put it into Murray's hands, and I suppose it will be another before he will strike a bargain. Have I any chance of seeing you in that time? As to publishing it without your having read and corrected it, I will not do it, even though I should send you the proof-sheets: but I wish much that you could examine it at your leisure in manuscript. I have bestowed a great deal of pains upon Moore's part, but I feel dissatisfied still. It does not convey to others the strong impression that I have myself of his difficulties, his judgement and quickness. However it is the best I can do and must stay the stomach of the public until better food is provided.

I am, my dear Colborne,

Yours very sincerely,

W. NAPIER.³³

³¹ G. R. Gleig, who had served in the war as a lieutenant in the 84th Regiment.

³² 20 Oct. 1827. The boy was the son of Colonel H. E. Bunbury and the nephew of Mrs. Napier, his mother and Mrs. Napier being daughters of General Henry Fox.

³³ Colonel Napier visited Sir J. Colborne in Guernsey—probably taking his first volume with him—early in January 1828. He left on 12 January, and his first volume was published later in the spring.

XX.

Calne: 1 Aug. 1828.

My dear Colborne,—I am obliged to write a long letter to you, and, as I see by the papers that you are preparing for an 'immediate attack by the French,' I suppose it will reach you in Guernsey. Otherwise I was in hopes to have seen you or heard of you by this time in England.

You will have probably seen Sorrel's pamphlet, which under the guise of putting me right is a covert attack on Sir John Moore. The error about his falling back to Villa Franca I confess. The closeness of the correspondence misled me to think that it was in consequence of Blake's information (?), especially as I remember well that we marched some miles beyond Astorga and then returned before the retreat to Villa Franca. As to the destruction of stores, I myself saw ammunition thrown into the river, and I marched *over the shoes* in brandy running in the streets of Astorga. The dragoon affair I will punish him for by printing George's³⁴ account of the whole business as it happened, for this pamphlet is *old Baird's*, not Sorel's. The march of 60 miles in 36 hours I cannot make out on the map to be more than 40 miles, and the number of hours appears to me to be also 40, which is not very great exertion. What do you know about this part of the business?

It is not my intention to print another pamphlet; the reply to Lord Strangford is enough for me; but in a 2nd edition I must take some notice of Sorel. The old man's being hurt about the manner I treat him at the battle of Coruña is natural, and I will alter that part and the retreat to Villa Franca, but I will not soften a word about the dragoon and I will repeat and strengthen the assertions about the army's having been irregular. I wish you would give me your view of Sorel's publication.

I have since seen General Bathurst, who I find a clever fellow, but so vain that he kept me for three successive days at his own house employed without relaxation in listening to his assurances, that everything good done by Lord Wellington and by Sir John Moore was in consequence of his directions, and that every failure was because they did not follow his advice. He says that Sir J. Moore was *the only inexperienced man* in the army, and that all the difficulties and losses arose from his inexperience and not from any other causes, and that he, Bathurst, proposed and offered to prepare the means of defending Galicia 15 days before the retreat, and that he also pressed to be allowed to make a raft and bridge at Valencia de St. Juan before we advanced to Sahagun, but that his remonstrances were unheeded. He swore to me that nobody was with Sir John Moore but himself at the battle of Coruña, and that he, Sir John, went into the smoke, where he could see nothing, because he wanted to be near the 42nd out of a foolish partiality and idle affectation of being near an old Scotch regiment. Bathurst spoke to him not to remain there, but he answered, 'I can't leave the 42nd.'

How much of all this was madness and how much folly, I can't make out, but his recollection is so clear and good about facts that it is difficult to know where to leave him. At Calcabellos he says that there was only a picquet of dragoons in front of the town, and that 8,000 or 4,000 French

³⁴ George Napier was the officer who took the despatch to Baird which Baird's dragoon lost on its way to Fraser. See *Early Life of Sir G. Napier*, p. 63.

came after them. . If I recollect right that is *the point you deny*. What do you say about the number of our cavalry? He is also *positive* that Moore did not receive the reports about Vigo at Nogales. He says he changed his route entirely because he remembered Betanzos to be a tolerable harbour when he had formerly reconnoitred it, and that his change of retreat should be attributed to caprice rather than anything else. All this was accompanied by the most ardent protestations of admiration and love for the memory of Sir John.

Lord Howden has sent me all his papers, and I have seen Sir N. Trant, who promises me his, but I think he is a devilish cunning fellow. Do you know him well? How much should I trust him? Lord Londonderry is getting into scrapes in all corners about his errors. I owe Trant's and Lord Howden's communications entirely to him.³⁵ I wish I could see you about Bathurst and Sorel.

Yours,

W. NAPIER.

Savary has contradicted some of my assertions. That about himself I was told by an aide-de-camp of Murat's, but of course Savary knows best. His other remarks are so incorrect about dates, &c., that it is evident he writes from recollection. His memoirs are very interesting, but I do not understand how Napoleon could have moved on the 24th only, when Moore heard of his march the 23rd. There is a great obscurity about the period when Napoleon first heard of our advance.

Major-Genl. Sir John Colborne,
Guernsey.

XXI.

[August 1828.]

My dear Colborne,—I enclose you one of General Bathurst's letters, by which you will perceive the sort of feeling he has against Moore, and perhaps you can give me answers to some of his observations. That about stores I can answer, but in my 2nd edition it will be absolutely necessary to put Sir D. Baird a little more in the wrong, that his version may be valued at its worth. By a shorter retreat from Sahagun Bathurst means a retreat in one column by Valencia de S. Juan, which would have left Benevente open to the French. This appears to me to be a touch of his unhappy state, for it is certainly against all reason to abandon your stores, the main road, the defence of the river and the bridge, and to club the army at one place, merely because 6 or 8 miles' distance might be gained, when time was not wanted and when it would not have been saved by the expedient. Bathurst had, he says, proposed the forming a raft bridge there while we were on the advance—this is *the secret*. What does he mean about the orders being sent direct to the generals and not to the quartermaster-general?

As to the hurry of the retreat and the not checking the French, that is the old story, best answered by the fact that the French did not break our rear-guard once and consequently were checked enough.

Your sincerely,

W. NAPIER.

³⁵ Londonderry had criticised Cradock [*i.e.* Lord Howden] for lingering at Lisbon in February–March 1809. The latter put his views and his papers at Napier's disposal for the discomfiture of Londonderry.

Sorel lays great stress upon Baird's proposition, dated 8th Dec., to defend Galicia. To this I would answer that an army in Galicia would not have troubled Napoleon. He would have placed 50,000 men in Leon to watch it, and could have sent 50,000 more without difficulty to Lisbon and Oporto. The defence of Galicia would then have fallen to pieces. It was an army *moving from Galicia upon his line of communication* that alarmed him and drew him down on the British. He had the 1st corps, 80,000, the 4th corps, 24,000, the 10,000 men in Madrid, all untouched, besides what he carried to Astorga. Besides which Baird's proposition was only made the 8th. The 10th it reached Moore. The answer would have got back the 12th. Baird would have taken 2 days to arrange the mode, and by the time the commissaries at Coruña had begun to ask after provisions and mules, the army would have been at Villa Franca.

Major-Genl. Sir John Colborne, K.C.B.,
Lieut.-Governor,
Guernsey.

Enclosure.

Bath: 1 Aug. 1828.

My dear Colonel Napier,— . . . Two days ago I received Sorell's pamphlet. It seems written with moderation, and upon most parts you know I should agree with him rather than with you, as I fear Sir John had *at least* his full share of blame for any irregularities in the retreat, from not taking sufficient precautions to check the rapid advance of the enemy from Astorga and even not looking *early enough* to the means of the most expeditious and shortest retreat from Sahagun; and I forgot to tell you that on the day he proposed to advance, I was sent with a squadron of the 15th to reconnoitre the banks of the Carrion, and a most long and *desperate* march it would have been all night in the snow and over half-frozen streams, if it had been persisted in. I returned late at night, just as he had determined to countermand the columns.

I see also, what I always believed, that it was *Sir John* himself by a direct communication to the Lt.-generals altered the arrangements for the route of the divisions without communicating to the Q.M.-General. Otherwise Sir David Baird's division would not have had the distance from Astorga to Cacabellos to go over in so short a time. *Nor was it necessary*: for if, when pressed, Sir John had ordered Sir David from Manzanal to Cacabellos and the villages between that and Bembidre, he would have had support near the reserve and shortened the march from Astorga to at most from 85 to 40 miles; for I believe even to Cacabellos was not much more than 45 to 50 at most, and not 60, and Sir David would then have been at Villa Franca when the reserve were at Cacabellos.

I believe also that Sir John having left Sir David to fix the point of retreat for himself, adopted it for the whole army without examining minutely the documents on which Vigo was fixed upon and Corunna given up; and that he *changed* it, equally without examination of these documents, or even enquiring much into the subject either of Sir David or those about him, and I fear without even any *reports* from any

officers sent by himself; but only from the impression in his own mind respecting Betanzos, and finding himself pressed more than he expected. And he certainly never enquired, nor would he adopt when proposed, any of those means which Sir David Baird had prepared and intended to use and check the advance of the enemy if he had himself been pressed.

I believe these causes to have materially contributed to the hurry and disorder of the retreat, though I admit the weather had also much effect, but the conduct of the officers had partly the excuses Sorell makes for them.

The *indefinite* order to destroy stores, by which the Engineers were deprived of tools that were afterwards wanted, was *Sir J. Moore's*; and I believe that he did not state that he might want some for destroying bridges and roads, as he had no intention or thought of destroying any till he got to Lugo.

Sorell is also right that Sir David *destroyed no stores*—only the few shot thrown down wells to make room for money, as I mentioned to you. Sorell's reasoning about the advance I think *wrong*: though it may be doubtful whether it was not pushed a day too long, and, as I before said, without sufficient calculation for an easy and expeditious retreat.

Yours very sincerely,

JAMES BATHURST.

XXII.

From Sir George Napier.

17 May [1828].

I only am just returned from Paris. Soult was uncommonly kind to me, and you never heard a man louder in his unqualified praise of every part of Wm.'s history, and he said the observations at the end of the chapters were perfect, and as far as he was a judge required no comment but met his full and entire approbation, and that the whole French army would and must be highly pleased with the correctness and justness with which he narrated the different events of the war, and that his name would go down to posterity as a great and just historian who had not allowed either national or party influence to make him swerve from the truth. Old Count Dumas is in high delight and said that he had little or no criticisms to make, but that in a few instances Willm. was a little *too hard* on them and that he had written to him about it; that the account of the General's retreat was perfect and the eloquence above his praise; that William was the only historian who seemed to comprehend Napoleon's military views on entering Spain and the only man who had done justice to the Emperor, and that all he stated was new to France and to Europe. Clausel praised it highly, but Balesteros, who I met at Soult's, had not read it. Count Dumas has nearly got it all translated, and uncommonly well. He has half of it printed already, and hopes to see it published by the end of next month. Soult gave me a print of himself before I came away. General Anderson, whom I saw two days ago, told me to write to Wm. and tell him that he had met *Lord Stewart* (Sir Chas.), who said, 'I am Napier-mad; every word in that book is correct, and it is perfect, and the first and only history of that time.' In short, Anderson told me

he has universally found it most highly praised. Wm. has heard *nothing* from either the Duke or Lord FitzRoy, but we hear Mrs. Arbuthnot says *she* is highly pleased with the dedication and much *amused* with the History, which is a curious frase. But I suppose His Grace has not had time to read it yet, or perhaps he may not be pleased with the politicks.

XXIII.

From Sir George Napier.

Dawlish : 27 Jan. 1829.

William has had a most able, clever statement, written by the *Duke himself*, with an explanatory plan of the passage of the Duro, sent him by His Grace, for his next volume. William says it is *perfect* and puts to flight all the stories about conspiracies in Soult's army having anything to say to the Duke's operations at that period. He seems highly pleased with it, and no wonder, as it shows the Duke's opinion of his work, or he would not at this busy period have taken the trouble to write it for him. I hear Beresford abuses it finely and says he has just *two Gods*, Moore and Buonaparté, and cares for no one else. William says he will see that he has a Devil as well as Gods. He hopes to be ready with it by the end of spring.

XXIV.

From Sir George Napier.

Florence : 25 July 1834.

I do not know what you think of the review³⁶ of Mr. James Moore's *Life* of his brother, but I am sure he well deserves it, for so abominable a work as he has given to the public under the name of a *Life* of that great man. William's fourth volume is selling off amazingly, and approved by all, I hear, except Lord Beresford, who has attacked him again, and William has answered him *wickedly*. I hear he has proceeded a long way in the fifth volume.

XXV.

From Sir George Napier.

Pisa : 20 April 1835.

I agree with you in wishing Wm. had been less *severe* in his review of Sir John Moore's *Life* (though he has never told me he was the writer,) on account of the Admiral³⁷ and the rest of the family. As to Mr. Carrick Moore, I pity him not.

XXVI.

From Admiral Sir Graham Moore.

Brook Farm, Cobham, Surrey : 29 Sept. 1834.

I wished him to have compiled it almost entirely from the letters of which I have a great number and from the journal. It was with difficulty that James was persuaded to insert even the letters which appear in the work, and he could not be persuaded to omit his own general observations

³⁶ By Colonel William Napier. It appeared in the *Edinburgh Review* of April 1834.

³⁷ Sir Graham Moore.

on politicks, which only tended to bring a host of party scriblers [about him] without illustrating the character of the General in the least. You know that John always kept aloof from party and that he felt no enthusiastic admiration for the leading men of any of the great parties in the state, of whom he formed his judgement from their actions and not at all from their speeches. The General's letters and his journal, together with what was known to the public of his professional conduct, formed ample materials for exemplifying his character and give a much clearer idea of the man than any description drawn up by the most acute observer could afford.

I have to thank Lord Seaton and the Hon. W. N. Bruce, grandson of Sir William Napier, for kindly giving their sanction to the present publication, and Mr. Charles Oman, Fellow of All Souls' College, Oxford, for kindly supplying some notes and corrections.

G. C. MOORE SMITH.