

MY LORD,

Merida, Jan. 6, 1812.

MY letter of the 2d and 3d instant would acquaint your Lordship of my having, on the 1st instant, marched with the corps under my command to Almendralejo, in the hope that Count d'Erlon, who had collected the greater part of his troops at that place, might have given me an opportunity of coming in contact with him, as well as of my disappointment in that respect, he having previously fallen back in the direction of Lerena, leaving only a small rear-guard in Almendralejo, which retired also on our approach. I have the honour to acquaint your Lordship, that it was my intention to have followed the enemy, and, failing in my desire to bring him to action, to have given him every possible annoyance in his retreat; but the dreadful state of the weather, the condition of the roads (which are daily becoming worse), and the consequent difficulty of getting up my supplies, render any further operations on my part impossible for the present, without incurring risks, and making sacrifices, greater than could have been justified by the occasion, or by your Lordship's instructions. I therefore determined, after halting two days at Almendralejo, and occupying Villa Franca and Fuente del Maestre, to put the troops into cantonments in this town and neighbourhood, there to await a more favourable opportunity of acting; trusting that the alarm occasioned to the enemy by the movement already made, will have in part effected one of the objects with which I was instructed by your Lordship to take the field. A part of the troops accordingly returned here yesterday, and the remainder are now on their march; the enemy being, by the last accounts which I have received, also in full march towards the south, his rear-guard having left Zafra and Los Santos yesterday. I have the satisfaction to enclose, for your Lordship's information, a letter from the Honourable Lieutenant-Colonel Abercromby, detailing the particulars of a successful attack, made by some of the 2d hussars and Portuguese cavalry, acting under his orders at Fuente del Maestre, on a body of the enemy's dragoons, which reflects the greatest credit on Lieutenant-Colonel Abercromby who directed, and the officers and non-commissioned officers and men who executed it.

I have, &c.

(Signed)

R. HILL.

SIR,

Merida, January 5, 1812.

IN obedience to your orders, I marched on the
No. 65616.

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3d instant from Almendralejo at noon, with the column you did me the honour to place under my command, and reached Fuente del Maestre at a little after four o'clock in the evening of that day. On my arrival, I learned that some of the enemy's cavalry were still in the neighbourhood; and having passed through the town, I halted the column, and proceeded to reconnoitre in front. About one hundred of the enemy's horse were discovered on the Los Santos road, who, apparently ignorant of our force, formed squadron, and advanced towards us. The Portuguese cavalry exchanged a few shots with them until the hussars were brought up; the enemy then halted, and shewed a disposition to charge; in this, however, he was quickly frustrated. The two squadrons of the hussars were formed on the right, and one squadron of the 10th Portuguese cavalry on the left. Instantly the enemy were charged on one flank by the squadron of Portuguese, under Lieutenant Colonel Campbell, and by Captain Cleves's squadron on the other. The right hussar squadron remained in reserve. A few minutes decided the contest. The enemy being completely routed, left in our hands two officers and thirty men, besides several killed. The squadron which remained in reserve was then sent in pursuit, as far as prudence would allow.

No language of mine can do sufficient justice to the gallantry of Lieutenant-Colonel Campbell, as well as that of Lieutenant Hutchinson, the other officers and men composing the squadron of Portuguese cavalry. Suffice it to say, that on this occasion the hussars under Major Busche upheld the high military character they are so universally known to possess.

This little affair has been achieved with very trifling loss on our side.

Inclosed I have the honour to transmit to you a list of the killed and wounded.

(Signed) A. ABERCROMBY, Lieut. Col.

To Lieutenant General Hill, &c. &c. &c.

Returns of killed, wounded, and missing of the Second Division of the Army under His Excellency General Lord Viscount Wellington, K. B. in Action with the Enemy near Fuente del Maestre, on the 3d of January 1812.

Head-Quarters, Gallegos, Jan. 9, 1812.

2d Hussars King's German Legion—1 rank and file, 2 horses, killed; 2 serjeants, 12 rank and file, 4 horses, wounded.
Portuguese Cavalry—1 staff, 5 rank and file, horse, wounded; 1 horse, missing.

