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Sommario/riassunto

A masterful, epic account of the Spanish Ulcer that drained Napoleon's resources and played a pivotal role in the end of his domination of Europe. The author served with distinction in the actions of the Light Division, such as the epic march to Talavera, the battles of Fuentes d'Onoro, Salamanca, Nivelle, Orthes and Toulouse. He left the service a General and Knight Commander of the Order of Bath. Napier's History would rank as the most important history to be written by an actual participant, and was as controversial with his countrymen as among his contemporaries on the Continent.]Continuing on from his first volume, Napier's second volume focuses on the period (late 1808-mid 1810). Starting in earnest with the second French invasion of Portugal, and the re-introduction of the Duke of Wellington to the Peninsular, having been called back to England to face a Court of Inquiry over the convention of Cintra [by whom he was exonerated fully, even praised]. The state of Portugal's defence is assessed, brave soldiers but not organised into an army as yet, and the far-reaching appointment of the English general William Carr Beresford as Portuguese Marshal detailed along with the militia raised in the provinces. Thus with inauspicious beginnings Wellington, begins his first full campaign in the Peninsula. The lightning capture of Porto and the pursuit of Soult's Army of Portugal then ensue before Wellington makes his first foray into Spain. Culminating in the battle of Talavera, although on paper won bloodily, and a somewhat dangerous retreat follow, the fruits of bad co-operation of the parts of the Allies bordering on malign behaviour. Napier goes to some trouble to cover all areas of the Peninsular, not just those that the British soldiers were directly involved in.