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Intro -- TABLE OF CONTENTS -- LIST OF PLATES. -- DEDICATION -- PREFACE. -- NOTICES. -- BOOK THE FIRST. -- CHAPTER I.-1807 -- Introduction -- CHAPTER II.-1807 to July 1808 -- Dissensions in the Spanish court-Secret treaty and convention of Fontainebleau-Junot's army enters Spain-Dupont's and Moncey's corps enter Spain-Duhesme's corps enters Catalonia-Insurrections of Aranjuez and Madrid-Charles the Fourth abdicates-Ferdinand p arrives at Madrid -- CHAPTER III.-1808 -- Council of Castile refuses to take the oath of allegiance-Supreme junta established at Seville-Marquis of Solano murdered at Cadiz, and the Conde d'Aguilar at Seville-Intercourse between Castanos and Sir Hew Dalrymple-General Spencer and admiral Purvis ofHorrible murder of Filanghieri -- CHAPTER IV.-1808 -- New French corps formed in Navarre-Duhesme fixes himself at Barcelona-Importance of that city-Napoleon's military plan and arrangements -- CHAPTER, V.-June 1808 -- First operations of marshal Bessieres-Spaniards defeated at Cabecon, at Segovia, at Logrono, at Torquemada-French take Santander-Lefebre Desnouettes defeats the Spaniards on the Ebro, on the Huecha, on the Xalon-First siege of Zaragoza-Observations -- OPERATIONS OF MARSHAL BESSIERES. -- FIRST SIEGE OF ZARAGOZA. -- OBSERVATIONS. -- CHAPTER VI.-June 1808 to August 1808 -- Operations in Catalonia-General Swartz marches against the town of Manresa, and general Chabran against Taragona-French defeated at Bruch-Chabran recalled-Burns Arbos-Marches against Bruch- Retreats-Duhesme assaults Gerona-Is repulsed with loss-Action on Observations -- OPERATIONS IN CATALONIA. -- OBSERVATIONS. -- OPERATIONS OF MARSHAL MONCEY. -- OBSERVATIONS. -- CHAPTER VII.-June 1808 to July 1808. Second operations of Bessieres-Blake's and Cuesta's armies unite at Benevente-Generals disagree-Battle of Rio Seco-Bessieres' endeavour to corrupt the Spanish generals fails-Bessieres marches to invade Galicia, is recalled, and falls back to Burgos-Observations -- OPERATIONS AGAINST BLAKE AND CUESTA. -- BATTLE OF RIO SECO. -- OBSERVATIONS. -- CHAPTER VIII.-June 1808 to August 1808 -- Dupont marches against Andalusia, forces the bridge of Alcolea, takes Cordoba-Alarm at Seville-Castanos arrives, forms a new army-Dupont retreats to Andujar, attacks the town of Jaen-Vedel forces the pass of Despenas Perros, arrives at Baylen-Spanish armyImpolicy of so doing -- OPERATIONS IN ANDALUSIA. -- OBSERVATIONS. -- BOOK THE SECOND. -- CHAPTER I.-November 1807 to May 1808 -- The Asturian deputies received with enthusiasm in England-Ministers precipitate-Imprudent choice of agents-Junot marches to Alcantara, joined by the Spanish contingent, enters Portugal, arrives at Abrantes, pushes on to Lisbon-Prince regent emigrates to tAlarm of the French -- INVASION OF PORTUGAL. -- CHAPTER II.-June 1808 to August 1808 -- The Spanish general Belesta seizes general Quesnel and retires to Galicia-Insurrection at Oporto-Junot disarms and confines the Spanish soldiers near Lisbon-General Avril's column returns to Estremos-General Loison marches from Almeida against Oporto -- isObservations -- OBSERVATIONS. -- CHAPTER III.-June 1808 to July 1808 -- Political and military retrospect-Mr. Fox's conduct contrasted with that of his successors-General Spencer sent to the Mediterranean-Sir John Moore withdrawn from thence -- arrives in England -- sent to Sweden-Spencer arrives at Gibraltar-Ceuta, the object ofConfused arrangements made by the ministers -- CHAPTER IV-July 1808 to August 1808. Sir A. Wellesley quits his troops and proceeds to Coruna-Junta refuse assistance in men, but ask for and obtain money-Sir Arthur goes to Oporto -- arranges a plan with the bishop -- proceeds to the Tagus -- rejoins his troops, joined by Spencer -- disembarks at tJunot

concentrates his army at Torres Vedras -- COMBAT OF RORICA. -- CHAPTER V.-August 1808 to September 1808 -- Portuguese take Abrantes-Generals Acland and Anstruther land and join the British army at Vimiero-Sir Harry Burrard arrives-Battle of Vimiero-Junot defeated-Sir Hew Dalrymple arrives-Armistice -Terms of it-Junot returns to Lisbon-Negotiates for a convention-Reflections thereupon -- BATTLE OF VIMIERO. -- CHAPTER VI.-August 1808 to September 1808 -- The bishop and junta of Oporto aim at the supreme power -- wish to establish the seat of government of Oporto -- their intrigues -- strange proceedings of general Decken -- reflections thereupon-Clamour raised against the convention in England and in Portugal -- so on the convention -- OBSERVATIONS. -- BOOK THE THIRD. -- CHAPTER I.-1808 -- Comparison between the Portuguese and Spanish people-The general opinion of French weakness and Spanish strength and energy, fallacious -Contracted policy of the English cabinet-Account of the civil and military agents employed-Many of them act without judgment-Extravagant project to procure them -- OPERATIONS OF THE SPANISH ARMIES IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE BATTLE OF BAYLEN. -- CHAPTER II.-1808 to September 1808 -- Internal political transactions-Factions in Galicia, Asturias, Leon, and Castille-Flagitious conduct of the junta of Seville-Mr. Stuart endeavours to establish a northern cortes-Activity of the council of Castillo -- proposes a supreme government agreeable-Mr. Frere appointed envoy extraordinary, & -- c. -- INTERNAL POLITICAL TRANSACTIONS. -- EXTERNAL POLITICAL RELATIONS OF SPAIN.

CHAPTER III.-September 1808 to November 1808 -- Political position of Napoleon -- he resolves to crush the Spaniards -- his energy and activity -- marches his armies from every part of Europe towards Spain -- his oration to his soldiers-Conference at Erfurth -- Negotiations for peace-Petulant conduct of Mr. Cann-Gloomy aspect of affairs --

CHAPTER IV.-September 1808 -- Movements of the Spanish generals on the Ebro -- their absurd confidence, their want of system and concert-General opinion that the French are weak-Real strength of the king-Marshall Ney and general Jourdan join the army-Military errors of the king exposed-Observations thereupon -- CAMPAIGN OF THE FRENCH AND SPANISH ARMIES BEFORE THE ARRIVAL OF THE EMPEROR. -- OBSERVATIONS. -- CHAPTER V.-September 1808 to November 1808 -- Position and strength of the French and Spanish armies-Blake moves from Reynosa to the Upper Ebro -- sends a division to Bilbao -- French retire from that town-Ney quits his position near Logrono, and retakes Bilbao-The armies of the centre and right approach-Observations -- COMBAT AT DURANGO. -- OBSERVATIONS -- BOOK THE FOURTH. --

CHAPTER I.-November 1808 -- Napoleon arrives at Bayonne-Blake advances towards Bilbao-The count Belvedere arrives at Burgos-The first and fourth corps advance -Combat of Guenes-Blake retreats-Napoleon at Vitoria = -- his plan-Soult takes the command of the second corps-Battle of Gamonal-Battle of Tudela -- BATTLE OF GAMONAL. -- THE BATTLE OF ESPINOSA. -- BATTLE OF TUDELA. --

CHAPTER II.-November 1808 to December 1808 -- Napoleon marches against the capital -- forces the pass of the Somosierra -St. Juan murdered by his men-Tumults in Madrid-French army arrives there -- the Retiro stormed-Town capitulates-Remains of Castanos' army driven across the Tagus -- retire to Cuenca-Napoleon-Defenceless state of Spain -- PASSAGE OF THE SOMOSIERRA.

CHAPTER III.-November 1808 to December 1808 -- Sir John Moore arrives at Salamanca -- hears of the battle of Espinosa-His dangerous position -- discovers the real state of affairs -- contemplates a hardy enterprise -- hears of the defeat of Tudela -- resolves to retreat --

waits for general Hope's division-DangerMr. Frere, incapable of judging rightly, opposes the retreat -- his weakness and levity -- insults the general -- sends colonel Charmilly -- OPERATIONS OF THE BRITISH ARMY. -- CHAPTER IV.-December 1808 -- British army advances towards Burgos-French outposts surprised at Rueda-Letter from Berthier to Soult intercepted-Direction of the march changed-Mr. Stuart and a member of the junta arrive at headquarters-Arrogant and insulting letter of Mr. Frere-Noble aThe emperor unites his army at Astorga -- hears of the Austrian war -- orders Marshal Soult to pursue the English army, and returns to France. -- CHAPTER V.-January 1809 -- Sir John Moore retreats towards Vigo -- is closely pursued-Miserable scene at Bembibre-Excesses at Villa Franca-Combat at Calcabellos-Death of general Colbert-March to Nogales-Line of retreat changed from Vigo to Coruna-Skilful passage of the bridge of ConsHis character -- BATTLE OF CORUNA. -- CHAPTER VI. -- Observations-The conduct of Napoleon and that of the English cabinet compared-The emperor's military dispositions examined-Propriety of Sir John Moore's operations discussed-Diagram, exposing the relative positions of Spanish, French, and English armies-PSir John Moore's judgment defended -- his conduct calumniated by interested men for party purposes -- eulogized by Marshal Soult, by Napoleon, by the Duke of Wellington -- OBSERVATIONS. -- BOOK THE FIFTH -- CHAPTER I.-January 1809 to February 1809.

Slight effect produced in England by the result of the campaign-Debates in parliament-Treaty with Spain-Napoleon receives addresses at Valladolid-Joseph enters Madrid-Appointed the emperor's lieutenant-Distribution of the French army-The duke of Dantzig fCuesta takes post on the Tagus, and breaks down the bridge of Almaraz.

Sommario/riassunto

William Napier, was born in Dublin in 1785, one of a number of brothers who entered the British army and excelled in the service although it is his History of the War in the Peninsular that he is most remembered for. A masteful, epic account of the Spanish Ulcer that drained Napoleon's resources and played a pivotal role in the end of his domination of Europe.Napier gained his first commission as an ensign in the Royal Irish Artillery in 1800. By the time of the Napoleonic Wars he had transferred to to the 52nd Regiment, which was being trained as light infantry at Shorncliffe under Sir John Moore. Napier saw his first service in the Peninsular with the 43rd Foot under Sir John Moore during the Corunna campaign. Napier would go on to be conspicuous 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.In this first volume (1807 to beginning of 1809), Napier surveys the scene in mainland Europe and particularly Spain and Portugal, the rotten state of politics in Spain, the isolation of Portugal as the only ally of Great Britain still not under Napoleon's domination. He starts with the machinations of the French to supplant the Bourbon regime in Spain and the joint Franco-Spanish invasion of Portugal with its flood of French troops supposed friends soon to be enemies. The initial disastrous campaigns of the splintered Spanish armies are written of in great detail, battles such as Rio Seco and Ucles, and the parlous state of the Spanish government are shown in all their infamy, juxtaposed to the second defence of Saragossa by the valorous Spaniards. Wellington's first short-lived campaign in Portugal, including the battle of Vimiero is given due attention and much is lavished on the campaign of Sir John Moore.A Classic, deserves to be read and re-read.
