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TRANSCRIBER’S NOTE

\* Italics are denoted by underscores as in \_italics\_, and small caps

are represented in upper case as in SMALL CAPS.

\* Obvious printer errors have been silently corrected.

\* Original spelling was kept, but variant spellings were made

consistent when a predominant usage was found.

\* Errata and Notes on illustrations have been inserted into their

proper places in the text.

\* To aid referencing places and names in present-day maps and

documents, outdated and current spellings of some proper names

follow:

Albaracin, now Albarracín,

Albondonates, now Algodonales,

Albuquerque, now Alburquerque,

Alcanizas, now Alcañices,

Alemtejo, now Alentejo,

Almanza, now Almansa,

Almunecar, now Almuñecar,

Araçena, now Aracena,

Arzobispo, now El Puente del Arzobispo,

Baccelar (Manuel), now Manuel Pinto de Morais Bacelar,

Ballasteros, now Ballesteros,

Barcellos, now Barcelos,

Baylen, now Bailén,

Boçaco, now Buçaco,

Bussaco, now Buçaco,

Cacabellos, now Cacabelos,

Caçeres, now Cáceres,

Calandriz, now Calhandriz,

Campredon, now Camprodón,

Cardadeu, now Cardedeu,

Compostella, now Compostela,

Cordova, now Córdoba,

Corunna, now La Coruña,

Dao, now Dão,

Daymiel, now Daimiel,

Deleytosa, now Deleitosa,

Despeña-Perros, now Despeñaperros,

Douro, now Duero (in Spain),

Douro (in Portugal),

El Moral, now Moral de Calatrava,

Estremadura, now Extremadura (in Spain),

Estremadura (in Portugal),

Golegão, now Golegã,

Guadalaviar (river), now Turia (río),

Guimaraens, now Guimarães,

La Baneza, now La Bañeza

La Bispal, now La Bisbal,

Loxa, now Loja,

Majorca, now Mallorca,

Meza, now Mesas de Ibor,

Momblanch, now Montblanch,

Nabao (river), now Nabão (río),

Ona (river), now Güeña (río),

Oña (river), now Oñar (río),

Palleresa, now Pallaresa,

Pampeluna, now Pamplona,

Ripol, now Ripoll,

Sabugoça, now Sabugosa

Santona, now Santoña,

Saragossa, now Zaragoza,

Senabria, now Sanabria,

Tagus (river), now Tajo (Spanish), Tejo (Portuguese),

Tajuna, now Tajuña,

Tondella, now Tondela,

Truxillo, now Trujillo,

Vierzo, now El Bierzo,

Villaharta, now Villarta de San Juan,

Vincente, now Vicente,

Vittoria, now Vitoria,

Xeres, now Jerez,

\* Chapter headers and Table of contents have been made consistent.

\* Footnotes have been renumbered into a single series. Each footnote

is placed at the end of the paragraph that includes its anchor.

\* In p. 49, the anchor placement for footnote 52 is conjectured; no

anchor was found in the printed original.

\* In pp. 202, 398 and 428, paragraphs have been broken at “(1)” for

a more natural presentation and an easier reading.

[Illustration:\_Duke of Wellington\_

\_From a portrait in the Hope Collection\_

(\_1813\_)]

A HISTORY OF THE

PENINSULAR WAR

BY

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DE LA HISTORIA OF MADRID

VOL. III

SEPT. 1809-DEC. 1810

OCAÑA CADIZ BUSSACO TORRES VEDRAS

WITH MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

OXFORD

AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

1908

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PREFACE

This, the third volume of the History of the Peninsular War, covers

a longer period than either of its predecessors, extending over the

sixteen months from Wellington’s arrival at Badajoz on his retreat

from Talavera (Sept. 3, 1809) to the deadlock in front of Santarem

(Dec. 1810), which marked the end of Masséna’s offensive campaign

in Portugal. It thus embraces the central crisis of the whole war,

the arrival of the French in front of the Lines of Torres Vedras and

their first short retreat, after they had realized the impossibility

of forcing that impregnable barrier to their advance. The retreat

that began at Sobral on the night of Nov. 14, 1810, was to end at

Toulouse on April 11, 1814. The armies of the Emperor were never

able to repeat the experiment of 1810, and to assume a general and

vigorous offensive against Wellington and Portugal. In 1811 they

were on the defensive, despite of certain local and partial attempts

to recover their lost initiative. In 1812 they had to abandon

half Spain--Andalusia, Estremadura, Asturias, La Mancha, and much

more,--despite of Wellington’s temporary check before Burgos. In

1813 they were swept across the Pyrenees and the Bidassoa; in 1814

they were fighting a losing game in their own land. Rightly then

may Masséna’s retreat to Santarem be called the beginning of the

end--though it was not for a full year more that Wellington’s final

offensive commenced, with the investment of Ciudad Rodrigo on Jan. 8,

1812.

The campaign of Bussaco and Torres Vedras, therefore, marked the

turning-point of the whole war, and I have endeavoured to set forth

its meaning in full detail, devoting special care to the explanation

of Wellington’s triple device for arresting the French advance--his

combination of the system of devastation, of the raising of the

\_levée en masse\_ in Portugal, and of the construction of great

defensive lines in front of Lisbon. Each of these three measures

would have been incomplete without the other two. For the Lines of

Torres Vedras might not have saved Portugal and Europe from the

domination of Napoleon, if the invading army had not been surrounded

on all sides by the light screen of irregular troops, which cut

its communications, and prevented it from foraging far afield. Nor

would Masséna have been turned back, if the land through which he

had advanced had been left unravaged, and if every large village had

contained enough food to subsist a brigade for a day or a battalion

for a week.

The preparations, the advance, and the retreat of Masséna cover about

half of this volume. The rest of it is occupied with the operations

of the French in Northern, Eastern, and Southern Spain--operations

which seemed decisive at the moment, but which turned out to be

mere side-issues in the great contest. For Soult’s conquest of

Andalusia, and Suchet’s victories in Aragon, Catalonia, and Valencia

only distracted the imperial generals from their central task--the

expulsion of Wellington and his army from the Peninsula. Most

readers will, I think, find a good deal of new information in the

accounts of the siege of Gerona and the battle of Ocaña. The credit

due to Alvarez for the defence of the Catalonian city has never

been properly set forth before in any English history, nor have the

details of Areizaga’s miserable campaign in La Mancha been fully

studied. In particular, the composition and strength of his army have

never before been elucidated, and Appendices V, VI of this volume

consist of absolutely unpublished documents.

I have to offer my grateful thanks to those who have been good

enough to assist me in the writing of this book, by furnishing me

with stores of private papers, or hitherto unknown official reports.

Two of the kind helpers who put me on the track of new information

for the compiling of Volume II have passed away while Volume III

was in progress. I bitterly regret the loss of my friends General

Arteche and Colonel F. A. Whinyates. The former, with his unrivalled

knowledge of the contents of the historical department of the Madrid

War Office, had enabled me to discover many a lost document of

importance. The latter had placed at my disposal his copious store

of papers, letters, and diaries relating to his old corps, the Royal

Artillery. In this present section of the history of the war I am

still using much of the material which he lent me.

But new helpers have come to my aid while this volume was being

written. To three of them I must express my special gratitude.

The first is Mr. W. S. M. D’Urban, of Newport House, near Exeter,

who has furnished me with copies of a collection of papers of

unique interest, the diary and correspondence of his grandfather,

Sir Benjamin D’Urban, who served as the Quarter-Master-General

of the Portuguese army, under Marshal Beresford, during the two

years covered by this section of my history. Thanks to the mass of

documents furnished by Mr. D’Urban’s kindness, I am now in a position

to follow the details of the organization, movements, and exploits

of the Portuguese army in a way that had hitherto been impossible to

me. Moreover, Sir Benjamin’s day by day criticisms on the strategy

and tactics both of Masséna and of Wellington have the highest

interest, as reflecting the opinions of the more intelligent section

of the head-quarters staff. It is noteworthy to find that, while

many of Wellington’s chief subordinates despaired of the situation

in 1810, there were some who already felt an enthusiastic confidence

in the plans of their leader, so much so that their criticisms

were reserved for the occasions when, in their opinion, he showed

himself over-cautious, and refused to take full advantage of the

uncomfortable positions into which he had lured his enemy.

The second mass of interesting private papers placed in my hands

of late is the personal correspondence of Nicholas Trant and John

Wilson, the two enterprising leaders of Portuguese militia forces,

to whom Wellington had entrusted the cutting off of Masséna’s

communication with Spain, and the restriction of his raids for

sustenance to feed his army. These letters have been lent me by

Commander Bertram Chambers of H.M.S. \_Resolution\_, a collateral

relative of Wilson. They fill up a gap in the military history of

1810, for no one hitherto had the opportunity of following out in

detail the doings of these two adventurous soldiers and trusty

friends, while they were engaged in the difficult task that was set

them. For a sample of Trant’s breezy style of correspondence, I may

refer the reader to pages 399-400 of this volume. Unfortunately, when

the two militia generals were in actual contact, their correspondence

naturally ceased, so that the series of letters has many \_lacunae\_.

But they are nevertheless of the highest value.

Thirdly, I have to thank Sir Henry Le Marchant for a sight of the

private papers of his grandfather, the well-known cavalry brigadier,

General John Gaspar Le Marchant, who fell at Salamanca. He did not

land in the Peninsula till 1811, but during the preceding year he was

receiving many letters of interest, some from his own contemporaries,

officers of high rank in Wellington’s army, others from younger men,

who had been his pupils while he was in command of the Military

College at High Wycombe. Some of the seniors, and one especially,

were among those down-hearted men--of the opposite type to Benjamin

D’Urban--who were consistently expecting disaster, and looked for a

hasty embarkation at Lisbon as the natural end of the campaign of

1810. The younger men took a very different view of affairs, and

invariably sent cheerful accounts of the doings of the army.

I must mention, once more, kind assistance from the officials of the

Historical sections of the War Ministries at Paris and at Madrid.

My friend Commandant Balagny, who gave me so much help during the

compilation of my second volume, has unfortunately been absent on a

military mission to Brazil during the last three years. But the kind

offices of M. Martinien have continually aided me in getting access

to the particular sections of the Paris archives with which I was

from time to time concerned. I must here take the opportunity of

expressing once more my admiration for his colossal work, the \_Liste

des officiers tués et blessés pendant les Guerres de l’Empire\_,

which, on the numberless occasions when no casualty-return appears

in the Paris archives, enables one to determine what regiments

were present at any action, and in what proportion they suffered.

At Madrid Captain Emilio Figueras has continued his kind services,

offered during the compilation of my second volume, and was

indefatigable in going through the papers of 1810 with me, during my

two visits to the Spanish capital.

Among my English helpers I must cite with special gratitude four

names. The first is that of Mr. C. T. Atkinson, Fellow of Exeter

College, Oxford, who has read the proofs of the greater part of

this volume, and given me many valuable corrections and pieces of

information, from his wide knowledge of British regimental history.

The second is that of Major John H. Leslie, R.A., who has compiled

the Artillery Appendix to this section, corresponding to that which

Colonel Whinyates compiled for the last. I am also most grateful to

him for an early view of the useful ‘Dickson Papers,’ which he is

publishing for the Royal Artillery Institution. The third is that

of the Rev. Alexander Craufurd, who has continued to give me notes

on the history of the Light Division, while it was commanded by his

grandfather, the famous Robert Craufurd. The fourth is that of Mr. C.

E. Doble of the Clarendon Press, who has again read for errors every

page of a long volume.

Lastly, the indefatigable compiler of the Index must receive once

more my heartfelt thanks for a labour of love.

The reader will find several topographical notes appended at the

end of chapters, the results of my first and second tours along the

borderland of Spain and Portugal. Two long visits to the battlefield

of Bussaco, and some days spent between the Coa and the Agueda, and

behind the Lines of Torres Vedras, gave me many new topographical

facts of importance. Drives and walks in the Badajoz-Elvas country,

and about Coimbra, also turned out most profitable. But my notes on

the battlefields of Fuentes d’Oñoro and Albuera can only be utilized

in my next volume, which I trust may not be long in following its

predecessor into print.

The spelling of many of the Spanish, and more especially the

Portuguese, names may appear unfamiliar to some readers. But I

believe that correctness should be studied above all things, even

though the results in cases like Bussaco with the double s, Golegão,

or Santa Comba Dao, may produce a momentary shock to the eye.

Portuguese spelling, both in personal names and in topography, was

in a state of flux in 1810. For example, the General commanding the

Artillery always appears as da Rosa in the official army lists, yet

signed his name da Roza; countless other instances could be produced.

Where it was possible I have followed the individual’s own version

of his name: he ought to have known best. There are still, no doubt,

errors of spelling surviving: no man is infallible, but I have done

my best to reduce them to a minimum.

C. OMAN.

OXFORD:

\_March 1, 1908\_.

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NOTES ON THE ILLUSTRATIONS

I. SPANISH INFANTRY 1808

This shows the old uniform of Charles IV. The Line regiments had

white, the Foreign and Light regiments blue, coats. Both wore white

breeches and black gaiters: the plume and facings varied in colour

for each regiment.

II. SPANISH INFANTRY 1810

Under the influence of the immense quantity of British materials

supplied, the uniform has completely changed since 1808. The cut is

assimilated to that of the British army--the narrow-topped shako,

and long trousers have been introduced. The coat is dark-blue, the

trousers grey-blue, the facings red. Grenadiers have the grenade,

light-companies the bugle-horn on their shakos.

ERRATA

Page 264, line 13, \_for\_ 318 \_read\_ 333

Page 277, line 20, \_for\_ 1811 \_read\_ 1810

Page 335. Lord Blayney’s force had only a half-battalion, not a

whole battalion of the 89th, but contained 4 companies of

foreign chasseurs, not mentioned in the text. [See his

Memoirs, i. pp. 5-6.]

SECTION XVII

FROM TALAVERA TO OCAÑA

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY. THE CENTRAL JUNTA. WELLESLEY AND WELLINGTON

Between the 20th of August, 1809, when Robert Craufurd’s Light

Brigade[1] withdrew from the Bridge of Almaraz, to follow the rest

of the British army across the mountains to the neighbourhood of

Badajoz, and February 27, 1810, when part of that same brigade was

engaged in the first skirmish of Barba del Puerco, not a shot was

fired by any of Wellington’s troops. This gap of over six months in

his active operations may appear extraordinary, and it was bitterly

criticized at the time. Between August and March there was hard

fighting both in the south of Spain and along the north-eastern

frontier of Portugal; but the British army, despite many invitations,

took no part in it. Wellington adhered to his resolve never to commit

himself again to a campaign in company with the Spaniards, unless he

should be placed in a position in which he could be independent of

the freaks of their government and the perversity of their generals.

Two months’ experience of the impracticability of Cuesta, of the

deliberate disobedience of Venegas, of the fruitless promises of

the commissary-general Lozano de Torres, of the insane demands and

advice sent in by the Central Junta, had convinced him that he dare

not risk his army in a second venture such as that which had led

him to Talavera. If he were made commander-in-chief by the Spanish

Government, and granted a free hand in the direction of the Spanish

armies, matters would look different[2]. But there was at present

no chance whatever that he would receive such a mark of confidence.

Only a small minority of the leading men at Seville could endure with

patience the idea of a British commander-in-chief. Wellington himself

had long dismissed the project--which Frère had broached in the

spring[3]--as impracticable.

[1] Not, it must be remembered, to become the Light \_Division\_

till March 1810.

[2] See Wellington to Canning, Sept. 5, 1800, in \_Dispatches\_, v.

123-4.

[3] See vol. ii. pp. 465-6.

Meanwhile the French advance had no sooner ceased--after the rather

objectless combat of Arzobispo--than the Junta began to press upon

the British general schemes for a resumption of the offensive and

a second march toward Madrid. The political situation, and not any

military considerations, was the originating cause of their untimely

activity. They felt that their authority was waning, that their

popularity had vanished, that their critics were daily growing more

venomous, and they saw that success in the war would be the only

possible way out of their difficulties. Hence at the very moment

when Wellington was withdrawing his half-starved army from the

Tagus, and impeaching in letters of stinging irony the conduct of

the Junta’s mendacious commissaries, he was being pressed to resume

the offensive. Countless appeals were made to him. Both formal and

argumentative invitations from the ministers at Seville, and private

remonstrances by individuals, Spanish and English, were showered upon

him[4]. The Junta even went so far as to offer him command of the

Spanish troops in Estremadura, though this offer was qualified by

their statement that they intended to reduce those troops to 12,000

men, the larger half of the army being under orders to march eastward

into La Mancha and join the force of Venegas. This proposal did not

in the least meet Wellington’s main objection to resuming active

operations; viz. that he could not trust the Spanish Government to

feed his army, nor the Spanish generals to carry out with punctual

accuracy any scheme for a joint campaign which might be laid before

him. He put the matter very plainly--‘till the evils of which I think

that I have reason to complain are remedied: till I see magazines

established for the supply of the troops, and a regular system

adopted for keeping them filled: till I see an army upon whose

exertions I can depend, commanded by officers capable and willing

to carry into execution the operations which have been planned by

mutual agreement, I cannot enter upon any system of co-operation

with the Spanish armies[5].’ This statement was for publication: in

private correspondence with his brother, the ambassador at Seville,

he added still more cogent reasons for declining to take the field

with Venegas or Eguia. He had witnessed with his own eyes the panic

of Portago’s division on the night before Talavera, ‘when whole corps

threw away their arms and ran off in my presence, while neither

attacked nor threatened with attack, but frightened (I believe) by

their own fire’: he had seen Albuquerque’s cavalry, the day after

the combat of Arzobispo, lurking in every village for twenty miles

round, and ‘had heard Spanish officers telling of nineteen or twenty

actions of the same description as that of Arzobispo, an account of

which (I believe) has never been published.’ The army of Estremadura

consisted, he concluded, ‘of troops by no means to be depended

upon’--on every ground, therefore, he ought to avoid ‘risking the

King’s army again in such company[6].’

[4] See \_Dispatches\_, v. 168, for an account of an interview

with the Marquis of Malaspina and Lord Macduff, who had come to

Badajoz to make personal representation, which Wellington much

resented.

[5] Wellington to Wellesley, Oct. 30: \_Dispatches\_, v. 213. For

stronger language about the rash folly of Spanish generals, see

Wellington to Beresford, ibid. 179.

[6] Wellington to Wellesley, Aug. 24, from Merida.

There was no getting over this fundamental objection of Wellington’s,

and his brother, therefore, was placed in a very uncomfortable

position. During all his negotiations with the Central Junta, Lord

Wellesley’s task indeed was a most invidious one. He had been

directed by his government to profess an earnest desire to aid the

Spaniards in bringing the war to a successful conclusion, and to

pledge the aid of Great Britain, yet he was forced to refuse every

definite proposal made to him by the Junta. On the other hand,

there were clauses in his instructions which provoked the most

openly-displayed suspicion and resentment, when he touched upon them

in his conversations with Martin de Garay and the other Spanish

ministers. Such were the proposal to place the whole Spanish army

under a British commander (i.e. Wellington), the attempt to open up

the subject of a certain measure of free trade with Spanish America,

and--most of all--the offer to send British troops to garrison

Cadiz. For despite the fiasco of the preceding winter, the Portland

ministry were still harping on this old string, and allusions to it

occur in nearly every dispatch sent from London to the ambassador at

Seville[7].

[7] See Canning’s instruction to Wellesley of June 27, 1809, on

pages 186-91 of Wellesley’s \_Dispatches and Correspondence\_,

Lond. 1838.

Wellesley’s position was made even more difficult by the fact

that all the Spanish factions opposed to the Central Junta tried

to draw him into their schemes, by making lavish professions of

what they were ready to do if only the present government were

evicted from office. Of these factions there were many: the old

‘Council of Castile,’ which the Junta had superseded, still clung

together, making protests as to the legality of their successor’s

position. The local assemblies were equally jealous of the central

authority--the Juntas of Estremadura and Valencia, in especial, were

always intriguing behind its back, and the former at least made many

tempting proposals both to Wellesley and to Wellington. But the most

dangerous enemies of the existing government were the malcontents

close at its gates--the Andalusian conspirators, led by the members

of the old Junta of Seville, and by the intriguers like the Conde de

Montijo, the dukes of Infantado and Ossuna, and Francisco Palafox.

The dissatisfaction caused by the incapacity, indecision, and--as

it was openly said--the nepotism and venality of the Junta was so

general, that a plan was formed in Seville to seize them, deport them

all to the Canaries, and proclaim a Regency. The troops in the place

were tampered with, some demagogues were ready to raise the mob, and

Infantado[8], who was in the thick of the plot, came to Wellesley

one night to divulge the arrangements for the ‘Pronunciamento’ and

to bespeak his aid. Much as he disliked the Junta and its methods,

the Ambassador scornfully refused to make himself a member of a

conspiracy, and after warning Infantado of his intention, went

straight to the Secretary Garay and gave him all the information as

to the project, though without divulging any names. Some of the

plotters fled, others were arrested. ‘For the last two days,’ writes

Wellesley to his brother, ‘I have been employed in endeavouring to

save the necks of these caitiffs from the just fury and indignation

of the people and soldiery, and I have succeeded. A regular plot was

formed to seize (and I believe to \_hang\_) them all. But I could not

suffer such outrages under my nose, so I interfered and saved the

curs from the rope. They were all gratitude \_for an hour\_ [Wellesley

was offered and refused the Order of the Golden Fleece next morning],

but now that they think themselves secure they have begun to cheat me

again[9].’

[8] See Baumgarten, \_Geschichte Spaniens\_, i. 408, and Toreno,

vol, ii. p. 72. Wellesley only calls the Duke ‘a person’:

\_Dispatches\_, p. 160.

[9] Wellesley to Wellington, Sept. 19, 1809. Wellington,

\_Supplementary Dispatches\_, vi. 372.

Much as every patriot should deprecate the employment of \_coups

d’état\_ while a foreign war is on hand, there was much to excuse

the conduct of the enemies of the Junta. That body was now more

than a year old; it had been from the first regarded as a stop-gap,

as a provisional government which was destined to give place to

something more regular and constitutional when occasion should serve.

A ‘Committee of Public Safety’ which fails to preserve the state

stands self-condemned, and the history of the Central Junta had been

one record of consistent disaster. A body of over thirty persons is

too large for a ministry, too small for a representative assembly.

Every intelligent Spaniard, whatever his politics, was desirous of

seeing it give place to a regular government. The Conservatives

and bureaucrats would have been contented if it had appointed a

Regency of four or five persons, and then abdicated. The Liberals

demanded that it should summon the national Cortes, and leave to

that body the creation of an executive. Pamphlets were showered by

dozens from the press--now more or less free, for the first time

in Spanish history--to advocate one or other of these courses. The

Junta, however, had no intention of surrendering its power, whatever

pretence of disinterestedness it might assume and proclaim. Its

first attempts to put off the evil day when it must yield to public

opinion were ingeniously absurd. It issued, as early as May 22, a

proclamation acknowledging the advisability of summoning a Cortes,

and then invited all well-thinking Spaniards to send in schemes and

suggestions during the next two months concerning the best way in

which the national assembly could be organized, and the reforms and

constitutional improvements which it should take in hand. These

documents were to be read and pondered over by a Commission, mainly

composed of members of the Junta, which was to issue a report in due

time, embodying the best of the suggestions and the results of its

own discussion[10]. This was an admirable device for wasting time

and putting off the assembly of the Cortes. The Commission finally

decided, on September 19, after many weeks of session, that a supreme

Executive Council of five persons should be appointed, carefully

avoiding the name of Regency. But only existing members of the

Central Junta were to be eligible as Councillors, and the Council

was to be changed at short intervals, till every member of the

Junta had taken a turn in it[11]. The only laudable clause of this

scheme was one providing that Spanish America should be represented

in the Junta, and therefore ultimately in the Executive Council.

The arrangement satisfied nobody--it merely substituted a rapidly

changing committee of the Junta for the whole of that body as the

supreme ruling power: and it was clear that the orders of the Council

would be those of the Junta, though they might be voiced by fewer

mouths. The assembly of the Cortes would be put off \_ad infinitum\_.

[10] For the text of this wordy proclamation see Wellesley’s

\_Spanish Dispatches\_, pp. 135-9.

[11] Note the extraordinary similarity of this plan to that

produced by the Athenian oligarchs in 411 B. C. Had some one been

reading Thucydides?

Any effect which the report of the Commission might have had, was

spoilt by the fact that it was followed by a minority report, or

manifesto, drawn up by the Marquis of La Romana, who had been one of

the Commissioners. The Junta had called him back from Galicia, and

compelled him to surrender the army that he had re-formed, under the

pretext that he had been co-opted as a member of their own body. A

death-vacancy had been created in the representation of the kingdom

of Valencia: he had been named to fill it, summoned to Seville,

and placed on the constitutional Commission. Dissenting from every

word of the report of the majority, he published on October 14 a

counter-scheme, in which he declared that the venality, nepotism,

and dilatory incapacity of the Junta made it necessary for Spain

to seek a new executive which should be wholly independent of that

body. Accordingly he suggested that a Regency of five members should

be constituted, as the supreme governing body of the realm. No

member of the Junta was to sit therein. It was to be assisted, for

consultative purposes, by a body of six persons--one of whom was

to be a South American. This second committee, to be called ‘the

Permanent Deputation of the Realm,’ was to be considered to represent

the Cortes till that assembly should meet. It was not to meddle with

executive matters, but was to devote itself to drawing up the details

of the constitution of the future Cortes, and to suggesting practical

reforms.

So far as the declaration in favour of a Regency went, most sensible

Spaniards liked La Romana’s scheme, and it obtained Wellesley’s

approval also. But the idea of the ‘Permanent Deputation’ frightened

the Liberals, who feared that its existence would be made the excuse

for putting off the summoning of the Cortes for an indefinite time.

Moreover it was rumoured that La Romana intended to resign his seat

in the Junta, and to become a candidate for the position of Senior

Regent, so that his proposals must be intended to benefit himself.

The suspicion that his personal ambitions inspired his patriotic

denunciation of the Junta’s misdoings was made the more likely by

events that occurred at the same moment in Valencia. There the

leading personage of the moment was the governor, General José Caro,

the younger brother of La Romana, who had complete control of the

local Junta, and exercised what his enemies called a tyranny in the

province. He and his following were already on the worst terms with

the Seville Government, and now took the opportunity of bursting

out into open rebellion. They issued a sounding manifesto against

the Supreme Junta, declared their intention of refusing to obey it

any longer, and republished and sent in all directions to the other

local Juntas La Romana’s report in favour of a Regency, of which Caro

had struck off 6,000 copies. They threatened to turn back by force

General Castro whom the Supreme Junta had sent to supersede Caro,

and declared their second representative in that body, the Conde de

Contamina, deposed for ‘disobedience to the will of the people.’ It

looked as if La Romana might be intending to overthrow the central

government by means of his brother’s Valencian army. Apparently he

must be acquitted of this charge, his fiery and ambitious kinsman

having gone far beyond his intentions.

In the midst of all these intrigues, plots, and manifestos the

Central Junta had only one hope--to rehabilitate themselves by means

of a great military success. With ruinous consequences they tried to

direct the course of the war with political rather than strategical

ends in view. Of the unhappy autumn campaign which their rashness

precipitated we shall speak in its proper place; but before narrating

the disasters of Ocaña and Alba de Tormes, we must turn back for

some months to consider the situation of Eastern Spain, where the

continuous chronicle of events has been conducted no further than

Blake’s rout at Belchite in June, and St. Cyr’s victory of Valls

in February 1809. Much had happened in Catalonia and Aragon even

before the day of Talavera. Much more was to take place before the

ill-judged November campaign of the Junta’s armies in New Castile and

Leon had begun.

N.B.--This is a military history: for the war of pamphlets and

manifestos, plots and intrigues, between the Seville Government

and its adversaries, the reader who is anxious to master the

disheartening details may consult Toreno’s Tenth Book; Schepeler,

iii. 460-86; Baumgarten, vol. i. chapter viii; Arteche, vol. vii.

chapter vi, and above all the volume of the Marquis of Wellesley’s

\_Spanish Dispatches\_ (London, 1838). There is a good and lively

description of the chief members of the Junta and the ministry, and

of the intrigues against them, in William Jacob’s \_Travels in the

South of Spain\_ (London, 1811).

SECTION XVII: CHAPTER II

EVENTS IN EASTERN SPAIN DURING THE SUMMER AND AUTUMN OF 1809. THE

SIEGE OF GERONA BEGUN

In the spring of 1809 the theatres of operations of the two French

army-corps entrusted with the reduction of Aragon and of Catalonia

were still divided by a broad belt of territory which was in the

hands of the Spaniards, around the fortresses of Lerida, Mequinenza,

and Tortosa. Only once had communication been opened between Suchet

and St. Cyr, and then the force which had crossed from Aragon into

Catalonia found itself unable to return. The only way of getting a

dispatch from Saragossa to Barcelona was to send it by the circuitous

road through France. Co-operation between the 3rd and the 7th Corps

would have been difficult in any case; but since each of the two

corps-commanders was interested in his own problems alone, and found

them all-absorbing, the war in Catalonia and the war in Aragon went

on during 1809 and the first half of 1810 as separate affairs from

the French point of view. It was otherwise with the Spaniards: Blake

had been placed in command of the whole of the \_Coronilla\_, the

three provinces of Valencia, Aragon, and Catalonia which had formed

the ancient kingdom of Aragon[12]. He had Suchet on his left and

St. Cyr on his right, was equally interested in the operations of

each, and might, so far as the rules of strategy go, have turned his

main force against whichever of the two he might please, leaving a

comparatively small force to ‘contain’ the other. Unfortunately he

proved unable to make head against either of his adversaries. We

have already seen how, in the early summer, he threw himself upon

Suchet, and was beaten off at Maria and routed at Belchite. In the

later months of the year it was mainly with St. Cyr that he had to

deal, and his efforts were equally unsuccessful. It would seem that

he found it very difficult to concentrate any preponderant portion

of his troops for a blow to either side: very few battalions from

Catalonia accompanied his Valencians and Aragonese to Maria: very

few Valencians were brought up to aid the Catalans in the operations

about Gerona. The problems of food and transport had something to

do with this, but the main difficulty was that the armies of both

provinces, more especially the Catalans, were essentially local

levies, and disliked being drawn far from their homes. There was

always some threatening danger in their own district which made

them loath to leave it unguarded, while they were taken off on some

distant expedition. The complaints and arguments of the Juntas,

the manifest unwillingness of the officers and men, fettered the

hands of the commander-in-chief, whenever he strove to accomplish a

general concentration. Hence it came to pass that for the most part

St. Cyr was opposed by Catalan troops only, Suchet by Valencians and

Aragonese only, during the campaigns of 1809.

[12] Catalonia had been added to his command after Reding died of

wounds received at the battle of Valls.

The tasks of the commander of the 3rd Corps in the months that

followed his victories over Blake were both less interesting and

less important than those imposed upon his colleague in Catalonia.

They were however laborious enough; after having driven the

Spanish regular armies out of Aragon, Suchet had now to tame the

country-side. For even after Belchite he held little more than the

towns of Saragossa and Jaca, and the ground on which his camps were

pitched from day to day. When he had concentrated his corps to fight

Blake, the rest of the province had slipped out of his hands. Its

reconquest was a tedious matter, even though he had only to contend

with scattered bands of peasants, stiffened by stragglers from the

army that had dispersed after Belchite. The plain of the Ebro, which

forms the central strip of Aragon, was easily subdued, but the

mountains to the north and south were well fitted to be the refuge of

insurgents. The Aragonese, along with the Galicians, were the first

of the Spaniards to take to systematic guerrilla warfare. Undismayed

by the fate of Blake’s army, they had resolved to defend themselves

to the last. There was more than one focus of resistance: a colonel

Renovales, who had been one of the defenders of Saragossa, and had

escaped after the capitulation, was at the head of the bands of the

north-western mountains, in the vale of Roncal and on the borders

of Navarre. In the north-eastern region, about the upper waters of

the Cinca and the hills beyond Jaca, two local chiefs named Perena

and Sarasa kept the war on foot, getting their stores and ammunition

from the Catalans on the side of Lerida. In an entirely distinct

part of the province, south of the Ebro, lay Gayan and Villacampa,

whose centres of activity were Daroca and Molina, mountain towns from

which they were often driven up into that central ganglion of all

the ranges of Spain, the Sierra de Albaracin, from which descend in

diverging directions the sources of the Tagus, the Guadalaviar, and

the Xucar. Both Gayan and Villacampa were officers of the regular

army, holding commissions under Blake: the band of the former had as

its nucleus the regiment of La Princesa, whose extraordinary escape

across northern Spain after the combat of Santander has been told in

another place[13].

[13] See vol. ii. p. 387.

Suchet’s work, during the later summer and the autumn of 1809, was

to break up and as far as possible to destroy these bands. His

success was considerable but not complete: in July he stormed Gayan’s

stronghold, the mountain sanctuary of Nuestra Señora del Aguila,

captured his magazines, and drove him up into the mountains of

Molina. Continuing his campaign south of the Ebro, he sent the Pole

Chlopiski against Villacampa, who abandoned Calatayud, Daroca, and

the other hill towns, and retired into the Sierra de Albaracin, where

he took refuge at the remote convent of El Tremendal, one of the most

out-of-the-way spots in the whole Peninsula. Here, nevertheless,

the partisan was followed up on Nov. 23-4 by a column under Colonel

Henriot, who manœuvred him out of his position, surprised him by a

night attack, and drove him over the Valencian border. The convent

was blown up, the dependent village of Orihuela sacked, and the

French withdrew[14].

[14] For an excellent personal diary of all these operations see

General Von Brandt’s \_Aus meinem Leben\_, pp. 100-12. He accuses

Suchet of grossly exaggerating, both in his dispatches and his

memoirs, the difficulty and importance of these mountain raids

(see Suchet’s \_Memoirs\_, i. pp. 40-74, for a highly picturesque

narrative). The insurgents were still unskilled in arms, shot

very poorly, kept bad watch, and were given to panic. That there

is something in Brandt’s criticism seems to be shown by the fact

that the whole division of Musnier lost between July 1 and Dec.

31, 1809, only three officers killed and eight wounded out of

200 present with the eagles in six months of incessant raids and

skirmishes (see Martinien’s \_Liste des officiers\_, often quoted

before).

These operations had been carried out by Musnier’s division; but

meanwhile movements of a very similar sort were being undertaken by

another division, that of Laval, on the other side of Aragon, along

the slopes and gorges of the Pyrenees[15]. In the end of August a

column of 3,000 men stormed the convent of San Juan de la Peña, close

to Jaca, which Sarasa and Renovales were wont to make their head

quarters. It was an ancient building containing the tombs of the

early kings of Aragon, who reigned in the mountains before Saragossa

had been recovered from the Moor; it had never seen an enemy for

eight hundred years, and was reputed holy and impregnable. Hence its

capture dealt a severe blow to the confidence of the insurgents.

Renovales, however, held out in the western upland, continuing to

defend himself in the valley of Roncal, till he was beset on all

sides, for Suchet had obtained leave from Paris to call up the

National Guards of the Ariége, Basses Pyrénées and Haute Garonne, and

their \_bataillons d’élite\_ attacked the insurgents in the rear from

across the high mountains, while the 3rd Corps advanced against them

from the front. After much scattered fighting Renovales capitulated,

on condition that he should be allowed a free departure. He retired

to Catalonia with some of his men: the rest dispersed for the moment,

but only to reassemble a few weeks later, under another and a more

wary and obstinate chief, the younger Mina, who commenced in this

same autumn to make the borders of Aragon and Navarre the theatre

of his hazardous exploits. But the region was comparatively quiet

in September and October, and Suchet transferred the activity of

his movable column further to the eastward, where he drove some

\_partidas\_ out of the valleys of the Cinca and Essera, and tried to

open up a new line of communication with France by way of the valley

of Venasque. This was accomplished, for a moment, by the aid of

national guards from beyond the Pyrenees, who entered the valley from

the north while the troops of Suchet were operating from the south.

But the road remained unsafe, and could only be used for the passage

of very large bodies of troops, so that it was practically of little

importance.

[15] Suchet’s third division, that of Habert, was lying out in

the direction of the Cinca and the Guadalupe, watching lest Blake

might make a new sally from Tortosa or Lerida.

In December Suchet completed the formal conquest of Aragon, by

moving up the whole of Laval’s division into the high-lying district

of Teruel, in the extreme south-east of the province, the only

part of it that had never yet seen the French eagles. The Junta of

Aragon fled from thence over the border of the kingdom of Valencia,

but Villacampa and his bands remained in the mountains unsubdued,

and while they continued to exist the conquest of the upland was

incomplete. The moment that its towns ceased to be held by large

garrisons, it was clear that the insurgents would descend to reoccupy

them. Nevertheless Suchet had done much in this year: besides the

crushing of Blake he had accomplished the complete subjection of

the plains of Central Aragon, and had obtained a grip upon its two

mountain regions. He had fortified Monzon, Fraga, Alcañiz, and Caspe

as outposts against the Catalans, and, having received large drafts

from France in the autumn, was on the last day of the year at the

head of a fine corps of 26,000 men, from which he might hope to

produce in the next spring a field army sufficient for offensive

operations against Catalonia or Valencia, after providing garrisons

for his various posts of strength[16]. The weak point of his

position was that the guerrilleros had learned caution, refused for

the future to fight save under the most favourable conditions, and

devoted themselves to the safe and vexatious policy of intercepting

communications and cutting up small parties and stragglers. They were

much harder to deal with, when once they had learnt that not even in

fastnesses like El Tremendal or San Juan de la Peña was it wise to

offer the French battle. Unless Suchet left a garrison in every town,

nay, in every considerable village, of the sierras, the insurgents

dominated the whole region. If he did take such measures for holding

down the upland, he was forced to immobilize a very large proportion

of his army. We shall note that in 1810 he was only able to draw out

12,000 of his 26,000 men for the invasion of Western Catalonia.

[16] The 3rd Corps which had gone down to little over 10,000 men

in May 1809, counted on Jan. 1, 1810, the following force:

Division Laval 5,348

” Musnier 8,465

” Habert 4,757

Cavalry Brigade 2,172

Artillery and Engineers 928

Garrisons of Alcañiz, Jaca,

Monzon, Saragossa, Tudela 3,110

‘Chasseurs des Montagnes’

[permanently embodied Pyrenean

National Guards] 1,425

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Total 26,205

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Of these 23,074 were effectives present with colours, the

remainder were in hospital or detached.

While the commander of the 3rd Corps was making steady progress with

the conquest of Aragon, the fortunes of his colleague of the 7th

Corps had been far more chequered. Indeed for the greater part of

1809 St. Cyr was brought to a complete standstill by the unexpected

obstinacy of the gallant garrison of Gerona, who for no less than

eight months kept the main body of the army of Catalonia detained in

front of their walls.

When last we dealt with the operations in this region we left St.

Cyr victorious at the well-contested battle of Valls, after which

he advanced into the plain of Tarragona, made some demonstrations

against that fortress, but returned after a few weeks to Barcelona

(March 18) without having made any serious attempt to turn his

victory to practical account. This retreat after a brilliant

success may be compared to Victor’s similar evacuation of Southern

Estremadura after Medellin, and was brought about, in the main,

by the same cause, want of supplies. For when he had consumed the

resources of the newly-subdued district between Valls and Tarragona,

St. Cyr had no means of providing his army with further subsistence.

Barcelona, his base, could not feed him, for the city was itself

on the edge of famine: it was still beset to north and west by the

local miqueletes, who had returned to their old haunts when the main

French army had gone off southward on the campaign of Valls. It was

stringently blockaded on the sea side by the British Mediterranean

fleet, and it could not draw food from France by land, because

the high-road to Perpignan passed through the fortress of Gerona,

which was still in Spanish hands. St. Cyr himself, it will be

remembered, had only reached Barcelona by turning off on to side

tracks through the mountain, and winning his way down to the shore by

the hard-fought battle of Cardadeu. Till Gerona should fall, and the

garrison of Barcelona be placed in direct communication with France,

there was little use in making ambitious offensive movements against

Tarragona or any other point in Southern or Central Catalonia. It was

absolutely necessary to reduce Gerona, and so to bring the division

left behind under Reille, in the Ampurdam and on the frontier of

Roussillon, into free communication with the remainder of the 7th

Corps. From the moment when St. Cyr passed the mountains during

the winter Reille had been fighting out a petty campaign against

the northern Catalans, which had no connexion whatever with his

superior’s operations at Molins de Rey and Valls, and had little

definite result of any kind.

No one saw more clearly than Napoleon the need for the reduction of

Gerona: as early as January he had issued orders both to St. Cyr and

to Reille to prepare for the enterprise. But St. Cyr was now out of

touch, and Reille was far too weak in the early spring to dream of

any such an adventure: he had been left no more than seven depleted

battalions to maintain his hold on Northern Catalonia, when St. Cyr

took the rest of the army across the hills to Barcelona. The Emperor

was not slow to realize that the 7th Corps must be reinforced on a

large scale. He did so by sending thither in the spring of 1809 a

brigade of Berg troops (four battalions), the regiment of Würzburg

(two battalions), and a division (seven battalions) of Westphalians:

it will be noted that now, as always, he was most chary of drafting

native French troops to Catalonia, and always fed the war in that

direction with auxiliaries in whose fate he was little interested:

the campaign in eastern Spain was, after all, but a side issue in the

main struggle[17]. When these reinforcements had arrived Reille began

to collect material at Bascara on the Fluvia, to which siege-guns

laboriously dragged across the Pyrenees were added: several companies

of heavy artillery and sappers were brought up from France.

[17] Cette portion de l’Espagne reste, d’ailleurs, isolée, et

sans influence sur le reste de la Péninsule. Imperial Minute of

Dec. 1, 1809.

St. Cyr meanwhile, four weeks after his retreat from the plain of

Tarragona, moved on to Vich upon April 18, with the divisions of

Souham, Pino, Lecchi, and Chabot, leaving Duhesme with his original

French division, which had held Barcelona since the outbreak of the

war, in charge of his base of operations. His departure was partly

designed to spare the stores of Barcelona, where the pinch of famine

was beginning to be felt; for he intended to subsist his army on the

upland plain of Vich, a rich corn-bearing district hitherto untouched

by the war. But a few days after he had marched forth Barcelona

was freed from privation, by the lucky arrival of a squadron of

victuallers from Toulon, convoyed by Admiral Cosmao, which had put to

sea in a storm and eluded the British blockading squadron (April 27).

The position of Vich, however, had been chosen by St. Cyr not only

for reasons of supply, but because the place was happily situated

for covering the projected siege of Gerona against any interruption

by Blake. If the Spanish commander-in-chief brought up the wrecks

of the old Catalan army from Tarragona, with his Valencian levies

added, he would almost certainly take the inland road by Manresa

and Vich, since the coast-road was practically barred to him by the

French occupation of Barcelona. As a matter of fact the commencement

of the leaguer of Gerona was not vexed by any such interruption, for

Blake had his eyes fixed on Saragossa in May and June, and was so

far from dreaming of an assault on St. Cyr, that he drew off part of

the Catalan army for his unhappy invasion of Aragon, which finished

with the disaster of Belchite. During the early months of this long

siege the only external helpers of the garrison of Gerona were the

small force of regulars under the Swiss Wimpfen, and the miqueletes

of Claros and Rovira from the Ampurdam, Reille’s opponents during the

spring. At Tarragona the Marquis of Coupigny, the senior officer now

in Catalonia, had no more than 6,000 men left of Reding’s old army,

and was helpless to interfere with St. Cyr who had some 20,000 men

concentrated at Vich.

The preparations for the siege therefore went on in the end of

April and the beginning of May without any hindrance, save from

the normal bickerings of the French outlying detachments with the

local \_somatenes\_, which never ceased. Around Vich matters were

particularly lively, for the whole population of the town and the

surrounding plains had gone up into the hills, where they wandered

miserably for three months, much hunted by French foraging parties,

which they occasionally succeeded in destroying. St. Cyr opened up

his communications with Reille by sending to him Lecchi’s Italian

division, which cut its way amid constant skirmishes along the banks

of the Ter to Gerona, and met the troops from the Ampurdam under

its walls. Reille had moved forth from Bascara on May 4, and on the

eighth expelled the Spanish outposts from all the villages round the

fortress, not without some lively skirmishing. He had brought up some

10,000 infantry--including his own old division and all the newly

arrived Germans--with some 1,300 artillerymen and engineers. Almost

at the same moment arrived dispatches from Paris, announcing that the

Emperor, just before departing for the Austrian war, had superseded

both St. Cyr and Reille, being discontented with their handling of

affairs in Catalonia. It is unfortunate that no statement in detail

of his reasons appears in the \_Correspondance\_[18], but it would

seem that he thought that the victories of Molins de Rey and Valls

should have had greater results, disapproved of St. Cyr’s retreat

from in front of Tarragona, and thought that Reille had shown great

weakness in dealing with the insurgents of the Ampurdam. He ignored

the special difficulties of the war in Catalonia, thinking that the

30,000 men of the 7th Corps ought to have sufficed for its complete

conquest. Indeed he showed his conception of the general state of

affairs by recommending St. Cyr in March to undertake simultaneously

the sieges of Gerona, Tarragona, and Tortosa[19]. The leaguer of one,

and that the smallest, of these places was destined to occupy the

whole army of Catalonia, when largely reinforced, for eight months.

If it had been cut up according to the imperial mandate, it is

probable that at least one of its sections would have been destroyed.

St. Cyr wrote in his memoirs that his master was jealous of him, and

wished to see him fail, even at the cost of wrecking the 7th Corps.

This is of course absurd; but there can be no doubt that the Emperor

disliked his lieutenant, all the more because of the long string of

complaints, and of demands for more men, money, and stores, which he

was now receiving week by week from Catalonia. He loved generals who

achieved the impossible, and hated grumblers and \_frondeurs\_, a class

to which St. Cyr, despite all his talents, undoubtedly belonged. It

is possible that Napoleon’s determination to replace him may have

been fostered by intrigues on the part of the officer to whom the 7th

Corps was now turned over. Marshal Augereau had served with great

credit in the old republican campaign in Catalonia during 1793 and

1794, imagined himself to have a profound knowledge of the country,

and was anxious to try his hand in it. It was many years since he had

been trusted with an independent command; both in the wars of 1806-7

and in that of 1809 he had been lost in the ranks of the Grand Army.

His nomination to supersede St. Cyr was made early in May, but on his

way to the seat of war he was seized with a fit of the gout, and was

detained in bed at Perpignan for many weeks. Thus his predecessor,

though apprised of his disgrace, was obliged to continue in command,

and to commence the operations of which the Marshal, as he well knew,

would take all the credit. At the same moment Reille was displaced

by Verdier, the general who had conducted the first unlucky siege of

Saragossa--an experience which seems to have made him very cautious

when dealing with Spaniards behind walls.

[18] There is only a short note in Dispatch no. 16,004. See p. 63

of this vol.

[19] See St. Cyr to Berthier, March 6, 1809, and St. Cyr’s

\_Memoirs\_, p. 130.

Lecchi’s division forced its way back to St. Cyr on May 18, bringing

him the intelligence of his supersession, but at the same time

apprising him that Augereau would not arrive as yet, and that the

duty of commencing the siege of Gerona would still fall to his lot.

At the same time Verdier sent letters urging that his 10,000 infantry

formed too small a force to surround such a large fortress, and

that he must ask for reinforcements from the covering army. If they

were denied him, he should refuse to begin the siege, throwing the

responsibility for this disobedience of the Emperor’s commands on

his superior: he had reported the situation to Paris. St. Cyr was

incensed at the tone of this dispatch[20], above all at the fact

that Verdier was appealing straight to the Emperor, instead of

corresponding through his hierarchical superior, according to the

rules of military etiquette. But he saw that Verdier had a good case,

and he had just learnt that Blake had turned off against Aragon,

so that no trouble from that quarter need be feared. Accordingly

he, very grudgingly, sent back Lecchi’s division to Gerona. It was

the worst that he possessed, being composed of no more than four

Neapolitan and three Italian battalions, with a strength of little

over 3,000 bayonets[21]. He added to it a regiment of Italian light

horse, several of his own batteries, and nearly all the engineers and

sappers of his corps, so that the total reinforcement sent to Verdier

consisted of more than 4,000 men.

[20] It may be found printed in full in the Appendix to the

narrative of the siege of Gerona in Belmas’s \_Sieges\_, vol. ii.

pp. 660-1.

[21] 3,116 bayonets and two squadrons of Italian light horse by

the return of May 15. The Neapolitans were bad troops, deserting

whenever it was safe to do so.

Having received these succours, which brought up his total force to

14,000 infantry and cavalry, and 2,200 artillerymen, sappers and

engineers, Verdier commenced on May 24 his operations against Gerona:

on that day Lecchi’s division took its post in the plain of Salt,

on the west of the town, while the French and Westphalian divisions

were already close to the place on its eastern and northern sides.

The head quarters and the French brigades of Joba and Guillot lay

by Sarria and the bridge of Pont-Mayor, where the magazines were

established, while the Germans had been sent up on to the heights

east of the fortress and held the plateaux of Campdura, San Medir,

and Domeny. The rocky southern side of Gerona, in the direction of

the gorge of the Oña, was not yet properly invested.

Something has already been said, in an earlier volume of this work,

concerning the situation of Gerona, when its two earlier sieges by

Duhesme were narrated[22]. It must suffice to repeat here that the

town is built on the steep down-slope of two lofty heights, with the

river Oña at its foot: the stream is crossed by two bridges, but is

fordable everywhere save in times of spate. Beyond it lies the suburb

of the Mercadal, surrounded by fortifications which form an integral

part of the defences of the city. The river Ter, coming from the

west, joins the Oña at the north side of the Mercadal and washes the

extreme north-western corner of the walls of the city proper. The two

heights upon whose lower slopes Gerona is built are separated from

each other by a deep ravine, called the Galligan, down which run an

intermittent watercourse and a road, the only one by which approach

to the city from the east is possible. The northern height is crowned

by the strong fort of Monjuich, the most formidable part of the city

defences, with its three outlying redoubts called San Narciso, San

Luis and San Daniel. The crest of the southern height is covered in a

similar fashion by the three forts of the Capuchins, Queen Anne, and

the Constable, with the Calvary redoubt lower down the slope above

the Galligan, facing San Daniel on the other side of the ravine. Two

other small fortifications, the redoubts of the ‘Chapter’ and the

‘City,’ cover the path which leads down from the forts to Gerona.

Neither the Monjuich nor the Capuchin heights are isolated hills;

each is the end of a spur running down from the higher mountains.

But while the southern summit rises high above the hilly reach which

joins it to the mountain of Nuestra Señora de los Angeles, the

northern summit (where lies Monjuich) is at the end of a plateau

extending far to the north. The Capuchin heights, therefore, can

only be attacked uphill, while Monjuich can be assailed from ground

of a level little inferior to itself. But except on this point both

heights are very strong, their slopes being in many places absolutely

precipitous, especially towards the Galligan, and everywhere steep.

Nevertheless there are winding paths leading up both, from Sarria

and Pont-Mayor in the case of Monjuich, from Casa de Selva and other

villages towards the east and the sea in the case of the Capuchin

heights. All the ground is bare rock, with no superincumbent soil.

[22] See vol. i. pp. 317-29.

All the fortifications were somewhat antiquated in type, nothing

having been done to modernize the defences since the war of the

Spanish Succession[23]. Ferdinand VI and Charles III had neglected

Gerona in favour of the new fortress of Figueras, nearer to the

frontier, on which large sums had been expended--for the benefit of

the French who seized it by treachery in 1808, and were now using it

as their base of operations. The actual wall of enceinte of the city

was mediaeval--a plain rampart twenty-five feet high, too narrow for

artillery and set thickly with small towers; only at its two ends,

on the Oña and the Ter, two bastions (called those of La Merced and

Santa Maria) had been inserted, and properly armed. This weakness

of the walls went for little so long as Monjuich, the Capuchins,

and the other forts held firm, since the enemy could only approach

the town-enceinte at its two ends, where the bastions lay. Far more

dangerous was the feebleness of the Mercadal, whose ramparts formed

the southern section of the exterior defences of the place. Its

circuit had five plain bastions, but no demi-lunes or other outer

defences, no covered way nor counterscarp: its profile, only some

eighteen or twenty feet high, was visible, across the flat ground

which surrounds it, from the foot to the summit of the wall, for

want of ditch or glacis. The ground leading up to it was favourable

for siege approaches, since the soil was soft and easy to dig, and

was seamed with hollow roads and stone walls, giving much cover to

an assailant. Aware of the defects of the fortifications of the

Mercadal, the Spaniards had prepared a line of defence behind it,

along the further bank of the Oña. They had made the river-front of

the city proper defensible to a certain extent, by building up the

doors and windows of all the houses which abut upon the water, mining

the two bridges, and fixing a stockade and entanglements in the bed

of the Oña, along the considerable space, where it is fordable in

dry weather[24]. They had indeed repaired the whole circuit of the

defences since Duhesme’s sieges of 1808, having cleared out the

ditches of Monjuich and of the bastions of La Merced and Santa Maria,

walled up many posterns, and repaired with new and solid masonry all

the parts of the walls that had been dilapidated at the moment of the

first siege. They had also pulled down many isolated houses outside

the walls, and demolished the nearer half of the suburban village of

Pedret, which lies (most inconveniently for the defence) along the

bank of the Ter between the water and the slopes of Monjuich.

[23] For a good historical study of the fortifications of Gerona

and their history, see Vacani, vol. iii. pp. 245-55.

[24] This last was done by public subscription, when the

engineers pointed out the danger of the city being stormed across

the river-bed. See Arteche, vii. 151. Belmas and Vacani do not

seem to have known of this fact, as each of them makes the remark

that if the Mercadal had been taken, a sudden rush might have

taken the assailants across the shallow river and into the old

town. It may be remarked that there had once been a river-wall,

but that most of it had been allowed to fall into decay when the

Mercadal was taken into the city defences.

All these precautions must be put to the credit of the governor,

Mariano Alvarez de Castro, a man to be mentioned with all honour and

respect, and probably the best soldier that Spain produced during

the whole Peninsular War. He was a veteran of the Revolutionary and

Portuguese wars, and had a good reputation, but no special credit

for military science, down to the moment when he was put to the

test. He had been the officer in charge of the castle of Barcelona

on the occasion when it was seized by Duhesme in March 1808: his

spirit had been deeply wounded by that vile piece of treachery, and

he had at once adhered to the national cause. Since then he had

been serving in the Ampurdam against Reille, till the moment when

he was appointed governor of Gerona. Alvarez is described by those

who served under him as a severe, taciturn man of a puritan cast of

mind. ‘I should call him,’ wrote one of his brigadiers, ‘an officer

without the true military talents, but with an extreme confidence in

Providence--almost, one might say, a believer in miracles. His soul

was great, capable of every sacrifice, full of admirable constancy;

but I must confess that his heroism always seemed to me that of

a Christian martyr rather than of a professional soldier[25].’

General Fournas, who wrote this somewhat depreciatory sketch of

his chief, was one of those who signed the capitulation while

Alvarez was moaning \_no quiero rendirme\_ on his sick-bed, so that

his judgement is hardly to be taken as unprejudiced; but his words

point the impression which the governor left on his subordinates.

The details of his defence sufficiently show that he was a skilful

and resourceful as well as an obstinate general. His minute care to

utilize every possible means of defence prove that he was no mere

waiter on miracles. That he was a very devout practising Catholic

is evident from some of his doings; at the opening of the siege a

great religious ceremony was held, at which the local patron saint,

Narcissus, was declared captain of the city and presented with a

gold-hilted sword. The levy \_en masse\_ of the citizens was called

‘the Crusade,’ and their badge was the red cross. The ideas of

religion and patriotism were so closely intertwined that to the lay

companies of this force were afterwards added two clerical companies,

one composed of monks and friars, the other of secular priests: about

200 of these ecclesiastics were under arms[26]. Even the women were

organized in squads for the transport of wounded, the care of the

hospitals, and the carrying of provisions to the soldiery on the

walls: about 300 served, under the command of Donna Lucia Fitzgerald

and Donna Maria Angela Bibern, wives of two officers of the regiment

of Ultonia. Five of this ‘company of St. Barbara’ were killed and

eleven wounded during the siege.

[25] Manuscript notes of General Fournas, quoted by Arteche, vii.

458.

[26] The bishop gave his sanction to the formation of this

strange corps; see his proclamation in Arteche’s Appendix vii. p.

539, dated June 9.

The garrison at the moment of Verdier’s first attack consisted of

about 5,700 men, not including the irregulars of the Crusade. There

were seven battalions of the old army, belonging to the regiments

of Ultonia[27], Borbon, and Voluntarios de Barcelona, with three

battalions of miqueletes, two local corps, 1st and 2nd of Gerona,

and the 1st of Vich. Of cavalry there was a single squadron, newly

levied, the ‘escuadron de San Narciso.’ Of artillery there were but

278 men, a wholly insufficient number: the officers of that arm

were given 370 more to train, partly miqueletes of the 2nd Gerona

battalion, partly sailors having some small experience of gunnery.

It was difficult to make proper use of the great store of cannon in

the fortress, when more than half the troops allotted to them had

never before seen, much less served, a heavy gun of position. To the

above 5,700 men of all arms must be added about 1,100 irregulars of

the ‘Crusade’--seven lay and two clerical companies of fusiliers

and two more of artificers. But these were set to guard almost

unapproachable parts of the wall, or held in reserve: most of the

stress fell upon the organized troops. The defence was altogether

conducted on scientific principles, and had nothing in common with

that of Saragossa. Here the irregulars formed only a small fraction

of the garrison[28], and were never hurled in senseless fury against

the French batteries, but used carefully and cautiously as an

auxiliary force, capable of setting free some part of the trained men

for service on the more important points of the enceinte[29].

[27] Ultonia, the regiment of Ulster, still contained many

officers of the old Jacobite strain, as may be seen by consulting

the list of killed and wounded, where such names as O’Donnell,

Macarthy, Nash, Fitzgerald, Pierson, Coleby, Candy, occur: but

it had just been raised from 200 to 800 bayonets by filling

the depleted \_cadre\_ with Catalan recruits, and all the junior

lieutenants, newly appointed, were Catalans also. So there was

little Irish about it save the names of some of its senior

officers.

[28] For the details of the composition of the Gerona garrison,

see Appendix no. 1.

[29] I know not why Napier, contrasting Gerona with Saragossa

(ii. 251), says that at the former place the regular garrison

was 3,000, the armed multitude ‘less than 6,000.’ When it is

remembered that its total population was 14,000 souls--of whom

some fled to places of safety before the siege began--and that

it had already raised two battalions of miqueletes with 1,360

bayonets out of its able-bodied male inhabitants, it is difficult

to see how more than 5,000 armed irregulars are to be procured,

for in a population of 14,000 souls there cannot be more than

some 3,000 men between eighteen and forty-five. As a matter of

fact (see documents in Arteche, vii. Appendix 5), the ‘Crusade’

was about 1,100 strong at most.

For the first two months of the siege Alvarez received no help

whatever from without: in May the central government of Catalonia had

been left in a perfectly paralysed condition, when Blake went off

himself and took with him the best of the regular troops, in order to

engage in the campaign of Alcañiz and Maria. Coupigny, the interim

commander at Tarragona, had only 6,000 organized men, and he and

the Catalan provincial junta were during that month much engrossed

with an enterprise which distracted them from the needs of Gerona. A

wide-spread conspiracy had been formed within the walls of Barcelona,

with the object of rising against the garrison in St. Cyr’s absence.

A secret committee of priests, merchants, and retired officers had

collected all the arms in the city, smuggled in many muskets from

without, and enlisted several thousand persons in a grand design

for an outbreak and a sort of ‘Sicilian Vespers’ fixed--after two

postponements--for the 11th of May. They opened communication with

Coupigny and with the captains of the British frigates blockading the

port. The one was to bring his troops to the gates, the others to

deliver an attack on the port, upon the appointed night. No Spaniard

betrayed the plot, though 6,000 citizens are said to have been in

the secret, but it was frustrated by two foreigners. Conscious that

the town could not be freed if the citadel of Monjuich was retained

by the French, the conspirators sounded two Italian officers named

Captain Dottori, fort adjutant of Monjuich, and Captain Provana, who

was known to be discontented and thought to be corruptible. They

offered them an immense bribe--1,000,000 dollars, it is said--to

betray the postern of Monjuich to the troops of Coupigny, who were to

be ready in the ditch at midnight. But they had mistaken their men:

the officers conferred with Duhesme, and consented to act as \_agents

provocateurs\_: they pretended to join the conspiracy, were introduced

to and had interviews with the chiefs, and informed the governor.

On the morning before the appointed date many of the leaders were

arrested. Duhesme placed guards in every street, and proclaimed that

he knew all. The citizens remained quiet in their despair, the chiefs

who had not been seized fled, and the troops on the Llobregat retired

to Tarragona. Duhesme hanged his captives, two priests named Gallifa

and Pou, a young merchant named Massana, Navarro an old soldier, and

four others. ‘They went to the gallows,’ says Vacani, an eye-witness,

‘with pride, convinced every one of them that they had done the duty

of good citizens in behalf of king, country, and religion[30].’

[30] Vacani, iii. 211.

Engrossed in this plot, the official chiefs of Catalonia half forgot

Gerona, and did nothing to help Alvarez till long after the siege had

begun. The only assistance that he received from without was that the

miqueletes and \_somatenes\_ of the Ampurdam and the mountain region

above Hostalrich were always skirmishing with Verdier’s outposts,

and once or twice cut off his convoys of munitions on their way from

Figueras to the front.

The French engineers were somewhat at variance as to the right way

to deal with Gerona. There were two obvious alternatives. An attack

on the weak front of the Mercadal was certain to succeed: the ground

before the walls was suitable for trenches, and the fortifications

were trifling. But when a lodgement had been made in this quarter

of the town it would be necessary to work forward, among the narrow

lanes and barricades, to the Oña, and then to cross that river in

order to continue similar operations through the streets of Gerona.

Even when the city had been subdued, the garrison might still hold

out in the formidable works on the Monjuich and Capuchin heights. The

reduction of the Mercadal and the city, moreover, would have to be

carried out under a continuous plunging fire from the forts above,

which overlooked the whole place. This danger was especially insisted

upon by some of the engineer officers, who declared that it would be

impossible for the troops to work their way forward over ground so

exposed. As a matter of fact it was proved, after the siege was over

and the forts had been examined by the captors, that this fear had

been exaggerated; the angle of fire was such that large sections of

the town were in no way commanded from the heights, and the streets

could not have been searched in the fashion that was imagined. But

this, obvious in December, could not have been known in May[31].

The second alternative was to commence the attack on Gerona not

from the easiest but from the most difficult side, by battering the

lofty fort of Monjuich from the high plateau beside it. The defences

here were very formidable: the ground was bare exposed rock: but if

Monjuich were once captured it was calculated that the town must

surrender, as it was completely overlooked by the fort, and had no

further protection save its antiquated mediaeval wall. The deduction

that it would be cheaper in the end to begin with the difficult task

of taking Monjuich, rather than the easier operations against the

Mercadal, seemed plausible: its fault was that it presupposed that

Alvarez and his garrison would behave according to the accepted rules

of siegecraft, and yield when their situation became hopeless. But in

dealing with Spanish garrisons the rules of military logic did not

always act. Alvarez essayed the impossible, and held out behind his

defective defences for four months after Monjuich fell. The loss of

men and time that he thereby inflicted on the French was certainly

no less than that which would have been suffered if the besiegers

had begun with the Mercadal, and worked upwards by incessant street

fighting towards the forts on the height. But it is hard to say that

Verdier erred: he did not know his adversary, and he did know, from

his experiences at Saragossa, what street fighting meant.

[31] See Belmas, iii. 516.

It may be added that Verdier’s views were accepted by the

engineer-general, Sanson, who had been specially sent from France by

the Emperor, to give his opinion on the best mode of procedure. The

document which Verdier, Sanson, and Taviel (the commanding artillery

officer of the 7th Corps) sent to Paris, to justify their choice of

the upper point of attack, lays stress mainly on the impossibility of

advancing from the Mercadal under the fire of the upper forts[32].

But there were other reasons for selecting Monjuich as the point

of attack. It lay far nearer to the road to France and the central

siege-dépôts beside Sarria and the Pont Mayor. The approaches would

be over highly defensible ground where, if a disaster occurred, the

defeated assailant could easily recover himself and oppose a strong

front to the enemy. The shortness of the front was suitable for

an army of the moderate strength of 14,000 men, which had to deal

with a fortress whose perimeter, allowing for outlying forts and

inaccessible precipices, was some six miles. Moreover, the ground

in front of the Mercadal had the serious inconvenience of being

liable to inundation; summer spates on the Ter and Oña are rare, but

occur from time to time; and there was the bare chance that when the

trenches had been opened all might be swept away by the rivers[33].

[32] See their letter in Appendix V to Belmas’s account of the

siege.

[33] Note, ibid., ii. p. 502.

Verdier’s opinion was arrived at after mature reflection: the French

had appeared in front of Gerona on May 8: the outlying villages

on the east had been occupied between the twelfth and eighteenth:

Lecchi’s Italians had closed the western exits by occupying the plain

of Salt on the twenty-fourth: the inner posts of observation of the

Spaniards had been cleared off when, on May 30, the Italians seized

the suburban village of Santa Eugenia, and on June 1 the Germans took

possession of the mountain of Nuestra Señora de los Angeles. But it

was only on June 6 that the besiegers broke ground, and commenced

their trenches and batteries on the plateau of Monjuich. It was

necessary to make a beginning by subduing the outer defences of

the fort, the towers or redoubts of San Luis, San Narciso, and San

Daniel: two batteries of 24-pounders were constructed against them,

while a third battery of mortars on the ‘Green Mound’ by the Casa den

Roca on the west bank of the Ter, was to play upon the north end of

the town: Verdier hoped that the bombardment would break the spirit

of the citizens--little knowing the obstinate people with whom he

had to deal. Five thousand bombs thrown into the place in June and

July produced no effect whatever. More batteries on the heights were

thrown up upon the 13th and 15th of June, while on the former day, to

distract the attention of the Spaniards, Lecchi’s division, in the

plain below, was ordered to open a false attack upon the Mercadal.

This had good effect as a diversion, since Alvarez had expected an

assault in this quarter, and the long line of trenches thrown up

by the Italians in front of Santa Eugenia attracted much of his

attention. Three days of battering greatly damaged San Luis and San

Narciso, which were no more than round towers of masonry with ditches

cut in the rock, and only two or three guns apiece. The French also

took possession on the night of the fourteenth and fifteenth of the

remains of the half-destroyed suburb of Pedret, between Monjuich

and the Ter, as if about to establish themselves in a position from

which they could attack the low-lying north gate of the town and the

bastion of Santa Maria.

Hitherto the defence had seemed a little passive, but at dawn on the

morning of the seventeenth Alvarez delivered the first of the many

furious sallies which he made against the siege lines. A battalion

of Ultonia rushed suddenly down-hill out of Monjuich and drove the

French, who were taken completely by surprise, out of the ruins of

Pedret. Aided by a smaller detachment, including the artificers of

the \_Crusade\_, who came out of the Santa Maria gate, they destroyed

all the works and lodgements of the besiegers in the suburb, and

held it till they were driven out by two French and one Westphalian

battalion sent up from Verdier’s reserves. The Spaniards were forced

back into the town, but retired in good order, contented to have

undone three days of the besiegers’ labour. They had lost 155 men,

the French 128, in this sharp skirmish.

Two days later the towers of San Luis and San Narciso, which had been

reduced to shapeless heaps of stone, were carried by assault, with

a loss to the French of only 78 men; but an attempt to carry San

Daniel by the same rush was beaten off, this redoubt being still in

a tenable state. Its gorge, however, was completely commanded from

the ruins of San Luis, and access to or exit from it was rendered

so dangerous that Alvarez withdrew its garrison on the next night.

The possession of these three outworks brought the French close

up to Monjuich, which they could now attack from ground which was

favourable in every respect, save that it was bare rock lacking

soil. It was impossible to excavate in it, and all advances had to

be made by building trenches (if the word is not a misnomer in this

case) of sandbags and loose stones on the surface of the ground.

The men working at the end of the sap were therefore completely

exposed, and the work could only proceed at a great expense of life.

Nevertheless the preparations advanced rapidly, and on the night

of July 2 an enormous battery of sandbags (called the \_Batterie

Impériale\_) was thrown up at a distance of only four hundred yards

from Monjuich. Next morning it opened on the fort with twenty 16-

and 24-pounders, and soon established a superiority over the fire

of the defence. Several Spanish pieces were dismounted, others had

to be removed because it was too deadly to serve them. But a steady

fire was returned against the besiegers from the Constable and

Calvary forts, on the other side of the Galligan ravine. Nevertheless

Monjuich began to crumble, and it looked as if the end of the siege

were already approaching. On July 3 there was a breach thirty-five

feet broad in the fort’s north-eastern bastion, and the Spanish flag

which floated over it was thrown down into the ditch by a chance

shot. A young officer named Montorro climbed down, brought it up, and

nailed it to a new flagstaff under the fire of twenty guns. Meanwhile

long stretches of the parapet of Monjuich were ruined, the ditch

was half-filled with débris, and the garrison could only protect

themselves by hasty erections of gabions and sandbags, placed where

the crest of the masonry had stood.

By this time St. Cyr and the covering army had abandoned the position

in the plain of Vich which they had so long occupied. The general

had, as it seems, convinced himself at last that Blake, who was still

engaged in his unlucky Aragonese campaign, was not likely to appear.

He therefore moved nearer to Gerona, in order to repress the efforts

of the local \_somatenes\_, who were giving much trouble to Verdier’s

communications. On June 20 he established his head quarters at Caldas

de Malavella, some nine miles to the south-east of Gerona. That

same evening one of his Italian brigades intercepted and captured a

convoy of 1,200 oxen which the Governor of Hostalrich was trying to

introduce into the beleaguered city along one of the mountain-paths

which lead to the Capuchin heights from the coast. St. Cyr strung out

his 14,000 men in a line from San Feliu de Guixols on the sea to the

upper Ter, in a semicircle which covered all the approaches to Gerona

saving those from the Ampurdam. He visited Verdier’s camp, inspected

the siege operations, and expressed his opinion that an attack on

the Mercadal front would have been preferable to that which had been

actually chosen. But he washed his hands of all responsibility, told

Verdier that, since he had chosen to correspond directly with Paris,

he must take all the praise or blame resulting from his choice,

and refused to countermand or to alter any of his subordinate’s

dispositions. On July 2 however he sent, with some lack of logic, a

summons of his own to Alvarez, inviting him to surrender on account

of the desperate state of his defences: this he did without informing

Verdier of his move. The Governor returned an indignant negative, and

Verdier wrote in great wrath to complain that if the siege was his

affair, as he had just been told, it was monstrous that his commander

should correspond with the garrison without his knowledge[34]. The

two generals were left on even worse terms than before. St. Cyr,

however, gave real assistance to the siege operations at this time by

storming, on July 5, the little fortified harbour-town of Palamos,

which lies on the point of the sea-coast nearest to Gerona, and

had been hitherto used by the miqueletes as a base from which they

communicated by night with the fortress, and at the same time kept

in touch with Tarragona and the English ships of the blockading

squadron.

[34] See St. Cyr to Alvarez and Verdier to the Minister of War at

Paris, nos. 9 and 11 of Belmas’s Appendices in his second volume,

pp. 677 and 678.

On the night of the 4th and 5th of July the defences of Monjuich

appeared in such a ruinous condition that Commandant Fleury, the

engineer officer in charge of the advanced parallel, took the

extraordinary and unjustifiable step of assaulting them at 10 p.m.

with the troops--two companies only--which lay under his orders,

trusting that the whole of the guards of the trenches would follow

if he made a lodgement. This presumptuous attack, made contrary

to all the rules of military subordination, was beaten off with a

loss of forty men. Its failure made Verdier determine to give the

fort three days more of continuous bombardment, before attempting

to storm it: the old batteries continued their fire, a new one was

added to enfilade the north-western bastion, and cover was contrived

at several points to shelter the troops which were to deliver the

assault, till the actual moment of the storm arrived[35]. But three

hundred yards of exposed ground still separated the front trenches

from the breach--a distance far too great according to the rules of

siegecraft. The Spaniards meanwhile, finding it impossible under such

a fire to block the breach, which was now broad enough for fifty men

abreast[36], threw up two walls of gabions on each side of it, sank a

ditch filled with chevaux-de-frise in front of it, and loopholed some

interior buildings of the fort, which bore upon its reverse side.

[35] Napier says (ii. 250) that ‘the breaching fire ceased for

four days before the assault,’ and that this caused the failure.

The statement is in direct contradiction of Vacani (iii. 277)

who states that Verdier on the contrary ‘proseguì per tre giorni

il vivo fuoco della sua artilleria,’ and of Belmas (ii. 530) who

makes the same statement.

[36] See Alvarez’s letter in Belmas’s Appendix, no. 15, where he

says that the breach had this breadth since July 3.

Monjuich, however, looked in a miserable state when, just before

sunrise on July 7, Verdier launched his columns of assault upon

it. He had collected for the purpose the grenadier and \_voltigeur\_

companies of each of the twenty French, German, and Italian

battalions of the besieging army, about 2,500 men in all[37]. They

were divided into two columns, the larger of which went straight

at the breach, while the smaller, which was furnished with ladders,

was directed to escalade the left face of the demi-lune which covers

the northern front of Monjuich. The troops passed with no great loss

over the open space which divided them from the work, as its guns

had all been silenced, and the fire from the more distant forts was

ineffective in the dusk. But when they got within close musketry

range they began to fall fast; the head of the main column, which

was composed of some sapper companies and the Italian Velites of the

Guard, got up on to the face of the breach, but could never break in.

Every officer or man who reached the cutting and its chevaux-de-frise

was shot down; the concentric fire of the defenders so swept the

opening that nothing could live there. Meanwhile the rear of the

column was brought to a stand, partly in, partly outside, the ditch.

The Spaniards kept playing upon it with musketry and two or three

small 2- and 4-pounders, which had been kept under cover and reserved

for that purpose, firing canister into it at a distance of twenty or

thirty yards. Flesh and blood could not bear this for long, and the

whole mass broke and went to the rear. Verdier, who had come out to

the \_Batterie Impériale\_ to view the assault, had the men rallied

and sent forward a second time: the head of the column again reached

the breach, and again withered away: the supporting mass gave way at

once, and fell back much more rapidly than on the first assault. Yet

the General, most unwisely, insisted on a third attack, which, made

feebly and without conviction, by men who knew that they were beaten,

only served to increase the casualty list. Meanwhile the escalade of

the demi-lune by the smaller column had been repelled with ease: the

assailants barely succeeded in crossing the ditch and planting a few

ladders against the scarp: no one survived who tried to mount them,

and the troops drew off.

[37] This seems a low estimate of Belmas, as the \_compagnies

d’élite\_ formed a third of each battalion.

This bloody repulse cost the French 1,079 casualties, including

seventy-seven officers killed or wounded--much more than a third

of the troops engaged. It is clear, therefore, that it was not

courage which had been lacking: nor could it be said that the

enemy’s artillery fire had not been subdued, nor that the breach was

insufficient, nor that the 300 yards of open ground crossed by the

column had been a fatal obstacle; indeed, they had been passed with

little loss. The mistake of Verdier had been that he attacked before

the garrison was demoralized--the same error made by the English

at Badajoz in 1811 and at San Sebastian in 1813. A broad breach by

itself does not necessarily make a place untenable, if the spirit

of the defenders is high, and if they are prepared with all the

resources of the military art for resisting the stormers, as were the

Geronese on July 7-8. The garrison lost, it may be remarked, only

123 men, out of a strength of 787 present in the fort that morning.

The casualty list, however, was somewhat increased by the accidental

explosion, apparently by a careless gunner, of the magazine of the

tower of San Juan, alongside of the Galligan, which was destroyed

with its little garrison of twenty-five men.

The repulse of the assault of Monjuich thoroughly demoralized

the besieging army: the resistance of the Spaniards had been so

fierce, the loss they had inflicted so heavy, that Verdier’s motley

collection of French, German, Lombard, and Neapolitan regiments lost

heart and confidence. Their low spirits were made manifest by the

simultaneous outbreak of desertion and disease, the two inevitable

marks of a decaying morale. All through the second half of July and

August the hospitals grew gradually fuller, not only from sunstroke

cases (which were frequent on the bare, hot, rocky ground of the

heights), but from dysentery and malaria. The banks of the Ter always

possessed a reputation for epidemics--twice in earlier centuries

a French army had perished before the walls of Gerona by plagues,

which the citizens piously attributed to their patron, San Narciso.

It was mainly because he realized the depression of his troops that

Verdier refrained from any more assaults, and went on from July 9 to

August 4 battering Monjuich incessantly, while he cautiously pushed

forward his trenches, till they actually reached the ditch of the

demi-lune which covers the northern front of the fort. The garrison

was absolutely overwhelmed by the incessant bombardment, which

destroyed every piece of upstanding masonry, and prevented them from

rebuilding anything that was demolished. They were forced to lurk in

the casemates, and to burrow for shelter in the débris which filled

the interior of the work. Three large breaches had been made at

various points, yet Verdier would never risk another assault, till

on August 4 his approaches actually crowned the lip of the ditch of

the demi-lune, and his sappers had blown in its counterscarp. The

ruined little outwork was then stormed with a loss of only forty men.

This put the French in the possession of good cover only a few yards

from the main body of the fort. Proceeding with the same caution as

before, they made their advances against Monjuich by mining: on the

night of the 8th-9th August no less than twenty-three mines under the

glacis of the fort were exploded simultaneously. This left a gaping

void in front of the original breach of July 7, and filled up the

ditch with débris for many yards on either side: part of the interior

of the fort was clearly visible from the besiegers’ trenches.

Only one resource for saving Monjuich remained to Alvarez--a sortie

for the expulsion of the enemy from their advanced works. It was

executed with great courage at midday on August 9, while at the same

time separate demonstrations to distract the enemy were made at two

other points. The column from Monjuich had considerable success;

it stormed two advanced batteries, spiked their guns, and set fire

to their gabions; the French were cleared out of many of their

trenches, but made head behind one of the rear batteries, where

they were joined by their reserves, who finally thrust back the

sallying force into the fort. The damage done, though considerable,

could be repaired in a day. Verdier gave orders for the storm of

the dilapidated fort on the night of August 11, and borrowed a

regiment from St. Cyr’s covering army to lead the assault, being

still very doubtful of the temper of his own troops. But at six on

the preceding afternoon an explosion was heard in Monjuich, and great

part of its battered walls flew up into the air. The Spaniards had

quietly evacuated it a few minutes before, after preparing mines for

its demolition. The French, when they entered, found nothing but a

shapeless mass of stones and eighteen disabled cannon. The garrison

had lost, in the sixty-five days of its defence, 962 men killed and

wounded; the besiegers had, first and last, suffered something like

three times this loss.

While the bombardment of Monjuich was going on, the Spanish generals

outside the fortress had at last begun to make serious efforts for

its assistance. Not only had the \_somatenes\_ redoubled their activity

against Verdier’s convoys, and several times succeeded in destroying

them or turning them back, but Coupigny had at last begun to move,

for he saw that since Blake’s rout at Belchite on June 18 he, and he

alone, possessed an organized body of troops on this side of Spain,

small though it was. Unable to face St. Cyr in the field, he tried

at least to throw succours into Gerona by the mountain paths from

the south, if he could do no more. The first attempt was disastrous:

three battalions started from Hostalrich under an English adventurer,

Ralph Marshall, whom Alvarez had suggested for the command of this

expedition. They evaded the first line of the covering army, but at

Castellar, on July 10, ran into the very centre of Pino’s division,

which had concentrated from all sides for their destruction. Marshall

escaped into Gerona with no more than twelve men: 40 officers and 878

rank and file laid down their arms; the rest of the column, some 600

or 700 men, evaded surrender by dispersion[38].

[38] St. Cyr, Vacani, and Belmas all say that Marshall escaped

by hoisting the white flag, and taking to the hills while terms

of capitulation were being arranged. Coupigny on the other

hand (see his letter in Belmas’s Appendix no. 18) says that

Marshall behaved admirably, but was not seconded by his men,

who flinched and abandoned him. Rich, the officer who failed to

guide the column aright, was not, as Napier supposed (ii. 236),

an Englishman, but a Catalan, as is shown by his Christian name

Narciso. Ric or Rich is a common name in Catalonia.

Equally disastrous, though on a smaller scale, was another attempt

made on August 4 by a party of 300 miqueletes to enter Gerona: they

eluded St. Cyr, but on arriving at the entry of the Galligan, close

under the forts, made the unfortunate mistake of entering the convent

of San Daniel, which the garrison had been compelled to evacuate a

few days before. It was now in the French lines, and the Catalans

were all taken prisoners. It was not till August 17, six days

after the fall of Monjuich, that Alvarez obtained his first feeble

reinforcement: the miquelete battalion of Cervera, with a draft for

that of Vich already in the garrison, altogether 800 bayonets, got

into the city on the west side, by eluding Lecchi’s Italians in

the plain and fording the Ter. They were much needed, for Alvarez

was complaining to the Catalan Junta that he had now only 1,500

able-bodied men left of his original 5,000[39].

[39] This must have been an exaggeration, as 2,000 men under

arms of the old garrison survived to surrender in December. See

Alvarez’s letter, on p. 686 of Belmas’s Appendix.

Verdier had written to his master, after the capture of Monjuich, to

announce that Gerona must infallibly surrender within eight or ten

days[40], now that it had nothing but an antiquated mediaeval wall

to oppose to his cannon. So far, however, was he from being a true

prophet that, as a matter of fact, the second and longer episode of

the siege, which was to be protracted far into the winter, had only

just begun.

[40] See Verdier’s letter of August 12, in Belmas’s Appendix no.

11, p. 700.

SECTION XVII: CHAPTER III

THE FALL OF GERONA. AUGUST-DECEMBER, 1809

When Monjuich had been evacuated, the position of Gerona was

undoubtedly perilous: of the two mountain summits which command the

city one was now entirely in the hands of the French; for not only

the great fort itself but several of the smaller works above the

ravine of the Galligan--such as the fortified convent of San Daniel

and the ruined tower of San Juan--had been lost. The front exposed

to attack now consisted of the northern section of the old city

wall, from the bastion of Santa Maria at the water’s edge, to the

tower of La Gironella, which forms the north-eastern angle of the

place, and lies further up the slope of the Capuchin heights than any

other portion of the enceinte. The space between these two points

was simply covered by a mediaeval wall set with small round towers:

neither the towers nor the curtain between them had been built to

hold artillery. Indeed the only spots on this front where guns had

been placed were (1) the comparatively modern bastion of Santa Maria,

(2) a work erected under and about the Gironella, and called the

‘Redoubt of the Germans,’ and (3, 4) two parts of the wall called the

platforms[41] of San Pedro and San Cristobal, which had been widened

till they could carry a few heavy guns. On the rest of the enceinte,

owing to its narrowness, nothing but wall-pieces and two-pounders

could be mounted. The parts of the curtain most exposed to attack

were the sections named Santa Lucia, San Pedro, San Cristobal, and

Las Sarracinas, from churches or quarters which lay close behind

them. With nothing but an antiquated wall, seven to nine feet thick,

thirty feet high, and destitute of a ditch, it seemed that this side

of Gerona was doomed to destruction within a few days.

[41] Some call them bastions, but they are too small to deserve

that name.

But there were points in the position which rendered the attack

more difficult than might have been expected. The first was that any

approaches directed against this front would be exposed to a flanking

fire from the forts on the Capuchin heights, especially from the

Calvary and Chapter redoubts. The second was that the greater part

of the weak sections of the wall were within a re-entering angle;

for the tower of Santa Lucia and the ‘Redoubt of the Germans’ by the

Gironella project, and the curtains between them are in a receding

sweep of the enceinte. Attacks on these ill-fortified sections would

be outflanked and enfiladed by the two stronger works. The only

exposed part of the curtain was that called Santa Lucia, running

from the tower of that name down to the bastion of Santa Maria.

Lastly, the parallels which the French might construct from their

base on Monjuich would have to be built on a down slope, overlooked

by loftier ground, and when they reached the foot of the walls they

would be in a sort of gulley or bottom, into which the defenders of

the city could look down from above. The only point from which the

north end of Gerona could be approached from flat ground and without

disadvantages of slope, is the short front of less than 200 yards

breadth between the foot of Monjuich and the bank of the Ter. Here,

in the ruins of the suburb of Pedret, there was plenty of cover, a

soil easy to work, and a level terrain as far as the foot of the

Santa Maria bastion. The engineers of the besieging army selected

three sections of wall as their objective. The first was the ‘Redoubt

of the Germans’ and the tower of La Gironella, the highest and most

commanding works in this part of the enceinte: once established in

these, they could overlook and dominate the whole city. The other

points of attack were chosen for the opposite reason--because

they were intrinsically weak in themselves, not because they were

important or dominating parts of the defences. The curtain of Santa

Lucia in particular seemed to invite attack, as being in a salient

angle, unprotected by flanking fire, and destitute of any artillery

of its own.

Verdier, therefore, on the advice of his engineers, set to work

to attack these points of the enceinte between La Gironella and

Santa Maria. New batteries erected amid the ruins of Monjuich were

levelled against them, in addition to such of the older batteries

as could still be utilized. On the front by Pedret also, where

nothing had hitherto been done, works were prepared for guns to be

directed against Santa Maria and Santa Lucia. Meanwhile a perpetual

bombardment with shell was kept up, against the whole quarter of the

town that lay behind the selected points of attack. Mortars were

always playing, not only from the Monjuich heights but from two

batteries erected on the so-called ‘Green Mound’ in the plain beyond

the river Ter. Their effect was terrible: almost every house in the

northern quarter of Gerona was unroofed or destroyed: the population

had to take refuge in cellars, where, after a few days, they began

to die fast--all the more so that food was just beginning to run

short as August advanced. From the 14th to the 30th of that month

Verdier’s attack was developing itself: by its last day four breaches

had been established: one, about forty feet broad, in the curtain

of St. Lucia, two close together in the works at La Gironella[42],

the fourth and smallest in the platform of San Cristobal. But the

approaches were still far from the foot of the wall, the fire of the

outlying Spanish works, especially the Calvary fort, was unsubdued,

and though the guns along the attacked front had all been silenced,

the French artillery had paid dearly both in lives and in material

for the advantage they had gained. Moreover sickness was making

dreadful ravages in the ranks of the besieging army. The malarious

pestilence on which the Spaniards had relied had appeared, after

a sudden and heavy rainfall had raised the Ter and Oña beyond

their banks, and inundated the whole plain of Salt. By malaria,

dysentery and sunstroke Verdier had lost 5,000 men, in addition to

his casualties in the siege. Many of them were convalescents in the

hospitals of Perpignan and Figueras, but it was hard to get them

back to the front; the \_somatenes\_ made the roads impassable for

small detachments, and the officers on the line of communication,

being very short of men, were given to detaining drafts that reached

them on their way to Gerona[43]. Hence Verdier, including his

artillerymen and sappers, had less than 10,000 men left for the

siege, and these much discouraged by its interminable length, short

of officers, and sickly. This was not enough to guard a periphery

of six miles, and messengers were continually slipping in or out of

Gerona, between the widely scattered camps of the French.

[42] Belmas, for convenience’ sake, distinguishes these two

breaches by calling the northern one the breach in the Barracks,

the southern the breach in the Latrines of the ‘German Redoubt.’

[43] Between Gerona and Perpignan, for the defence of

communications and the garrisoning of Figueras, there were

at this time the Valais battalion, one battalion of the

Confederation of the Rhine (Waldeck-Reuss-Schwarzburg), one

battalion each of the French 7th and 113th--not more than 2,300

bayonets in all. See Returns of the Army of Spain for Sept. 15,

1809.

On August 31 a new phase of the siege began. In response to the

constant appeals of Alvarez to the Catalan Junta, and the consequent

complaints of the Junta alike to the Captain-General Blake, and to

the central government at Seville, something was at last about to

be done to relieve Gerona. The supreme Central Junta, in reply to a

formal representation of the Catalans dated August 16[44], had sent

Blake 6,000,000 reals in cash, and a peremptory order to march on

Gerona whatever the state of his army might be, authorizing him to

call out all the \_somatenes\_ of the province in his aid. The general,

who had at last returned to Tarragona, obeyed, though entirely

lacking confidence in his means of success; and on the thirty-first

his advance guard was skirmishing with St. Cyr’s covering army on the

heights to the south of the Ter.

[44] For this correspondence see the Appendices nos. 16 and 24-5

in vol. ii of Belmas.

Blake’s army, it will be remembered, had been completely routed at

Belchite by Suchet on June 18. The wrecks of his Aragonese division

had gradually rallied at Tortosa, those of his Valencian divisions

at Morella: but even by the end of July he had only a few thousand

men collected, and he had lost every gun of his artillery. For many

weeks he could do nothing but press the Junta of Valencia to fill

the depleted ranks of his regiments with recruits, to reconstitute

his train, and to provide him with new cannon. Aragon had been

lost--nothing could be drawn from thence: Catalonia, distracted by

Suchet’s demonstration on its western flank, did not do as much as

might have been expected in its own defence. The Junta was inclined

to favour the employment of miqueletes and \_somatenes\_, and to

undervalue the troops of the line: it forgot that the irregulars,

though they did admirable work in harassing the enemy, could not be

relied upon to operate in large masses or strike a decisive blow.

Still, the regiments at Tarragona, Lerida, and elsewhere had been

somewhat recruited before August was out.

Blake’s field army was composed of some 14,000 men: there were five

Valencian regiments--those which had been least mishandled in the

campaign of Aragon--with the relics of six of the battalions which

Reding had brought from Granada in 1808[45], two of Lazan’s old

Aragonese corps, and five or six of the regiments which had formed

the original garrison of Catalonia. The battalions were very weak--it

took twenty-four of them to make up 13,000 infantry: of cavalry there

were only four squadrons, of artillery only two batteries. Those of

the rank and file who were not raw recruits were the vanquished of

Molins de Rey and Valls, or of Maria and Belchite. They had no great

confidence in Blake, and he had still less in them. Despite the

orders received from Seville, which bade him risk all for the relief

of Gerona, he was determined not to fight another pitched battle.

The memories of Belchite were too recent to be forgotten. Though

much obloquy has been poured upon his head for this resolve, he was

probably wise in his decision. St. Cyr had still some 12,000 men in

his covering army, who had taken no share in the siege: their morale

was intact, and they had felt little fatigue or privation. They could

be, and were in fact, reinforced by 4,000 men from Verdier’s force

when the stress came. Blake, therefore, was, so far as regular troops

went, outnumbered by the French, especially in cavalry and artillery.

He could not trust in time of battle the miqueletes, of whom some

4,000 or 5,000 from the Ampurdam and Central Catalonia came to join

him. He thought that it might be possible to elude or outflank

St. Cyr, to lure him to divide his forces into scattered bodies by

threatening many points at once, or, on the other hand, to induce him

to concentrate on one short front, and so to leave some of the exits

of Gerona open. But a battle with the united French army he would not

risk under any conditions.

[45] See the ‘morning state’ given in Arteche, vii. pp. 565-6.

The Valencian regiments were Savoia, Orihuela, Voluntarios de

Valencia, and Almanza, with about 5,000 bayonets. Of Reding’s old

troops from the south there were Almeria, Baza, Santa Fé, 1st

of Granada (otherwise called Iliberia), and two battalions of

Provincial Grenadiers, something over 3,000 men. The rest were

mainly Catalans.

St. Cyr, however, was too wary for his opponent: he wanted to fight

at all costs, and he was prepared to risk a disturbance of the siege

operations, if he could catch Blake in the open and bring him to

action. The moment that pressure on his outposts, by regular troops

coming from the south, was reported, he drew together Souham’s and

Pino’s divisions on the short line between San Dalmay on the right

and Casa de Selva on the left, across the high road from Barcelona.

At the same time he sent stringent orders to Verdier to abandon

the unimportant sections of his line of investment, and to come to

reinforce the field army at the head of his French division, which

still counted 4,000 bayonets. Verdier accordingly marched to join

his chief, leaving Lecchi’s Italians--now little more than 2,000

strong--to watch the west side of Gerona, and handing over the charge

of the works on Monjuich, the new approaches, and the park at Pont

Mayor, to the Westphalians. He abandoned all the outlying posts on

the heights, even the convent of San Daniel, the village of Campdura,

and the peak of Nuestra Señora de los Angeles. Only 4,600 infantry

and 2,000 gunners and sappers were left facing the garrison: but

Alvarez was too weak to drive off even such a small force.

On September 1 Blake ostentatiously displayed the heads of his

columns in front of St. Cyr’s position; but while the French general

was eagerly awaiting his attack, and preparing his counter-stroke,

the Spaniard’s game was being played out in another quarter. While

Rovira and Claros with their miqueletes made noisy demonstration

from the north against the Westphalians, and threatened the park and

the camp at Sarria, Blake had detached one of his divisions, that of

Garcia Conde, some 4,000 strong, far to the left beyond St. Cyr’s

flank: this corps had with it a convoy of more than a thousand mules

laden with provisions, and a herd of cattle. It completely escaped

the notice of the French, and marching from Amer at break of day came

down into the plain of Salt at noon, far in the rear of St. Cyr’s

army. Garcia Conde had the depleted Italian division of the siege

corps in front of him: one of the brigadiers, the Pole Milosewitz,

was in command that day, Lecchi being in hospital. This small force,

which vainly believed itself covered from attack by St. Cyr’s corps,

had kept no look-out to the rear, being wholly intent on watching

the garrison. It was surprised by the Spanish column, cut into two

halves, and routed. Garcia Conde entered the Mercadal in triumph with

his convoy, and St. Cyr first learnt what had occurred when he saw

the broken remnants of the Italians pouring into the rear of his own

line at Fornells.

That night Gerona was free of enemies on its southern and eastern

sides, and Alvarez communicated freely with Rovira’s and Claros’s

irregulars, who had forced in the Westphalian division and compelled

it to concentrate in Monjuich and the camp by the great park near

Sarria. The garrison reoccupied the ruined convent of San Daniel by

the Galligan, and placed a strong party in the hermitage on the peak

of Nuestra Señora de los Angeles. It also destroyed all the advanced

trenches on the slopes of Monjuich. On the next morning, however, it

began to appreciate the fact that the siege had not been raised. St.

Cyr sent back Verdier’s division to rejoin the Westphalians, and with

them the wrecks of Lecchi’s routed battalions. He added to the force

under Verdier half Pino’s Italian division--six fresh battalions.

With these reinforcements the old siege-lines could be reoccupied,

and the Spaniards were forced back from the points outside the walls

which they had reoccupied on the night of September 1.

By sending away such a large proportion of the 16,000 men that he had

concentrated for battle on the previous day, St. Cyr left himself

only some 10,000 men for a general action with Blake, if the latter

should resolve to fight. But the Spanish general, being without

Garcia Conde’s division, had also no more than 10,000 men in line.

Not only did he refuse to advance, but when St. Cyr, determined to

fight at all costs, marched against him with offensive intentions,

he hastily retreated as far as Hostalrich, two marches to the rear.

There he broke up his army, which had exhausted all its provisions.

St. Cyr did the same and for the same reasons; his men had to

disperse in order to live. He says in his memoirs that if Blake had

shown a bold front against him, and forced him to keep the covering

army concentrated for two more days, the siege would have had to be

raised. For the covering army had advanced against the Spaniards on

September 2 with only two days’ rations, it had exhausted its stores,

and eaten up the country-side. On the fourth it would have had to

retire, or to break up into small fractions, leaving the siege-corps

unprotected. St. Cyr doubted whether the retreat would have ceased

before Figueras was reached. But it is more probable that he would

have merely fallen back to join Verdier, and to live for some days

on the dépôts of Pont Mayor and Sarria. He could have offered battle

again under the walls of Gerona, with all his forces united. Blake

might have got into close touch with Alvarez, and have thrown what

convoys he pleased into the town; but as long as St. Cyr and Verdier

with 22,000 men lay opposite him, he could not have risked any

more. The situation, in short, would have been that which occurred

in February 1811 under the walls of Badajoz, when Mortier faced

Mendizabal, and would probably have ended in the same fashion, by the

French attacking and driving off the relieving army. Blake, then, may

be blamed somewhat for his excessive caution in giving way so rapidly

before St. Cyr’s advance: but if we remember the quality of his

troops and the inevitable result of a battle, it is hard to censure

him overmuch.

Meanwhile Garcia Conde, whose movements were most happy and adroit,

reinforced the garrison of Gerona up to its original strength of

5,000 bayonets, by making over to Alvarez four whole battalions and

some picked companies from other corps, and prepared to leave the

town with the rest of his division and the vast drove of mules, whose

burden had been discharged into the magazines. If he had dedicated

his whole force to strengthening the garrison, the additional troops

would have eaten up in a few days all the provisions that the

convoy had brought in[46]. Accordingly he started off at two a.m.

on September 4 with some 1,200 men, by the upland path that leads

past the hermitage of Los Angeles: St. Cyr had just placed Pino’s

troops from the covering army to guard the heights to the south-east

of Gerona, but Garcia Conde, warned by the peasants of their exact

position, slipped between the posts and got off to Hostalrich with a

loss of no more than fifty men[47].

[46] The reinforcements left behind by Garcia Conde consisted of

two battalions of Baza (one of Reding’s old Granadan regiments),

with 1,368 bayonets, two Catalan ‘tercios,’ 1st and 2nd of

Talarn, with 716 bayonets, and select companies of 1st of Granada

(Iliberia), 2nd of Vich, and Voluntarios de Tarragona--in all

apparently about 2,707 men.

The table on p. 375 of Arteche’s vol. vii seems to err in

crediting the Cervera ‘tercio’ to Garcia: this had come in on

Aug. 17, as described on p. 35. On the other hand the company of

Voluntarios de Tarragona should be credited to him.

[47] St. Cyr tells a story to the effect that he had placed

Mazzuchelli’s brigade of Pino’s division in ambush behind the

hill of Palau to intercept Garcia Conde, and that the Spaniards

would have marched right into the trap on Sept. 3, if the

Italians had not been stupid enough to sound the \_réveil\_ at

dawn, and so warn the enemy of their existence. But the Spanish

accounts of Minali and Claros are quite different (see Arteche,

vii. 377); they are to the effect that Garcia Conde had intended

to start \_at dusk\_ on the third, but, hearing firing on the side

of Palau, deferred his exit and took another road. If he was

starting at 7 or 8 o’clock at night on the third, he cannot have

been warned by the morning bugles at 4 o’clock on the previous

morning. See St. Cyr, p. 234, and Napier, ii. 245, for the

French story, which the latter takes over whole from the former.

Belmas and Vacani do not give the tale, though they have a full

narration of the escape of Garcia Conde.

Before he could consider his position safe, Verdier had to complete

the lines of investment: this he did on September 5 by driving off

the intermediate posts which Alvarez had thrown out from the Capuchin

heights, to link the town with the garrison in the hermitage of

Nuestra Señora de los Angeles. Mazzuchelli’s brigade stormed the

hermitage itself on the following day, with a loss of about eighty

men, and massacred the greater part of the garrison. On that same

day, however, the French suffered a small disaster in another part of

the environs. General Joba, who had been sent with three battalions

to clear the road to Figueras from the bands of Claros and Rovira,

was beaten and slain at San Gregorio by those chiefs. But the

miqueletes afterwards retired to the mountains, and the road became

intermittently passable, at least for large bodies of men.

It was not till September 11, however, that Verdier recommenced the

actual siege, and bade his batteries open once more upon Gerona.

The eleven days of respite since Blake interrupted the bombardment

on September 1 had been invaluable to the garrison, who had cleared

away the débris from the foot of the breaches, replaced the damaged

artillery on the front of attack, and thrown up interior defences

behind the shattered parts of the wall. They had also destroyed all

the advanced trenches of the besiegers, which had to be reconstructed

at much cost of life. In four days Verdier had recovered most of

the lost ground, when he was surprised by a vigorous sally from the

gate of San Pedro: the garrison, dashing out at three p.m., stormed

the three nearest breaching batteries, spiked their guns, and filled

in all the trenches which were advancing towards the foot of the

walls. Four days’ work was thus undone in an hour, and it was only

on September 19 that Verdier had reconstructed his works, and pushed

forward so far towards his objective that he considered an assault

possible. He then begged St. Cyr to lend him a brigade of fresh

troops, pleading that the siege-corps was now so weak in numbers,

and so demoralized by its losses, that he did not consider that the

men would do themselves justice at a storm. The losses of officers

had been fearful: one battalion was commanded by a lieutenant,

another had been reduced to fifty men; desertion was rampant among

several of the foreign corps. Of 14,000 infantry[48] of the French,

Westphalian, and Italian divisions less than 6,000 now remained. So

far as mere siegecraft went, as he explained to St. Cyr, ‘the affair

might be considered at an end. We have made four large practicable

breaches, each of them sufficient to reduce the town. But the troops

cannot be trusted.’ St. Cyr refused to lend a man for the assault,

writing with polite irony that ‘every general has his own task:

yours is to take Gerona with the resources placed at your disposal

by the government for that object, and the officers named by the

government to conduct the siege[49].’ He added that he considered,

from its past conduct, that the morale of the siege-corps was rather

good than bad. He should not, therefore, allow the covering army to

join the assault; but he would lend the whole of Pino’s division to

take charge of Monjuich and the camps, during the storm, and would

make a demonstration against the Mercadal, to distract the enemy

from the breaches. With this Verdier had to be content, and, after

making two final protests, concentrated all his brigades save those

of the Westphalian division, and composed with them four columns,

amounting to some 3,000 men, directing one against each of the four

breaches. That sent against the platform of San Cristobal was a mere

demonstration of 150 men, but the other three were heavy masses: the

Italians went against Santa Lucia, the French brigade against the

southern breach in the ‘Redoubt of the Germans,’ the Berg troops

against the northern one. A separate demonstration was made against

the Calvary fort, whose unsubdued fire still flanked the breaches, in

the hope that its defenders might be prevented from interfering in

the main struggle.

[48] Verdier did not exaggerate: see Appendix no. 2 at end of

this volume, showing that his three divisions had lost 8,161 men

out of 14,044 by September 15.

[49] See the acrid correspondence between St. Cyr and Verdier in

Appendices nos. 37-8, 40-6 of Belmas, vol. ii.

Alvarez, who had noted the French columns marching from all quarters

to take shelter, before the assault, in the trenches on the slopes

of Monjuich and in front of Pedret, had fair warning of what was

coming, and had done his best to provide against the danger. The

less important parts of the enceinte had been put in charge of

the citizens of the ‘Crusade,’ and the picked companies of every

regiment had been told off the breaches. The Englishman, Ralph

Marshall, was in charge of the curtain of Santa Lucia, William Nash,

the Spanish-Irish colonel of Ultonia, commanded at the two breaches

under La Gironella: Brigadier Fournas, the second-in-command of the

garrison, had general supervision of the defences; he had previously

taken charge of Monjuich during the great assault in August.

Everything had been done to prepare a second line of resistance

behind the breaches; barricades had been erected, houses loopholed,

and a great many marksmen disposed on roofs and church towers, which

looked down on the rear-side of the gaps in the wall.

At four o’clock in the afternoon of September 19 the three columns

destined for the northern breaches descended from Monjuich on the

side of San Daniel, crossed the Galligan, and plunged into the

hollow at the foot of the ‘Redoubt of the Germans.’ At the same

moment the fourth column started from the ruins of the tower of San

Juan to attack the curtain of Santa Lucia. The diversion against the

Calvary fort was made at the same moment, and beaten off in a few

minutes, so that the fire of this work was not neutralized during

the assault according to Verdier’s expectation. The main assault,

nevertheless, was delivered with great energy, despite the flanking

fire. At the two points of attack under La Gironella the stormers

twice won, crossed, and descended from the breach, forcing their

way into the ruined barracks behind. But they were mown down by the

terrible musketry fire from the houses, and finally expelled with

the bayonet. At the Santa Lucia curtain the Italians scaled the

breach, but were brought up by a perpendicular drop of twelve feet

behind it--the foot of the wall in this quarter chancing to be much

higher than the level of the street below. They held the crest of the

breach for some time, but were finally worsted in a long and furious

exchange of fire with the Spaniards on the roofs and churches before

them, and recoiled. The few surviving officers rallied the stormers,

and brought them up for a second assault, but at the end of two hours

of hard fighting all were constrained to retire to their trenches.

They had lost 624 killed and wounded, including three colonels (the

only three surviving in the whole of Verdier’s corps) and thirty

other officers. The Spanish loss had been 251, among them Colonel

Marshall, who was mortally wounded at his post on the Santa Lucia

front.

[Illustration: SIEGE OF GERONA]

Verdier accused his troops of cowardice, which seems to have been

unjust. St. Cyr wrote to the Minister of War to express his opinion

that his subordinate was making an excuse to cover his own error,

in judging that a town must fall merely because there were large

breaches in its walls[50]. ‘The columns stopped for ninety minutes

on the breaches under as heavy a fire as has ever been seen. There

was some disorder at the end, but that is not astonishing in view of

the heavy loss suffered before the retreat. I do not think that

picked grenadiers would have done any better, and I am convinced

that the assault failed because the obstacles to surmount were

too great.’ The fact was that the Spaniards had fought with such

admirable obstinacy, and had so well arranged their inner defences,

that it did not suffice that the breaches should have been perfectly

practicable. At the northern assault the stormers actually penetrated

into the buildings behind the gaps in the ruined wall, but could

not get further forward[51]. In short, the history of the siege of

Gerona gives a clear corroboration of the old military axiom that

no town should ever surrender merely because it has been breached,

and justifies Napoleon’s order that every governor who capitulated

without having stood at least one assault should be sent before a

court martial. It refutes the excuses of the too numerous commanders

who have surrendered merely because there was a practicable breach in

their walls, like Imaz at Badajoz in 1811. If all Spanish generals

had been as wary and as resolute as Mariano Alvarez, the Peninsular

War would have taken some unexpected turns. The moral of the defences

of Tarifa, Burgos, and San Sebastian will be found to be the same as

that of the defence of Gerona.

[50] ‘Il paraît que l’on a employé la ressource, malheureusement

trop usitée en pareil cas, de dire que les troupes n’ont pas fait

leur devoir, ce qui produit de justes réclamations de leur part.’

(St. Cyr to the Minister, Sept. 24, 1809.)

[51] The not unnatural suggestion that the German and Italian

troops may have failed to display such desperate courage as the

native French in the assault seems to be refuted by their losses,

which were hardly smaller in proportion. Of 1,430 native French

of the 7th and 56th Line and 32nd Léger, 328 were put out of

action; of 1,400 Berg, Würzburg, and Italian troops, 296. The

difference in the percentage is so small that it is clear that

there was no great difference in conduct.

The effect of the repulse of September 19 on the besieging army was

appalling. Verdier, after writing three venomous letters to the

Emperor, the War Minister, and Marshal Augereau[52], in which he

accused St. Cyr of having deliberately sacrificed the good of the

service to his personal resentments, declared himself invalided. He

then went off to Perpignan, though permission to depart was expressly

denied him by his superior: his divisional generals, Lecchi and

Morio, had already preceded him to France. Disgust at the failure of

the storm had the same effect on the rank and file: 1,200 men went

to the hospital in the fortnight that followed the assault, till by

October 1 the three divisions of the siege-corps numbered little more

than 4,000 bayonets--just enough to hold Monjuich and the camps by

the great dépôts at Pont Mayor and Sarria. The store of ammunition in

the park had been used up for the tremendous bombardment poured upon

the breaches from the 15th to the 17th of September. A new supply was

wanted from Perpignan, yet no troops could be detached to bring it

forward, for the miqueletes were again active, and on September 13

had captured or destroyed near Bascara a convoy guarded by so many as

500 men.

[52] See especially Verdier to Augereau, no. 53, and to the

Minister, no. 61, of Belmas’s Appendices.

St. Cyr, left in sole charge of the siege by Verdier’s departure,

came to the conclusion that it was useless to proceed with the attack

by means of trenches, batteries, and assaults, and frankly stated

that he should starve the town out, but waste no further lives on

active operations. He drew in the covering corps closer to Gerona, so

that it could take a practical part in the investment, put the wrecks

of Lecchi’s troops--of whom less than 1,000 survived--into Pino’s

division, and sent the French brigade of Verdier’s old division to

guard the line between Bascara and the Frontier. Thus the distinction

between the siege-corps and the covering troops ceased to exist, and

St. Cyr lay with some 16,000 men in a loose circle round Gerona,

intent not on prosecuting advances against the walls, but only on

preventing the introduction of further succours. He was aware that

acute privations were already being suffered by the Spaniards:

Garcia Conde’s convoy had brought in not much more than eight days’

provisions for the 5,000 men of the reinforced garrison and the

10,000 inhabitants who still survived. There was a considerable

amount of flour still left in store, but little else: meat, salt

and fresh, was all gone save horseflesh, for Alvarez had just begun

to butcher his draught horses and those of his single squadron of

cavalry. There was some small store of chocolate, tobacco, and

coffee, but wine and aguardiente had run out, so had salt, oil, rice,

and--what was most serious with autumn and winter approaching--wood

and charcoal. All the timbers of the houses destroyed by the

bombardment had been promptly used up, either for fortification or

for cooking[53]. Medical stores were wholly unobtainable: the chief

hospital had been burnt early in the siege, and the sick and wounded,

laid in vaults or casemates for safety, died off like flies in the

underground air. The seeds of pestilence were spread by the number

of dead bodies of men and animals which were lying where they could

not be reached, under the ruins of fallen houses. The spirit alike of

garrison and troops still ran high: the repulse of the great assault

of September 19, and the cessation of the bombardment for many days

after had encouraged them. But they were beginning to murmur more

and more bitterly against Blake: there was a general, if erroneous,

opinion that he ought to have risked a battle, instead of merely

throwing in provisions, on September 1. Alvarez himself shared this

view, and wrote in vigorous terms to the Junta of Catalonia, to ask

if his garrison was to perish slowly by famine.

[53] The very interesting list of the prices of commodities at

the commencement and the end of the siege, drawn up by Dr. Ruiz,

one of the Gerona diarists, may be found on p. 579 of Arteche’s

vol. vii. Note the following--the real (20 to the dollar) =

2½\_d.\_ :--

\_Reals.\_

\_In June.\_ \_In Sept.\_

Wheat flour, the qr. 80 112

Barleymeal, the qr. 30 56

Oatmeal, the qr. 48 80

Coffee, the lb. 8 24

Chocolate, the lb. 16 64

Oil, the measure 2½ 24

Salt fish, the lb. 2¼ 32

Cheese, the lb. 4 40

Wood, the arroba (32 lb.) 5 48

Charcoal, ditto 3½ 40

Tobacco, the lb. 24 100

A fowl 14 320

Rice, the lb. 1½ 32

Fresh fish from the Ter, the lb. 4 36

Thus while flour and meal had not doubled in value, coffee had

gone up threefold, chocolate and tobacco fourfold, cheese and

fuel tenfold, and the other commodities far more.

Blake responded by a second effort, less happily planned than that of

September 1. He called together his scattered divisions, now about

12,000 strong, and secretly concentrated them at La Bispal, between

Gerona and the sea. He had again got together some 1,200 mules

laden with foodstuffs, and a large drove of sheep and oxen. Henry

O’Donnell, an officer of the Ultonia regiment, who had been sent out

by Alvarez, marched at the head of the convoy with 2,000 picked men;

a division of 4,000 men under General Wimpfen followed close behind

to cover its rear. Blake, with the rest, remained at La Bispal: he

committed the egregious fault of omitting to threaten other parts of

the line of investment, so as to draw off St. Cyr’s attention from

the crucial point. He trusted to secrecy and sudden action, having

succeeded in concentrating his army without being discovered by the

French, who thought him still far away beyond Hostalrich. Thus it

came to pass that though O’Donnell struck sharply in, defeated an

Italian regiment near Castellar, and another three miles further on,

and reached the Constable fort with the head of the convoy, yet the

rest of Pino’s division and part of Souham’s concentrated upon his

flank and rear, because they were not drawn off by alarms in other

quarters. They broke in between O’Donnell and his supports, captured

all the convoy save 170 mules, and destroyed the leading regiment of

Wimpfen’s column, shooting also, according to the Spanish reports,

many scores of the unarmed peasants who were driving the beasts of

burden[54]. About 700 of Wimpfen’s men were taken prisoners, about

1,300 killed or wounded, for little quarter was given. The remnant

recoiled upon Blake, who fell back to Hostalrich next day, September

27, without offering to fight. The amount of food which reached the

garrison was trifling, and Alvarez declared that he had no need for

the additional mouths of O’Donnell’s four battalions, and refused to

admit them into the city. They lay encamped under the Capuchin fort

for some days, waiting for an opportunity to escape.

[54] See Toreno, ii, and Arteche, vii. 412.

After having thus wrecked Blake’s second attempt to succour Gerona,

and driven him from the neighbourhood, St. Cyr betook himself to

Perpignan, in order, as he explained to the Minister of War[55],

to hurry up provisions to the army at the front, and to compel

the officers at the base to send forward some 3,000 or 4,000

convalescents fit to march, whose services had been persistently

denied him[56]. Arrived there he heard that Augereau, whose gout

had long disappeared, was perfectly fit to take the field, and

could have done so long before if he had not preferred to shift on

to other shoulders the responsibility for the siege of Gerona. He

was, on October 1, at the baths of Molitg, ‘destroying the germs of

his malady’ as he gravely wrote to Paris,--amusing himself, as St.

Cyr maintains in his memoirs. Convinced that the siege had still a

long time to run, and eager to do an ill turn to the officer who had

intrigued to get his place, St. Cyr played on the Marshal precisely

the same trick that Verdier had played on himself a fortnight before.

He announced that he was indisposed, wrote to congratulate Augereau

on his convalescence, and to resign the command to his hands, and

departed to his home, without waiting for an answer, or obtaining

leave from Paris--a daring act, as Napoleon was enraged, and might

have treated him hardly. He was indeed put under arrest for a short

time.

[55] See St. Cyr to the Minister, Belmas, ii. Appendix no. 67.

[56] Augereau to the Minister, ibid., Oct. 8.

From the first to the eleventh of October Souham remained in charge

of the army, but on the twelfth Augereau appeared and took command,

bringing with him the mass of convalescents who had been lingering

at Perpignan. Among them was Verdier, whose health became all that

could be desired when St. Cyr had disappeared. The night following

the Marshal’s arrival was disturbed by an exciting incident. Henry

O’Donnell from his refuge on the Capuchin heights, had been watching

for a fortnight for a good chance of escape. There was a dense fog

on the night of the 12th-13th: taking advantage of it O’Donnell

came down with his brigade, made a circuit round the town, crossed

the Oña and struck straight away into the plain of Salt, which,

being the most open and exposed, was also the least guarded section

of the French lines of investment. He broke through the chain of

vedettes almost without firing, and came rushing before dawn into

Souham’s head-quarters camp on the heights of Aguaviva. The battalion

sleeping there was scattered, and the general forced to fly in his

shirt. O’Donnell swept off his riding-horses and baggage, as also

some prisoners, and was out of reach in half an hour, before the

rallying fractions of the French division came up to the rescue of

their chief. By six o’clock the escaping column was in safety in the

mountains by Santa Coloma, where it joined the miqueletes of Milans.

For this daring exploit O’Donnell was made a major-general by the

Supreme Junta. His departure was a great relief to Alvarez, who had

to husband every mouthful of food, and had already put both the

garrison and the townsfolk on half-rations of flour and horseflesh.

Augereau was in every way inferior as an officer to St. Cyr. An old

soldier of fortune risen from the ranks, he had little education

or military science; his one virtue was headlong courage on the

battlefield, yet when placed in supreme command he often hesitated,

and showed hopeless indecision. He had been lucky enough to earn

a great reputation as Napoleon’s second-in-command in the old

campaigns of Italy in 1796-7. Since then he had made his fortune by

becoming one of the Emperor’s most zealous tools and flatterers.

He was reckoned a blind and reckless Bonapartist, ready to risk

anything for his master, but spoilt his reputation for sincerity by

deserting him at the first opportunity in 1814. He was inclined to

a harsh interpretation of the laws of war, and enjoyed a doubtful

reputation for financial integrity. Yet he was prone to ridiculous

self-laudatory proclamations and manifestos, written in a bombastic

strain which he vainly imagined to resemble his master’s thunders of

the \_Bulletins\_. Scraps of his address to the citizens of Gerona may

serve to display his fatuity--

‘Unhappy inhabitants--wretched victims immolated to the caprice

and madness of ambitious men greedy for your blood--return to your

senses, open your eyes, consider the ills which surround you! With

what tranquillity do your leaders look upon the graves crammed with

your corpses! Are you not horror-struck at these cannibals, whose

mirth bursts out in the midst of the human hecatomb, and who yet dare

to lift their gory hands in prayer towards the throne of a God of

Peace? They call themselves the apostles of Jesus Christ! Tremble,

cruel and infamous men! The God who judges the actions of mortals is

slow to condemn, but his vengeance is terrible.... I warn you for the

last time, inhabitants of Gerona, reflect while you still may! If you

force me to throw aside my usual mildness, your ruin is inevitable. I

shall be the first to groan at it, but the laws of war impose on me

the dire necessity.... I am severe but just. Unhappy Gerona! if thy

defenders persist in their obstinacy, thou shalt perish in blood and

flame.

(Signed) AUGEREAU.’

Stuff of this sort was not likely to have much effect on fanatics

like Alvarez and his ‘Crusaders.’ If it is so wrong to cause the

deaths of men--they had only to answer--Why has Bonaparte sent his

legions into Spain? On the Marshal’s line of argument, that it is

wrong to resist overwhelming force, it is apparently a sin before God

for any man to attempt to defend his house and family against any

bandit. There is much odious and hypocritical nonsense in some of

Napoleon’s bulletins, where he grows tender on the miseries of the

people he has conquered, but nothing to approach the maunderings of

his copyist.

Augereau found the army about Gerona showing not more than 12,000

bayonets fit for the field--gunners and sappers excluded. The men

were sick of the siege, and it would seem that the Marshal was

forced, after inspecting the regiments and conferring with the

generals, to acquiesce in St. Cyr’s decision that any further

assaults would probably lead to more repulses. He gave out that

he was resolved to change the system on which the operations had

hitherto been conducted, but the change amounted to nothing more

than that he ordered a slow but steady bombardment to be kept up,

and occasionally vexed the Spaniards by demonstrations against the

more exposed points of the wall. It does not appear that either of

these expedients had the least effect in shaking the morale of the

garrison. It is true that during October and November the hearts of

the Geronese were commencing to grow sick, but this was solely the

result of starvation and dwindling numbers. As to the bombardment,

they were now hardened to any amount of dropping fire: on October

28 they celebrated the feast of San Narciso, their patron, by a

procession all round the town, which was under fire for the whole

time of its progress, and paid no attention to the casualties which

it cost them.

Meanwhile, when the second half of October had begun, Blake made

the third and last of his attempts to throw succours into Gerona.

It was even more feebly carried out than that of September 26, for

the army employed was less numerous. Blake’s force had not received

any reinforcement to make up for the men lost in the last affair,

a fact that seems surprising, since Valencia ought now to have

been able to send him the remainder of the regiments which had

been reorganized since the disasters of June. But it would seem

that José Caro, who was in command in that province, and the local

Junta, made excuses for retaining as many men as possible, and cared

little for the danger of Gerona, so long as the war was kept far

from their own frontier. It was, at any rate, with no more than

10,000 or 12,000 men, the remains of his original force, that Blake

once more came forward on October 18, and threatened the blockading

army by demonstrations both from the side of La Bispal and that of

Santa Coloma. He had again collected a considerable amount of food

at Hostalrich, but had not yet formed a convoy: apparently he was

waiting to discover the weakest point in the French lines before

risking his mules and his stores, both of which were by now very

hard to procure. There followed a fortnight of confused skirmishing,

without any battle, though Augereau tried with all his might to force

on a general engagement. One of his Italian brigades was roughly

handled near La Bispal on the twenty-first, and another repulsed near

Santa Coloma on the twenty-sixth, but on each occasion, when the

French reinforcements came up, Blake gave back and refused to fight.

On November 1 the whole of Souham’s division marched on Santa Coloma,

and forced Loygorri and Henry O’Donnell to evacuate it and retire to

the mountains. Souham reported that he had inflicted a loss of 2,000

men on the Spaniards, at the cost of eleven killed and forty-three

wounded on his own side! The real casualty list of the two Spanish

divisions seems to have been somewhat over 100 men[57].

[57] See Souham’s dispatch, striving to make the combat into

a very big business, in Belmas, ii, Appendix no. 72, and cf.

Arteche, vii. pp. 430-1.

Nothing decisive had taken place up to November 7, when Augereau

conceived the idea that he might make an end of Blake’s fruitless but

vexatious demonstrations, by dealing a sudden blow at his magazines

in Hostalrich. If these were destroyed it would cost the Spaniards

much time to collect another store of provisions for Gerona.

Accordingly Pino marched with three brigades to storm the town,

which was protected only by a dilapidated mediaeval wall unfurnished

with guns, though the castle which dominated it was a place of

considerable strength, and proof against a \_coup de main\_. Only one

of Blake’s divisions, that of Cuadrado, less than 2,000 strong,

was in this quarter, and Augereau found employment for the others

by sending some of Souham’s troops against them. The expedition

succeeded: while Mazzuchelli’s brigade occupied the attention of

Cuadrado, the rest of the Italians stormed Hostalrich, which was

defended only by its own inhabitants and the small garrison of the

castle. The Spaniards were driven up into that stronghold after a

lively fight, and all the magazines fell into Pino’s hands and were

burnt. At a cost of only thirty-five killed and sixty-four wounded

the food, which Blake had collected with so much difficulty, was

destroyed[58]. Thereupon the Spanish general gave up the attempt to

succour Gerona, and withdrew to the plain of Vich, to recommence

the Sisyphean task of getting together one more convoy. It was not

destined to be of any use to Alvarez and his gallant garrison, for

by the time that it was collected the siege had arrived at its final

stage.

[58] See Pino’s and Augereau’s dispatches in Belmas’s Appendices,

nos. 73 and 74.

The Geronese were now reaching the end of their strength: for the

first time since the investment began in May some of the defenders

began to show signs of slackening. The heavy rains of October and

the commencement of the cold season were reducing alike troops and

inhabitants to a desperate condition. They had long used up all their

fuel, and found the chill of winter intolerable in their cellars and

casemates. Alvarez, though reduced to a state of physical prostration

by dysentery and fever, was still steadfast in heart. But there was

discontent brewing among some of his subordinates: it is notable, as

showing the spirit of the time, that the malcontents were found among

the professional soldiers, not among the citizens. Early in November

several officers were found holding secret conferences, and drawing

up an address to the local Junta, setting forth the desperate state

of the city and the necessity for deposing the governor, who was

represented as incapacitated for command by reason of his illness: it

was apparently hinted that he was going mad, or was intermittently

delirious[59]. Some of the wild sayings attributed to Alvarez during

the later days of the siege might be quoted as a support for their

representations. To a captain who asked to what point he was expected

to retire, if he were driven from his post, it is said that he

answered, ‘to the cemetery.’ To another officer, the first who dared

to say that capitulation was inevitable because of the exhaustion

of the magazines, he replied, ‘When the last food is gone we will

start eating the cowards, and we will begin with you.’ Though aware

that their conspiracies were known, the malcontents did not desist

from their efforts, and Alvarez made preparations for seizing and

shooting the chiefs. But on the night of November 19 eight of them,

including three lieutenant-colonels[60], warned by a traitor of their

approaching fate, fled to Augereau’s camp. Their arrival was the

most encouraging event for the French that had occurred since the

commencement of the siege. They spoke freely of the exhaustion of the

garrison, and said that Alvarez was mad and moribund.

[59] Alvarez’s letter to Blake of Nov. 3 printed in Arteche’s

Appendix, no. 18 of his vol. vii, gives this account of the first

discovery of plots.

[60] Of whom two, strangely enough, had been specially mentioned

for courage at the September assault.

It was apparently this information concerning the desperate state

of the garrison which induced Augereau to recommence active siege

operations. He ordered up ammunition from Perpignan to fill the

empty magazines, and when it arrived began to batter a new breach in

the curtain of Santa Lucia. On December 2 Pino’s Italians stormed

the suburb of La Marina, outside the southern end of the town, a

quarter hitherto unassailed, and made a lodgement therein, as if to

open a new point of attack. But this was only done to distract the

enemy from the real design of the Marshal, which was nothing less

than to cut off the forts on the Capuchin heights from Gerona by

seizing the redoubts, those of the ‘Chapter’ and the ‘City,’ which

covered the steep upward path from the walls to the group of works on

the hilltop. At midnight on December 6 the voltigeur and grenadier

companies of Pino’s division climbed the rough southern face of the

Capuchin heights, and surprised and escaladed the ‘Redoubt of the

City,’ putting the garrison to the sword. Next morning the batteries

of the forts above and the city below opened a furious fire upon the

lost redoubt, and Alvarez directed his last sally, sending out every

man that he could collect to recover the work. This led to a long

and bloody fight on the slopes, which ended most disastrously for

the garrison. Not only was the sortie repulsed, but in the confusion

the French carried the Calvary and Chapter redoubts, the other works

which guarded the access from Gerona to the upper forts. On the

afternoon of December 7 the communication with them was completely

cut off, and as their garrisons possessed no separate magazines, and

had been wont to receive their daily dole from the city, it was clear

that they must be starved out. They had only food for forty-eight

hours at the moment[61].

[61] Napier (ii. 249) says that the sortie was so far

successful that the Geronese opened the way for the garrison

of the Constable fort to escape into the city. But I can find

no authority for this in either the French or the Spanish

narratives, see especially Vacani.

The excitement of the sally had drained away the governor’s last

strength: he took to his bed that evening, was in delirium next day,

and on the morning of the ninth received the last sacraments of the

Church, the doctors having declared that his hours were numbered. His

last conscious act was to protest against any proposal to surrender,

before he handed over the command to the senior officer present,

General Juliano Bolivar. Had Alvarez retained his senses, it is

certain that an attempt would have been made to hold the town, even

when the starving garrisons of the forts should have surrendered.

But the moment that his stern hand was removed, his successor,

Bolivar, called together a council of war, to which the members of

the Junta, no less than the officers commanding corps, were invited.

They voted that further resistance was impossible, and sent out

Brigadier-General Fournas, the man who had so well defended Monjuich,

to obtain terms from Augereau. On the morning of the tenth the

Marshal received him, and dictated a simple surrender, without any of

the favourable conditions which Fournas at first demanded. His only

concession was that he offered to exchange the garrison for an equal

number of the unhappy prisoners from Dupont’s army, now lying in

misery on the pontoons at Cadiz, if the Supreme Junta concurred. But

the bargain was never ratified, as the authorities at Seville were

obdurate.

On the morning of December 11 the survivors of the garrison marched

out, and laid down their arms on the glacis of the Mercadal. Only

3,000 men came forth; these looked like living spectres, so pale,

weak, and tattered that ‘the besiegers,’ as eye-witnesses observed,

‘felt ashamed to have been held at bay so long by dying men.’ There

were 1,200 more lying in the hospitals. The rest of the 9,000 who

had defended the place from May, or had entered with Garcia Conde in

September, were dead. A detailed inspection of figures shows that

of the 5,723 men of Alvarez’s original command only 2,008 survived,

while of the 3,648 who had come later there were still 2,240 left: i.

e. two-thirds of the old garrison and one-third of the succours had

perished. The mortality by famine and disease far exceeded that by

the sword: 800 men had died in the hospitals in October, and 1,300

in November, from mere exhaustion. The town was in a dreadful state:

about 6,000 of the 14,000 inhabitants had perished, including nearly

all the very young and the very old. 12,000 bombs and 8,000 shells

had been thrown into the unhappy city: it presented a melancholy

vista of houses roofless, or with one or two of the side-walls

knocked in, of streets blocked by the fallen masonry of churches or

towers, under which half-decayed corpses were partially buried. The

open spaces were strewn with broken muskets, bloody rags, wheels of

disabled guns and carts, fragments of shells, and the bones of horses

and mules whose flesh had been eaten. The stench was so dreadful that

Augereau had to keep his troops out of the place, lest infection

should be bred among them. In the magazines nothing was found save a

little unground corn; all the other provisions had been exhausted.

There were also 168 cannon, mostly disabled; about 10,000 lb. of

powder, and a million musket cartridges. The military chest handed

over contained 562 reals--about 6\_l.\_ sterling.

Augereau behaved very harshly to the garrison: many feeble or

diseased men were made to march to Perpignan and perished by the

way. The priests and monks of the ‘Crusade’ were informed that they

were combatants, and sent off with the soldiery. But the fate of the

gallant Governor provokes especial indignation. Alvarez did not die

of his fever: when he was somewhat recovered he was forwarded to

Perpignan, and from thence to Narbonne, where he was kept for some

time and seemed convalescent. Orders then came from Paris that he

was to be sent back to Spain--apparently to be tried as a traitor,

for it was alleged that in the spring of 1808 he had accepted the

provisional government installed by Murat. He was separated from his

aide-de-camp and servants, and passed on from dungeon to dungeon

till he reached Figueras. The day after his arrival at that place he

was found dead, on a barrow--the only bed granted him--in the dirty

cellar where he had been placed. It is probable that he perished

from natural causes, but many Spaniards believed that he had been

murdered[62].

[62] For details of this disgraceful cruelty, see Arteche’s

‘Elogio’ on Alvarez in the proceedings of the Madrid Academy.

The Emperor Napoleon himself must bear the responsibility, as

it was by orders from Paris that Alvarez was sent back from

France to Figueras. Apparently he was to be tried at Barcelona,

and perhaps executed. There is no allusion to the matter in the

\_Correspondance de Napoléon\_.

Great as the losses of the garrison of Gerona had been, they were

far exceeded, both positively and proportionately, by those of the

besieging army. The French official returns show that on June 15 the

three divisions charged with the attack, those of Verdier, Morio, and

Lecchi, had 14,456 bayonets, and the two divisions of the covering

army, those of Souham and Pino, 15,732: there were 2,637 artillerymen

and engineers over and above these figures. On December 31, twenty

days after the surrender, and when the regiments had been joined by

most of their convalescents, the three siege-divisions counted 6,343

men, the covering divisions 11,666, and the artillery and engineers,

2,390.

This shows a loss of over 13,000 men; but on examination the deficit

is seen to be even larger, for two new battalions from France had

just joined Verdier’s division in December, and their 1,000 bayonets

should be deducted from his total. It would seem, then, that the

capture of Gerona cost the 7th Corps about 14,000 men, as well as

a whole campaigning season, from April to December. The attack on

Catalonia had been brought to a complete standstill, and when Gerona

fell the French occupied nothing but the ruined city, the fortresses

of Rosas and Figueras hard by the frontier, and the isolated

Barcelona, where Duhesme, with the 6,000 men of his division, had

been lying quiescent all the summer and autumn. Such a force was too

weak to make detachments to aid St. Cyr or Augereau, since 4,000 men

at least were needed for the garrison of the citadel and the outlying

forts, and it would have been hopeless for the small remainder to

take the field. Duhesme only conducted one short incursion to

Villafranca during the siege of Gerona. In the last months of the

year Barcelona was again in a state of partial starvation: the food

brought in by Cosmao’s convoy in the spring had been exhausted, while

a second provision-fleet from Toulon, escorted by five men-of-war,

had been completely destroyed in October. Admiral Martin surprised it

off Cape Creus, drove ashore and burnt two line-of-battle ships and

a frigate, and captured most of the convoy. The rest took refuge in

the harbour of Rosas, where Captain Halliwell attacked them with the

boats of the squadron and burnt them all[63].

[63] For details, see James’s \_Naval History\_, v. pp. 142-5.

While Gerona was enduring its last month of starvation, those whose

care it should have been to succour the place at all costs were

indulging in a fruitless exchange of recriminations, and making

preparations when it was all too late. Blake, after retiring to Vich

on November 10, informed the Junta of Catalonia that he was helpless,

unless more men could be found, and that they must find them. Why

he did not rather insist that the Valencian reserves should be

brought up, and risk stripping Tarragona and Lerida of their regular

garrisons, it is hard to say. This at any rate would have been in his

power. The Catalan Junta replied by summoning a congress at Manresa

on November 20, to which representatives of every district of the

principality were invited. The congress voted that a levy \_en masse\_

of all the able-bodied men from seventeen to forty-five years of age

should be called out[64], and authorized a loan of 10,000,000 reals

for equipping them. They also wrote to Seville, not for the first

time, to demand reinforcements from the Central Junta. But the battle

of Ocaña had just been fought and lost, and Andalusia could not

have spared a man, even if there had been time to transport troops

to Tarragona. All that the Catalans received was honorary votes of

approval for the gallant behaviour of the Geronese. The levy \_en

masse\_ was actually begun, but there was an insuperable difficulty

in collecting and equipping the men in winter time, when days were

short and roads were bad. The weeks passed by, and Gerona fell long

before enough men had been got together to induce Blake to try a

new offensive movement. Why was the congress not called in September

rather than in November? Blake had always declared that he was too

weak to risk a battle with the French for the raising of the siege,

but till the last moment the Catalans contented themselves with

arguing with him, and writing remonstrances to the Central Junta,

instead of lending him the aid of their last levies.

[64] The Proclamation of Nov. 29 ordering this levy, written in a

very magniloquent style, may be found in Belmas, Appendix no. 81.

One or two points connected with this famous siege require a word

of comment. It is quite clear that St. Cyr during its early stages

did not try his honest best to help Verdier. During June and July

his covering army was doing no good whatever at Vich: he pretended

that he had placed it there in order to ward off possible attacks

by Blake. But it was matter of public knowledge that Blake was far

away in Aragon, engaged in his unhappy campaign against Suchet, and

that Coupigny, left at Tarragona with a few thousand men, was not a

serious danger. St. Cyr could have spared a whole division more for

the siege operations, without risking anything. If he had done so,

Gerona could have been approached on two sides instead of one, the

Mercadal front might have been attacked, and the loose blockade,

which was all that Verdier could keep up, for want of more men, might

have been made effective. But St. Cyr all through his military career

earned a reputation for callous selfishness and habitual leaving

of his colleagues in the lurch. On this occasion he was bitterly

offended with Verdier, for giving himself the airs of an equal, and

corresponding directly with the Emperor. There can be no doubt that

he took a malicious pleasure in seeing his failures. It is hardly

disguised in his clever and plausible \_Journal des Opérations de

l’Armée de Catalogne en 1808-1809\_[65].

[65] Napoleon’s comments on the operations of his generals

are always interesting, though sometimes founded on imperfect

information, or vitiated by predispositions. Of St. Cyr’s

campaign he writes [Disp. no. 16,004] to Clarke, his Minister of

War:

‘Il faut me faire un rapport sérieux sur la campagne du général

Gouvion Saint-Cyr en Catalogne: (1) Sur les raisons qui l’ont

porté à évacuer cette province, lorsque Saragosse était prise

et sa jonction faite avec le maréchal Mortier. (2) Sur ce qu’il

s’est laissé attaquer par les Espagnols, et ne les a jamais

attaqués, et sur ce que, après les avoir toujours battus par la

valeur des troupes, il n’a jamais profité de la victoire. (3) Sur

ce qu’il a, par cet esprit d’égoisme qui lui est particulier,

compromis le siège de Gérone: sur ce qu’il n’a jamais secouru

suffisamment l’armée assiégeante, l’a au contraire attirée à

lui, et a laissé ravitailler la ville. (4) Sur ce qu’il a quitté

l’armée sans permission, sous le vain prétexte de maladie.’

The first point seems unjust to St. Cyr. From his position

in front of Tarragona, after Valls, he had no real chance of

combining his operations with the army of Aragon. But the other

three charges seem well founded.

Verdier, on the other hand, seems to have felt all through that he

was being asked to perform a task almost impossible, when he was

set to take Gerona with his own 14,000 men, unaided by the covering

army. His only receipt for success was to try to hurry on the matter

by delivering desperate blows. Both the assault on Monjuich on July

8 and that on the city on September 19 were premature; there was

some excuse for the former: Verdier had not yet realized how well

Alvarez could fight. But the second seems unpardonable, after the

warning received at Monjuich. If the general, as he declared before

delivering his assault, mistrusted his own troops, he had no right

to order a storm at all, considering his experience of the way in

which the Spaniards had behaved in July. He acted on the fallacious

theory that a practicable breach implies a town that can be taken,

which is far from being the case if the garrison are both desperate

and ingenious in defending themselves. The only way to deal with

such a resolute and capable adversary was to proceed by the slow and

regular methods of siegecraft, to sap right up to the ditch before

delivering an assault, and batter everything to pieces before risking

a man. This was how Monjuich was actually taken, after the storm had

failed. Having neither established himself close under the walls, nor

subdued the flanking fires from the Calvary and Chapter redoubts, nor

ascertained how far the Spaniards had prepared inner defences for

themselves, he had no right to attack at all.

As to Blake, even after making all possible allowances for the

fact that he could not trust his troops--the half-rallied wrecks

of Maria and Belchite--for a battle in the field, he must yet be

pronounced guilty of feebleness and want of ingenuity. If he could

never bring up enough regulars to give him a chance of facing St.

Cyr, the fault was largely his own: a more forcible general would

have insisted that the Valencian reserves should march[66], and would

have stripped Lerida and Tarragona of men: it could safely have

been done, for neither Suchet nor Duhesme was showing any signs of

threatening those points. He might have insisted that the Catalan

Junta should call out the full levy of \_somatenes\_ in September

instead of in November. He might also have made a better use of

the irregulars already in the field, the bands of Rovira, Milans,

and Claros. These miqueletes did admirable service all through the

siege, by harassing Verdier’s rear and cutting off his convoys, but

they were not employed (as they should have been) in combination

with the regulars, but allowed, as a rule, to go off on excursions

of their own, which had no relation to the main objects of Blake’s

strategy. The only occasion on which proper use was made of them was

when, on September 1, they were set to threaten Verdier’s lines,

while Garcia Conde’s convoy was approaching Gerona. It may be pleaded

in the Spanish general’s defence that it was difficult to exact

obedience from the chiefs: there was a distinct coolness between the

regulars and the irregulars, which sometimes led to actual quarrels

and conflicts when they met. But here again the reply is that more

forcible captain-generals were able to control the miqueletes, and if

Blake failed to do so, it was only one more sign of his inadequacy.

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that he mismanaged matters,

and that if in his second and third attempts to relieve Gerona he had

repeated the tactics of his first, he would have had a far better

chance of success. On September 1 only did he make any scientific

attempt to distract the enemy’s attention and forces, and on that

occasion he was successful. Summing things up, it may be said that he

was not wrong to refuse battle with the troops that he had actually

brought up to Gerona: they would undoubtedly have been routed if he

had risked a general engagement. His fault was that he did not bring

up larger forces, when it was in his power to do so, by the exercise

of compulsion on the Catalan and Valencian Juntas. But these bodies

must share Blake’s responsibilities: they undoubtedly behaved in

a slack and selfish fashion, and let Gerona perish, though it was

keeping the war from their doors for a long eight months.

[66] The Valencian troops at Maria were eleven battalions, viz.

Savoia (three), 1st and 3rd Cazadores de Valencia (two), America

(two), Voluntarios de Valencia (one), 1st of Valencia (three).

Of these only Savoia (now two batts. only) and Voluntarios

de Valencia turned up for the relief of Gerona. Along with

them came two fresh regiments, 2nd Cazadores of Orihuela, and

Almanza, which had not been at Maria. But these were Murcian, not

Valencian, troops.

All the more credit is due to Alvarez, considering the way in which

he was left unsuccoured, and fed with vain promises. A less constant

soul would have abandoned the defence long before: the last two

months of resistance were his sole work: if he had fallen sick in

October instead of December, his subordinates would have yielded

long before. But it is not merely for heroic obstinacy that he must

be praised. Every detail of the defence shows that he was a most

ingenious and provident general: nothing was left undone to make the

work of the besiegers hard. Moreover, as Napier has observed, it

is not the least of his titles to merit that he preserved a strict

discipline, and exacted the possible maximum of work from soldier

and civilian alike, without the use of any of those wholesale

executions which disgraced the defence of Saragossa. His words were

sometimes truculent, but his acts were just and moderate. He never

countenanced mob-law, as did Palafox, yet he was far better obeyed by

the citizens, and got as good service from them as did the Aragonese

commander. He showed that good organization is not incompatible with

patriotic enthusiasm, and is far more effective in the hour of danger

than reckless courage and blind self-sacrifice.

SECTION XVII: CHAPTER IV

THE AUTUMN CAMPAIGN OF 1809: TAMAMES, OCAÑA, AND ALBA DE TORMES

As early as August 30, when Wellington had not fully completed his

retreat from Almaraz and Jaraicejo to Badajoz and Merida, the central

Junta had already begun to pester him and his brother, the Ambassador

at Seville, with plans for a resumption of the offensive in the

valley of the Tagus. On that day Martin de Garay, the Secretary of

State, wrote to represent to Wellesley that he had good reason to

believe that the troops of Victor, Mortier, and Soult were making

a general movement to the rear, and that the moment had arrived

when the allied armies in Estremadura and La Mancha should ‘move

forward with the greatest activity, either to observe more closely

the movements of the enemy, or to attack him when circumstances may

render it expedient[67].’ The French movement of retreat was wholly

imaginary, and it is astonishing that the Spanish Government should

have been so mad as to believe it possible that ‘their retrograde

movement may have originated in accounts received from the North,

which compel the enemy either to retire into the interior of France,

or to take up a position nearer to the Pyrenees.’ On a groundless

rumour, of the highest intrinsic improbability, they were ready to

hurl the newly-rallied troops of Eguia and Venegas upon the French,

and to invite Wellington to join in the advance. Irresponsible

frivolity could go no further. But the Junta, as has been already

said, were eager for a military success, which should cause their

unpopularity to be forgotten, and were ready to seize on any excuse

for ordering their troops forward. This particular rumour died

away--the French were still in force on the Tagus, and, as a matter

of fact, the only movement northwards on their part had been the

return of Ney’s corps to Salamanca. But though the truth was soon

discovered, the Junta only began to look out for new excuses for

recommencing active operations.

[67] De Garay to Wellesley in \_Wellesley Dispatches\_, p. 92.

Wellington, when these schemes were laid before him, reiterated

his refusal to join in any offensive campaign, pointed out that

the allied forces were not strong enough to embark on any such

hazardous undertaking, and bluntly expressed his opinion that ‘he

was much afraid, from what he had seen of the proceedings of the

Central Junta, that in the distribution of their forces they do

not consider military defence and military operations so much as

political intrigue, and the attainment of petty political objects.’

He then proceeded to make an estimate of the French armies, to show

their numerical superiority to the allies; in this he very much

under-estimated the enemy’s resources, calculating the whole force

of the eight corps in Spain at 125,000 men, exclusive of sick and

garrisons not available for active service. As a matter of fact there

were 180,000 men, not 125,000, with the Eagles at that moment, after

all deductions had been made, so that his reasoning was far more

cogent than he supposed[68]. But this only makes more culpable the

obstinate determination of the Junta to resume operations with the

much inferior force which they had at their disposal.

[68] Wellington to Wellesley, from Merida, Sept. 1, 1809.

Undismayed by their first repulse, the Spanish ministers were soon

making new representations to Wellesley and Wellington, in order to

induce them to commit the English army to a forward policy. They sent

in repeated schemes for supplying Wellington with food and transport

on a lavish scale[69]; but he merely expressed his doubts as to

whether orders that looked admirable on paper would ever be carried

out in practice. He consented for the present to remain at Badajoz,

as long as he could subsist his army in its environs, but warned

the Junta that it was more probable that he would retire within the

Portuguese border, for reasons of supply, than that he would join in

another campaign on the Tagus.

[69] See the details in Wellesley to Canning, Sept. 2, 1809.

Despite of all, the government at Seville went on with its plans for

a general advance, even after they recognized that Wellington was

not to be moved. A grand plan of operations was gradually devised

by the War-Minister Cornel and his advisers. Stated shortly it was

as follows. The army in La Mancha, which Venegas had rallied after

the disaster of Almonacid, was to be raised to a strength of over

50,000 men by the drafting into it of a full two-thirds of Cuesta’s

old army of Estremadura. On September 21 Eguia marched eastwards up

the Guadiana, with three divisions of infantry and twelve or thirteen

regiments of cavalry, to join Venegas[70]. The remaining force,

amounting to two divisions of infantry and 2,500 cavalry, was left

in Estremadura under the Duke of Albuquerque, the officer to whom

the government was obliged to assign this army, because the Junta of

Badajoz pressed for his appointment and would not hear of any other

commander. He was considered an Anglophil, and a friend of some of

the Andalusian malcontents, so the force left with him was cut down

to the minimum. All the old regular regiments were withdrawn from

him, save one single battalion, and he was left with nothing save

the newly-raised volunteer units, some of which had behaved so badly

at Talavera[71]. His cavalry was soon after reduced by the order to

send a brigade to join the Army of the North, so that he was finally

left with only five regiments of that arm or about 1,500 sabres. Of

his infantry, about 12,000 strong, over 4,000 were absorbed by the

garrison of Badajoz, so that he had only 8,000 men available for

service in the field.

[70] His head quarters moved from Truxillo on the seventeenth,

were at La Serena on the twenty-first, and joined the army of La

Mancha about October 1.

[71] See the list of Albuquerque’s army in Appendix no. 2. There

had been twenty-one regular battalions in Cuesta’s army in June.

Twenty of these marched off with Eguia, leaving only one (4th

Walloon Guards) with Albuquerque.

Eguia, on the other hand, carried with him to La Mancha some 25,000

men, the picked corps of the Estremaduran army; and, as the remains

of Venegas’s divisions rallied and recruited after Almonacid,

amounted to rather more than that number, the united force exceeded

50,000 sabres and bayonets. With this army the Junta intended to

make a direct stroke at Madrid, while Albuquerque was directed to

show himself on the Tagus, in front of Almaraz and Talavera, with

the object of detaining at least one of the French corps in that

direction. It was hoped, even yet, that Wellington might be induced

to join in this demonstration. If once the redcoats reappeared at the

front, neither Soult nor Mortier could be moved to oppose the army of

La Mancha. Meanwhile Ney and the French corps in Leon and Old Castile

were to be distracted by the use of a new force from the north,

whose composition must be explained. The Junta held that the last

campaign had failed only because the allies had possessed no force

ready to detain Soult and Ney. If they had not appeared at Plasencia,

Wellington, Cuesta, and Venegas would have been able to drive King

Joseph out of his capital. Two months later the whole position was

changed, in their estimation, by the fact that Spain once more

possessed a large ‘Army of the Left,’ which would be able to occupy

at least two French corps, while the rest of the allies marched again

on Madrid. That such a force existed did indeed modify the aspect of

affairs. La Romana had been moved to Seville to become a member of

the Junta, but his successor, the Duke Del Parque, was collecting a

host very formidable as far as numbers went. The old army of Galicia

had been reformed into four divisions under Martin de la Carrera,

Losada, Mahy, and the Conde de Belveder--the general whose name was

so unfortunately connected with the ill-fought combat of Gamonal.

These four divisions now comprised 27,000 men, of whom more than half

were newly-raised Galician recruits, whom La Romana had embodied in

the depleted cadres of his original battalions, after Ney and Soult

had evacuated the province in July. A few of the ancient regiments

that had made the campaign of Espinosa had died out completely--their

small remnants having been drafted into other corps[72]. On the other

hand there were a few new regiments of Galician volunteers--but La

Romana had set his face against the creation of such units, wisely

preferring to place his new levies in the ranks of the old battalions

of the regular army[73]. In the main, therefore, the new ‘Army of

the Left’ represented, as far as names and cadres went, Blake’s

original ‘Army of Galicia[74].’ It had the same cardinal fault as

that army, in that it had practically no cavalry whatever: the single

dragoon regiment that Blake had owned (La Reina) having been almost

completely destroyed in 1808[75]. Each division had a battery; the

guns, of which La Romana’s army had been almost destitute in the

spring, had been supplied from England, and landed at Corunna during

the summer.

[72] The only regiments of Blake’s original army that seem to be

completely dead in October 1809 are 2nd of Catalonia, Naples,

Pontevedra, Compostella. Naples had been drafted into Rey early

in 1809. Of the others I can find no details.

[73] The new Galician regiments which appear in the autumn of

1809 are Monforte de Lemos, Voluntarios de la Muerte, La Union,

Lovera, Maceda, Morazzo.

[74] For the full muster-roll of Del Parque’s army in October,

see Appendix no. 4.

[75] Some small fraction of it reappeared in the campaign of 1809.

But the Galician divisions, though the most numerous, were not

the only units which were told off to the new ‘Army of the Left.’

Asturias had been free of invaders since Ney and Bonnet retired from

its borders in June 1809. The Central Junta ordered Ballasteros to

join the main army with the few regular troops in the principality,

and ten battalions of the local volunteers, a force of over 9,000

men. The Asturian Junta, always very selfish and particularist in

its aims, made some protests but obeyed. Nine of its less efficient

regiments were left behind to watch Bonnet.

Finally the Duke Del Parque himself had been collecting fresh levies

about Ciudad Rodrigo, while the plains of Leon lay abandoned by

the French during the absence of Ney’s corps in the valley of the

Tagus. Including the garrison of Rodrigo he had 9,000 men, all in new

units save one old line battalion and one old militia regiment[76].

Deducting the 3,500 men which held the fortress, there were seven

battalions--nearly 6,000 bayonets--and a squadron or two of horse

available for the strengthening of the field army. These were now

told off as the ‘5th Division of the Army of the Left’; that of

Ballasteros was numbered the 3rd Division.

[76] One battalion of Majorca, and the Militia battalion of

Segovia.

The Galician, Asturian, and Leonese divisions had between them less

than 500 horsemen. To make up for this destitution the Central Junta

directed the Duke of Albuquerque to send off to Ciudad Rodrigo, via

the Portuguese frontier, a brigade of his cavalry. Accordingly

the Prince of Anglona marched north with three regiments[77], only

1,000 sabres in all, and joined Del Parque on September 25. Thus at

the end of that month the ‘Army of the Left’ numbered nearly 50,000

men--all infantry save 1,500 horse and 1,200 gunners. But they were

scattered all over North-Western Spain, from Oviedo to Astorga, and

from Astorga to Ciudad Rodrigo, and had to be concentrated before

they could act. Nor was the concentration devoid of danger, for the

French might fall upon the Asturians or the Leonese before they had

joined the Galician main body. As a matter of fact the 50,000 never

took the field in one mass, for Del Parque left a division under

Mahy to protect Galicia, and, when these regiments and the garrison

of Rodrigo were deducted, he had but 40,000 in all, including sick

and men on detachment. This, nevertheless, constituted a formidable

force--if it had been in existence in July, Soult and Ney could never

have marched against Wellington with their whole strength, and the

Talavera campaign might have had another end. But the troops were

of varying quality--the Leonese division was absolutely raw: the

Galicians had far too many recruits with only two months’ training in

their ranks, the Estremaduran cavalry had a bad record of disasters.

A general of genius might have accomplished something with the Army

of the Left--but Del Parque, though more cautious than many of his

compeers, was no genius.

[77] Borbon, Sagunto, and Granaderos de Llerena, 1,053 sabres in

October. These regiments had newly rejoined the Estremaduran army

from the rear.

The Junta had a deeply-rooted notion that if sufficient pressure were

applied to Wellesley and Wellington, they would permit Beresford’s

Portuguese army, now some 20,000 strong, to join Del Parque for

the advance into the plains of Leon. They had mistaken their men:

Wellington returned as peremptory a refusal to their request for the

aid of the Portuguese troops as to their demand that his own British

army should advance with Albuquerque to the Tagus[78].

[78] See Wellington to Wellesley, from Badajoz, Oct. 30, 1809.

Nothing could be more hazardous than the plan finally formulated

at the Seville War Office for the simultaneous advance of the

armies of La Mancha, the North, and Estremadura. Even if it had

been energetically supported by Wellington and Beresford, it

would have been rash: converging operations by several armies

starting from distant bases against an enemy concentrated in their

midst are proverbially disastrous. In this particular plan three

forces--numbering in all about 110,000 men, and starting from

points so far apart as Ciudad Rodrigo, Truxillo, and the Passes

by La Carolina, were to fall upon some 120,000 men, placed in a

comparatively compact body in their centre. A single mistake in the

timing of operations, the chance that one Spanish army might outmarch

another, or that one of the three might fail to detain any hostile

force in its front (as had happened with Venegas during the Talavera

Campaign) was bound to be ruinous. The French had it in their power

to deal with their enemies in detail, if the least mischance should

occur: and with Spanish generals and Spanish armies it was almost

certain that some error would be made.

Meanwhile the Junta made their last preparation for the grand stroke,

by deposing Venegas from the command of the united army in La Mancha.

Eguia held the interim command for a few days, but was to be replaced

by Areizaga, an elderly general who had never commanded more than

a single division, and had to his credit only courage shown in a

subordinate position at the battle of Alcañiz. He was summoned from

Lerida, and came hastily to take up his charge.

The sole advantage which the Spaniards possessed in October 1809

was that their enemy did not expect to be attacked. A month after

Talavera matters had apparently settled down for the whole autumn, as

far as the French generals could calculate. With the knowledge that

the Austrian War was over, and that unlimited reinforcements could

now be poured into Spain by his brother, King Joseph was content to

wait. He had refused to allow Soult to make his favourite move of

invading Portugal in the end of August, because he wished the Emperor

to take up the responsibility of settling the next plan of campaign,

and of determining the number of new troops that would be required to

carry it out. The French corps, therefore, were in a semicircle round

Madrid: Soult and Mortier in the central Tagus Valley at Plasencia

and Talavera, Victor in La Mancha, with Sebastiani supporting him at

Toledo and Aranjuez, Ney at Salamanca, Dessolles and the Royal Guard

as a central reserve in the capital. This was a purely defensive

position, and Joseph intended to retain it, till the masses of troops

from Germany, with the Emperor himself perchance at their head,

should come up to his aid. It does not seem to have entered into his

head that the enemy would again take the offensive, after the fiasco

of the Talavera campaign, and the bloody lesson of Almonacid.

In September and the early days of October the French hardly moved

at all. Ney left his corps at Salamanca, and went on a short leave

to Paris on September 25, so little was any danger expected in the

plains of Leon. The charge of the 6th corps was handed over to

Marchand, his senior divisional general. There was an even more

important change of command pending--Jourdan had been soliciting

permission to return to France ever since July. He had been on

excellent terms with King Joseph, but found it hard to exact

obedience from the marshals--indeed he was generally engaged in a

controversy either with Victor or with Soult. The Emperor was not

inclined to allow him to quit Spain, but Jourdan kept sending in

applications to be superseded, backed by medical certificates as

to his dangerous state of health. Finally he was granted leave to

return, by a letter which reached him on October 25, just as the new

campaign was beginning to develop into an acute phase. But he gladly

handed over his duties to Soult, who thus became ‘major-general’ or

chief of the Staff to King Joseph, and departed without lingering or

reluctance for France, glad to be quit of a most invidious office[79].

[79] For Jourdan’s personal views, see his \_Mémoires\_, ed.

Grouchy, p. 282.

Before Jourdan’s departure there had been some small movements of

the French troops: hearing vague rumours of the passage eastward of

Eguia’s army, King Joseph ordered a corresponding shift of his own

troops towards that quarter. Soult and the 2nd Corps were ordered

from Plasencia to Oropesa and Talavera, there relieving Mortier and

the 5th Corps, who were to push up the Tagus toward Toledo. This

would enable Victor to call up Sebastiani’s cavalry and two of his

infantry divisions from Toledo into La Mancha. Having thus got

together some 25,000 men, Victor advanced to Daimiel, and pressed in

the advanced posts of the main Spanish army on October 15. Eguia, who

was still in temporary command, since Areizaga had not yet arrived,

made no attempt to stand, but retired into the passes of the Sierra

Morena. This apparent timidity of the enemy convinced the Marshal

that nothing dangerous was on hand in this quarter. He drew back

his army into cantonments, in a semicircle from Toledo to Tarancon,

leaving the cavalry of Milhaud and Paris out in his front.

Nothing more happened in La Mancha for a fortnight: but on the other

wing, in the kingdom of Leon, matters came to a head sooner. About

the middle of September the bulk of the Galician army, the divisions

of Losada, Belveder and La Carrera, had moved down the Portuguese

frontier via Alcanizas, and joined Del Parque at Ciudad Rodrigo. On

the twenty-fifth of the same month the Prince of Anglona, with the

cavalry brigade from Estremadura, also came in to unite himself to

the Army of the Left. Del Parque had thus 25,000 infantry and 1,500

horse concentrated. He had still to be joined by Ballasteros and the

Asturians, who had to pick their way with caution through the plains

of Leon. Mahy and the 4th division of the Galicians had been left in

the passes above Astorga, to cover the high-road into Galicia. He

had a vanguard in Astorga, under Santocildes, and the town, whose

walls had been repaired by the order of La Romana, was now capable of

making some defence.

Facing Del Parque and his lieutenants there were two distinct forces.

The 6th Corps, now under Marchand, was concentrated at Salamanca.

Having received few or no drafts since its return from Galicia it was

rather weak--its twenty-one battalions and four cavalry regiments

only counted at the end of September some 13,000 bayonets and 1,200

sabres[80] effective--the sick being numerous. In the north of Leon

and in Old Castile Kellermann was in charge, with an independent

force of no great strength: his own division of dragoons, nearly

3,000 sabres, was its only formidable unit. The infantry was composed

of three Swiss battalions, and four or five French battalions, which

had been left in garrisons in Old Castile when the regiments to

which they belonged went southward in the preceding winter[81].

The whole did not amount to more than 3,500 bayonets. The dragoons

were very serviceable in the vast plains of Leon, but it was with

difficulty, and only by cutting down garrisons to a dangerous extent,

that Kellermann could assemble a weak infantry brigade of 2,000 men

to back the horsemen.

[80] See the table given by Sprünglin on p. 366 of his \_Mémoires\_.

[81] Apparently Kellermann had at this moment a battalion each of

the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Swiss, a battalion of the Garde de Paris,

one each of the 12th Léger and 32nd Line, and one or two of the

122nd.

It was nevertheless on Kellermann’s side, and by the initiative of

the French, that the first clash took place in north-western Spain.

Hearing vague reports of the movement of the Galician divisions

towards Ciudad Rodrigo, Kellermann sent General Carrié, with two

regiments of dragoons and 1,200 infantry, to occupy Astorga, being

ignorant apparently that it was now garrisoned and more or less

fortified. Carrié found the place occupied, made a weak attack upon

it on October 9, and was beaten off. He was able to report to his

chief that the Spaniards (i. e. Mahy’s division) were in some force

in the passes beyond.

At much the same moment that this fact was ascertained Del Parque

began to move: he had been lying since September 24 at Fuente

Guinaldo in the highland above Ciudad Rodrigo. On October 5 he

made an advance as far as Tamames, on the by-road from Rodrigo to

Salamanca which skirts the mountains, wisely avoiding the high-road

in the more level ground by San Martin del Rio and Castrejon. He had

with him his three Galician divisions and his 1,500 horse, but he

had not brought forward his raw Leonese division under Castrofuerte,

which still lay by Rodrigo. On hearing of the duke’s advance Marchand

sent out reconnaissances, and having discovered the position of the

Spaniards, resolved at once to attack them. On October 17 he started

out from Salamanca, taking with him his whole corps, except the two

battalions of the 50th regiment, which were left to garrison the town.

On the afternoon of the next day Marchand came in sight of the enemy,

who was drawn up ready to receive him on the heights above Tamames.

The French general had with him nineteen battalions, some 12,000

bayonets--his 1,200 horse, and fourteen guns. Del Parque had 20,000

Galician infantry, Anglona’s cavalry, and eighteen guns: his position

was so strong, and his superiority in infantry so marked, that he was

probably justified in risking a battle on the defensive.

Tamames, an unwalled village of moderate size, lies at the foot of a

range of swelling hills. Its strategical importance lies in the fact

that it is the meeting-place of the two country roads from Ciudad

Rodrigo to Salamanca \_via\_ Matilla, and from Ciudad Rodrigo to Bejar

and the Pass of Baños \_via\_ Nava Redonda. Placed there, Del Parque’s

army threatened Salamanca, and had a choice of lines of retreat,

the roads to Rodrigo and to the passes into Estremadura being both

open. But retreat was not the duke’s intention. He had drawn up his

army on the heights above Tamames, occupying the village below with

a battalion or two. On the right, where the hillside was steeper,

he had placed Losada and the 2nd Division: on the left, where the

ridge sinks down gently into the plain, was Martin de la Carrera

with the Vanguard Division. The Conde de Belveder’s division--the

third--formed the reserve, and was drawn up on the reverse slope,

behind La Carrera. The Prince of Anglona’s cavalry brigade was out on

the extreme left, partly hidden by woods, in the low ground beyond

the flank of the Vanguard.

Marchand, arriving on the ground in the afternoon after a march of

fourteen miles from Matilla, was overjoyed to see the enemy offering

battle, and attacked without a moment’s hesitation. His arrangements

much resembled those of Victor at Ucles--though his luck was to be

very different. It was clear that the Spanish left was the weak

point, and that the heights could be turned and ascended on that side

with ease. Accordingly Maucune’s brigade (six battalions in all)[82]

and the light cavalry, strengthened by one regiment of dragoons, were

ordered to march off to the right, to form in a line perpendicular

to that of Del Parque, and break down his flank. When this movement

was well developed, Marcognet’s brigade (six battalions)[83] was to

attack the Spanish centre, to the east of the village of Tamames,

while the 25th Léger (two battalions) was to contain the hostile

right by a demonstration against the high and difficult ground in

that direction. Marchand kept in reserve, behind his centre, the 27th

and 59th of the Line (six battalions) and his remaining regiment

of dragoons. The vice of this formation was that the striking

force--Maucune’s column--was too weak: it would have been wise to

have strengthened it at the expense of the centre, and to have made a

mere demonstration against the heights above the village of Tamames,

as well as on the extreme French left.

[82] 6th Léger (two batts.), 69th Line (three batts.), and one

battalion of \_voltigeurs réunis\_.

[83] 39th and 76th of the Line.

Maucune accomplished his flank march undisturbed, deployed in front

of La Carrera’s left and advanced against it. The Spanish general

threw back his wing to protect himself, and ordered his cavalry

to threaten the flank of the advancing force. But he was nearly

swept away: when the skirmishing lines were in contact, the French

brigadier ordered his cavalry to charge the centre of the Spanish

division: striking in diagonally, Lorcet’s Hussars and Chasseurs

broke La Carrera’s line, and captured the six guns of his divisional

artillery. Almost at the same moment Anglona’s cavalry came in upon

Maucune’s flank; but being opposed by two battalions of the 69th in

square, they received but one fire and fled hastily to the rear.

Maucune then resumed his march up the hill, covering his flank with

his horsemen, and pushing La Carrera’s broken line before him. But at

the head of the slope he met Belveder’s reserve, which let the broken

troops pass through their intervals, and took up the fight steadily

enough. The French were now opposed by triple numbers, and the combat

came to a standstill: Maucune’s offensive power was exhausted, and

he could no longer use his cavalry on the steep ground which he had

reached.

[Illustration: BATTLE OF TAMAMES. Oct. 18, 1809.]

Meanwhile, on seeing their right brigade opening the combat with

such success, the two other French columns went forward, Marcognet

against the Spanish centre, Anselme of the 25th Léger against the

extreme right. But the ground was here much steeper: Losada’s

Galician division stood its ground very steadily, and Marcognet’s

two regiments made an involuntary halt three-quarters of the way up

the heights, under the full fire of the two Spanish batteries

there placed and the long line of infantry. The officers made several

desperate attempts to induce the columns to resume their advance, but

to no effect. They fell in great numbers, and at last the regiments

recoiled and descended the hill in disorder. Losada’s battalions

pursued them to the foot of the slope, and the Spanish light troops

in the village sallied out upon their flank, and completed their

rout. Marcognet’s brigade poured down into the plain as a disordered

mass of fugitives, and were only stayed when Marchand brought up the

27th and 59th to their rescue. Del Parque wisely halted the pursuing

force before it came into contact with the French reserves, and took

up again his post on the heights.

Meanwhile the 25th Léger, on the extreme French right, had not

pressed its attack home, and retreated when the central advance was

repulsed. Maucune, too, seeing the rout to his left, withdrew from

the heights under cover of his cavalry, carrying off only one of the

Spanish guns that he had taken early in the fight, and leaving in

return a disabled piece of his own on the hill.

The battle was fairly lost, and Marchand retired, under cover of

his cavalry along the Salamanca road. The enemy made no serious

attempt to pursue him in the plain, where his horsemen would have

been able to act with advantage. The French had lost 1,300 or 1,400

men, including 18 officers killed, and a general (Lorcet) and 54

officers wounded[84]. Marcognet’s brigade supplied the greater part

of the casualties; the 76th lost its eagle, seven officers killed and

fifteen wounded: the 39th almost as many. The cavalry and Maucune’s

brigade suffered little. The very moderate Spanish loss was 713

killed and wounded, mostly in La Carrera’s division.

[84] Marchand in his dispatch says 1,300 men in all were lost,

and a gun; he makes no mention of the eagle. His aide-de-camp,

Sprünglin, who has a good account of the battle in his \_Mémoires\_

(pp. 370-1), gives the total of 1,500. The Spaniards exaggerated

the loss to 3,000.

This was the first general action since Baylen in which the Spaniards

gained a complete victory. They had a superiority of about seven

to four in numbers, and a good position; nevertheless the troops

were so raw, and the past record of the Army of the Left was so

disheartening, that the victory reflects considerable credit on the

Galicians. The 6th Corps was reckoned the best of all the French

units in Spain, being entirely composed of old regiments from the

army of Germany. It is not too much to say that Ney’s absence was

responsible for the defeat of his men. Marchand attacked at three

points, and was weak at each. The Marshal would certainly have

massed a whole division against the Spanish left, and would not have

been stopped by the stout resistance made by Belveder’s reserve. A

demonstration by a few battalions would have ‘contained’ Losada’s

troops on the left, where the ground was too unfavourable for a

serious attack[85].

[85] ‘La perte de cette affaire fut entièrement due à la faute

que fit le Général Marchand de multiplier ses attaques, et de

s’engager par petits paquets. Tout le monde se mêlait de donner

son avis, et on remarquait l’absence de M. le Maréchal,’ says

Sprünglin in p. 371 of his \_Mémoires\_.

On the 19th of October the beaten army reached Salamanca by a

forced march. Marchand feared that the enemy would now manœuvre

either by Ledesma, so as to cut him off from Kellermann and the

troops in the north, or by Alba de Tormes, so as to intercept his

communication with Madrid. In either case he would have to retreat,

for there was no good defensive ground on the Tormes to resist an

army coming from the west. As a matter of fact Del Parque moved by

Ledesma, for two reasons: the first was that he wished to avoid the

plains, fearing that Kellermann might have joined the 6th Corps

with his cavalry division. The second was that, by moving in this

direction, he hoped to make his junction with Ballasteros, who had

started from the Asturias to join him, and had been reported to have

moved from Astorga to Miranda del Duero, and to be feeling his way

south-eastward. The juncture took place: the Asturian division, after

an unsuccessful attempt to cut off the garrison of Zamora on the

seventeenth, had marched to Ledesma, and met the main army there. Del

Parque had now 28,000 men, and though still very weak in cavalry,

thought himself strong enough to march on Salamanca. He reached it on

October 25 and found it evacuated. Marchand, learning that Kellermann

was too far off to help him, and knowing that no reinforcements

from Madrid could reach him for many days, had evacuated the town

on the previous evening. He retired towards Toro, thus throwing up

his communications with Madrid in order to make sure of joining

Kellermann. This seems doubtful policy, for that general could only

aid him with 4,000 or 5,000 men, and their joint force would be

under 20,000 strong. On the other hand, by retiring on Peñaranda or

Medina de Campo, and so approaching the King’s army, he could have

counted on picking up much larger reinforcements, and on resuming the

struggle with a good prospect of success.

As a matter of fact Jourdan, on hearing of the disaster of Tamames,

had dispatched, to aid the 6th Corps, Godinot’s brigade of Dessolles’

division, some 3,500 bayonets, from Madrid, and Heudelet’s division

of the 2nd Corps, about 4,000 strong, from Oropesa, as well as a

couple of regiments of cavalry. He made these detachments without

scruple, because there was as yet no sign of any activity on the part

of the Spanish armies of La Mancha and Estremadura. A week later he

would have found it much more hazardous to weaken his front in the

valley of the Tagus. These were the last orders issued by Jourdan,

who resigned his post on October 31, while Soult on November 5

arrived at Madrid and replaced him as chief of the staff to King

Joseph.

Del Parque, not unnaturally elated by his victory, now nourished

ambitious ideas of clearing the whole of Leon and Old Castile of

the enemy, being aware that the armies of La Mancha and Estremadura

ought now to be on the move, and that full occupation would be found

ere long for the French corps in the valley of the Tagus. He ordered

up his 5th Division, the raw Leonese battalions of Castrofuerte,

from Ciudad Rodrigo, and made vehement appeals to the Portuguese

Government to lend him the whole of Beresford’s army for a great

advance up the Douro. The Regency, though much pressed by the Spanish

ambassador at Lisbon, gave a blank refusal, following Wellington’s

advice to have nothing to do with offensive operations in Spanish

company[86]. But part of Beresford’s troops were ordered up to

the frontier, not so much to lend a moral support to Del Parque’s

advance[87] as to be ready to defend their own borders in the event

of his defeat. Showing more prudence than Wellington had expected,

Del Parque did not push forward from Salamanca, when he became

certain that he would have to depend on his own forces alone. Even

after the arrival of his reserves from Rodrigo he remained quiet,

only pushing out reconnaissances to discover which way the enemy had

gone. He had, in fact, carried out his part in the Central Junta’s

plan of campaign, by calling the attention of the French to the

north, and distracting troops thither from the King’s army. It was

now the time for Albuquerque and Areizaga to take up the game, and

relieve him. Marchand meanwhile had retired across the Douro, and

taken up an extended line behind it from Zamora to Tordesillas--a

front of over forty miles--which it would have been impossible to

hold with his 13,000 men against a heavy attack delivered at one

point. But he was hardly in position when Kellermann arrived, took

over the command, and changed the whole plan of campaign (November

1). He had left two battalions to guard Benavente, two to hold

Valladolid, and had only brought up his 3,000 dragoons and 1,500

infantry. Seeing that it was absolutely necessary to recover the

line of communication with Madrid, he ordered the 6th Corps to leave

Zamora and Toro, mass at Tordesillas, and then cross the Douro to

Medina del Campo, the junction point of the roads from Madrid,

Segovia, Valladolid, and Toro. To this same place he brought up his

own small force, and having received Godinot’s brigade from Madrid,

had thirty-four battalions and eighteen squadrons concentrated--about

23,000 men. Though not yet joined by the other troops from the

south--Heudelet’s division--he now marched straight upon Salamanca

in two columns, one by Cantalapiedra, the other by Fuente Sauco,

intending to offer battle to Del Parque.

[86] Del Parque’s demands had begun as early as the end of

September, see Wellington to Castlereagh, Badajoz, Sept. 29,

\_Dispatches\_, v. 200-1, and cf. Wellington to Forjaz, Oct. 15,

ibid. 223.

[87] Wellington to Beresford, Nov. 16, 1809.

But the duke, much to the surprise of every one, utterly refused

to fight, holding the plain too dangerous for an army so weak in

cavalry as his own, and over-estimating the enemy’s force at 36,000

men[88]. He retired from Salamanca, after having held it less than

a fortnight, on November 5, and took not the road to Ciudad Rodrigo

but that to Bejar and the Pass of Baños, as if he were about to

pass the mountains into Estremadura[89]. This was an excellent

move: the French could not pursue him in force without evacuating

Old Castile and Leon, which it would have been impossible for them

to contemplate. For when Kellermann had concentrated his troops to

strike at Salamanca, there was nothing left behind him in the vast

upland save a battalion or two at Benavente, Valladolid, and Burgos.

Mahy, from Galicia, and the Asturians might have overrun the whole

region unopposed. As it was, the whole of the provinces behind the

Douro showed signs of bursting out into insurrection. Julian Sanchez,

the Empecinado, and other guerrillero chiefs, whose names were soon

to be famous, raised large bands during the absence of the normal

garrisons, and swept the country-side, capturing convoys and cutting

the lines of communication between Vittoria, Burgos, and Valladolid.

Porlier came down with a flying column from the Asturias, assaulted

Palencia, and threatened Burgos. The French governors on every side

kept reporting their perilous position, when they could get a message

through to Madrid[90].

[88] He sent this estimate to Wellington, see the latter to

Beresford, Badajoz, Nov. 16.

[89] The Junta afterwards contemplated bringing him down to join

Albuquerque, via Plasencia, which was free of French troops,

since Soult had moved to Oropesa. But this does not seem to have

been thought of so early as Nov. 5.

[90] See Soult to Clarke, from Madrid, Nov. 6, for these

movements.

Realizing that he must cover his rear, or the whole of Old Castile

would be lost to the insurgents, Kellermann, after occupying

Salamanca on November 6, left the 6th Corps and Godinot’s brigade

distributed between Ledesma, Salamanca, and Alba de Tormes, watching

Del Parque, and returned in haste with his own troops to the Douro.

He commenced to send out flying columns from Valladolid to deal with

the guerrilleros, but did not work too far afield, lest he might be

called back by a new forward movement on the part of the Army of

the Left. But in a few days he had to recast all his arrangements,

for--as Del Parque had calculated--the campaign in La Mancha had

just opened, and the position of the French in Leon and Old Castile

was profoundly affected by the new developments.

In the south, as we have already explained, the Junta designed

Albuquerque’s army of Estremadura to be a mere demonstrating force,

while Areizaga’s 55,000 men were to strike the real blow. The

Estremaduran troops, as was proper, moved early to draw the attention

of the enemy. Albuquerque’s first division under Bassecourt--6,000

infantry and 600 horse--was on the Tagus from Almaraz to Meza

de Ibor: his second division under St. Juan and the rest of his

cavalry--some 4,000 in all--were moving up from Truxillo. Bassecourt

began by sending a small force of all arms across the river at

Almaraz, to drive in Soult’s outposts and spread reports abroad in

all directions that he was acting as the vanguard to Wellington’s

army, which was marching up from Badajoz. Unfortunately the full

effect that he desired was not produced, because deserters informed

Soult that the British Army was still quiescent on the Guadiana[91].

The French made no movement, and left the 2nd Corps alone to watch

Albuquerque.

[91] Soult to Clarke, from Madrid, Nov. 6. The deserters were a

body of twenty-one men of the Walloon Guards, who had enlisted

from Dupont’s prisoners in order to get a chance of escaping:

they reached Oropesa on Oct. 25.

Meanwhile Areizaga, within a few days of assuming the command of the

army of La Mancha, commenced his forward movement. On November 3,

having concentrated his eight divisions of infantry and his 5,700

horse at Santa Cruz de Mudela, at the foot of the passes, he gave

the order to advance into the plains. The head quarters followed the

high-road, with the train and three divisions: the rest, to avoid

encumbering the \_chaussée\_, marched by parallel side-roads, but were

never more than ten miles from their Commander-in-Chief: at any rate

Areizaga avoided the sin of dispersion. His army was the best which

had been seen under the Spanish banners since Tudela. The men had all

been furnished with new clothes and equipment since August, mainly

from English stores landed at Cadiz. There were sixty guns, and

such a body of cavalry as had never yet been collected during the

war. The value of the troops was very unequal; if there were many

old battalions of the regular army, there were also many new units

composed of half-trained Andalusian levies. The cavalry included the

old runaways of Medellin, and many other regiments of doubtful value.

The morale was on the whole not satisfactory. ‘I wish I had anything

agreeable to communicate to you from this army’ wrote Colonel Roche,

a British officer attached to Areizaga’s staff, to Wellington. ‘The

corps which belonged to the original army of La Mancha are certainly

in every respect superior to those from Estremadura, and from

everything that I can learn none of those abuses which were to be

lamented in the army of Estremadura existed here--or, at least, in

a much less degree. But nothing can exceed the general discontent,

dissatisfaction, and demoralization of the mass of the people and of

the army. How can anybody who has the faculty of reason separate the

inefficiency, intrigue, bad organization, and consequent disasters

of the army from the source of all those evils in the Junta? There

is not a man of the least reflection who, as things now stand, has a

hope of success; and this is the more melancholy, because the mass of

the people are just as inveterate in their resentment and abhorrence

of the French as at the first hour of the revolution[92].’ The fact

seems to have been that the superior officers doubted the wisdom of

taking the offensive according to the Junta’s orders, and had no

confidence in Areizaga, who was only known as a fighting general, and

had no reputation for skill. The rank and file, as Arteche remarks,

were disposed to do their duty, but had no confidence in their

luck[93]. Their government and not their generals must take the major

part of the blame for the disaster that followed.

[92] Roche to Wellington, from Santa Cruz de la Mudela,

\_Wellington Supplementary Dispatches\_, vi. 394. Cf. also the same

to the same, vi. 414.

[93] \_Historia de la Guerra de la Independencia\_, vii. 283.

Areizaga was well aware that his best chance was to strike with

extreme boldness and vigour, and to dash into the midst of the French

before they could concentrate. Hence his march was at first conducted

with great rapidity and decision; between the 3rd and the 8th of

November he made nearly fifteen miles a day, though the roads were

somewhat broken up by the autumn rains. On the eighth he reached

La Guardia, eighty miles from his starting-point, and his advanced

cavalry under General Freire had its first skirmish with a brigade of

Milhaud’s dragoons at Costa de Madera, near Dos Barrios. The Spanish

horse deployed in such numbers that the French were compelled to move

off in haste and with some loss, though they had beaten off with ease

the first two or three regiments which had gone forward against them.

The Spanish advance had been so rapid and so unexpected that Soult

and King Joseph had been taken completely by surprise. On November

6 the Marshal had reported to Paris that ‘the troops on the Tagus

and in La Mancha are up to the present unmolested, and as, from all

I can learn, there is no prospect of the enemy making any offensive

movement on that side, I intend to form from them a strong flying

column to hunt the brigands in the direction of Burgos[94].’ Only

four days later he had to announce that an army of at least 40,000

men was close in front of Aranjuez, and not more than thirty-five

miles from Madrid, and that he was hurrying together troops from all

quarters to make head against them. At the moment indeed, there was

nothing directly between Areizaga’s vanguard at La Guardia and the

Spanish capital, save the Polish division of the 4th Corps stationed

at Aranjuez, and Milhaud’s five regiments of dragoons at Ocaña. If

the Spaniard had pushed on for three days more at his starting pace,

he might have crossed the Tagus, and have forced King Joseph to

fight, close in front of Madrid, with an imperfectly assembled army.

On the ninth and tenth Leval’s Germans were in march from Toledo to

Aranjuez to join Sebastiani’s Poles: Mortier’s first division was

hurrying from Talavera to Toledo, and his second division was making

ready to follow. The 2nd Corps, despite Albuquerque’s demonstration

in front of Almaraz, was preparing to quit Oropesa, in order to

replace Mortier’s men at Talavera. Victor, in the meanwhile, with

the First Corps, was lying in front of Toledo at Ajofrin, with his

cavalry at Mora and Yebenes: he reported that no hostile force had

come his way, but that he had ascertained that a large army had

marched past his front along the great \_chaussée\_ from Madridejos to

Aranjuez. He was in a position to attack it in rear and flank, if

there was a sufficient force gathered in its front to justify him in

closing[95].

[94] Soult to Clarke, Madrid, Nov. 6.

[95] Soult to Clarke, Madrid, Nov. 10.

But on reaching La Guardia, Areizaga seemed suddenly to realize

the dangers of his movement. No doubt it was the news that Victor

was almost in his rear that paralysed him, but he halted on the

ninth, when a bold advance would certainly have enabled him to seize

Aranjuez, by evicting the small force under Milhaud and Sebastiani.

For three fatal days, the 9th, 10th, and 11th of November, the

Spanish main body remained halted in a mass at La Guardia, as if for

the special purpose of allowing the enemy to concentrate. On the

eleventh Areizaga at last began to move again: he sent forward the

whole of his cavalry, supported by Zayas and his Vanguard division,

to press back the force in his front. They found Milhaud’s five

regiments of dragoons ranged in line of battle before the small town

of Ocaña, and supported by Sebastiani’s Polish infantry. Freire

advanced, using his triple superiority of numbers to turn both flanks

of the French cavalry; Milhaud, after some partial charges, retired

behind the Poles, who formed a line of six battalion squares. The

Spanish horse made a half-hearted attempt to attack them, but were

repelled by their rolling fire before they came to close quarters,

and drew back. It was now four o’clock in the afternoon, and the

Spanish infantry was only just beginning to come up. Zayas and Freire

agreed that it was too late to begin a second attack, and put off

fighting till the next morning. But during the night the French

evacuated Ocaña and retired to Aranjuez, wisely judging that it would

be insane to wait for the arrival of the Spanish main body. They had

lost about fifty men, Freire’s cavalry just over two hundred.

Next day [November 12], Areizaga brought up the whole of his army to

Ocaña, and his cavalry reconnoitred up to the gates of Aranjuez and

the bridge of Puente La Reyna. Sebastiani made ready to defend them,

and having been joined by the German division from Toledo, wrote to

Soult to say that he would resist to the last extremity, in order

to gain time for the arrival of Victor’s corps and the other troops

which were marching up from the west and north[96]. The attack

which he expected was never delivered. Areizaga, nervous about the

presence of the 1st Corps on his flank, had resolved to shift his

army eastward to get further away from it. Abandoning his line of

communication by La Guardia and Madridejos, he marched his whole

force by cross-roads parallel to the Tagus up to La Zarza, and seized

the fords of Villamanrique, twenty-five miles above Aranjuez, on the

Madrid-Albacete road. If Victor, as he supposed, had been manœuvring

on his flank, this movement would have cut him off from his base in

Andalusia, and have left him only the mountains of Murcia as a line

of retreat. But, as a matter of fact, the 1st Corps was no longer at

Ajofrin or Mora, but had been called behind the Tagus, so that his

retreat was safer than he supposed.

[96] Sebastiani to Soult, night of the twelfth-thirteenth, from

Aranjuez.

Soult and King Joseph, meanwhile, had been completing their

concentration. They had written to Kellermann, ordering him to send

back to Madrid without delay the brigade of Dessolles’ division

under Godinot which had been lent him, and to spare them as well one

infantry brigade of the 6th Corps. These troops were too far off

to be available at once; but of the remainder of their units the

Royal Guard and Spanish battalions of King Joseph, with Dessolles’

remaining brigade, were moved out to support Sebastiani. Victor

had been brought back across the Tagus, and was also marching on

Aranjuez. Mortier’s corps was concentrated at Toledo, while the 2nd

Corps was in motion from Oropesa to Talavera, having discovered no

signs of a serious advance on the part of Albuquerque. The care of

Madrid was handed over to the incomplete French division of the 4th

Corps[97], some of whose battalions were dispersed at Guadalajara,

Alcala, Segovia, and other garrisons. Paris’s light cavalry of the

same corps was also at this moment watching the roads to the east of

Madrid.

[97] It had still no divisional general, and was officially known

by the name of ‘Sebastiani’s division’--regiments 28th, 32nd,

58th, 75th.

On the twelfth Areizaga threw Lacy’s division across the Tagus,

and laid down two pontoon bridges near Villamanrique, so as to be

able to bring over his whole army in the shortest possible time.

But the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth were days of storm,

the river rose high, and the artillery and train stuck fast on the

vile cross-roads from Ocaña over which they were being brought. In

consequence less than half the Spanish army was north of the Tagus

on November 15, though the advance cavalry pushed on to the line of

the Tajuna, and skirmished with Paris’s \_chasseurs\_ about Arganda.

It seemed nevertheless that Areizaga was committed to an advance

upon Madrid by the high-road from Albacete, wherefore Soult blew up

the bridges of Aranjuez and Puente la Reyna, and ordered Victor to

march from Aranjuez on Arganda with the 1st Corps, nearly 20,000 men,

purposing to join him with the King’s reserves and to offer battle on

the Tajuna, while Mortier and Sebastiani’s Poles and Germans should

fall upon the enemy’s flank. But this plan was foiled by a new move

upon Areizaga’s part; he now commenced a retreat as objectless as his

late advance. Just as Victor’s cavalry came in touch with his front,

he withdrew his whole army across the Tagus, destroyed his bridges,

and retired to La Zarza on the seventeenth, evidently with the

intention of recovering his old line of communication with Andalusia,

via Ocaña and Madridejos.

The moment that this new departure became evident, Soult reversed

the marching orders of all his columns save Victor’s, and bade them

return hastily to Aranjuez, where the bridge was repaired in haste,

and to cross the Tagus there, with the intention of intercepting

Areizaga’s line of retreat and forcing a battle on him near Ocaña.

Victor, however, had got so far to the east that it would have wasted

time to bring him back to Aranjuez, wherefore he was directed to

cross the river at Villamanrique and follow hard in Areizaga’s rear.

On the morning of the eighteenth Milhaud’s and Paris’s cavalry,

riding at the head of the French army, crossed the Tagus at Aranjuez,

and pressing forward met, between Ontigola and Ocaña, Freire’s

horsemen moving at the head of Areizaga’s column, which on this

day was strung out between La Zarza and Noblejas, marching hastily

westward towards the high-road. The collision of Milhaud and Freire

brought about the largest cavalry fight which took place during the

whole Peninsular War. For Milhaud and Paris had eight regiments,

nearly 3,000 men, while three of Freire’s four divisions were

present, to the number of over 4,000 sabres. On neither side was any

infantry in hand.

Sebastiani, who had come up with the light cavalry of his corps, was

eager for a fight, and engaged at once. Charging the Spanish front

line with Paris’s light horse, he broke it with ease: but Freire came

on with his reserves, forming the greater part of them into a solid

column--an odd formation for cavalry. Into this mass Milhaud charged

with four regiments of dragoons. The heaviness of their formation

did not suffice to enable the Spaniards to stand. They broke when

attacked, and went to the rear in disorder, leaving behind them

eighty prisoners and some hundreds of killed and wounded. The French

lost only a few scores, but among them was Paris, the not unworthy

successor of the adventurous Lasalle in command of the light cavalry

division attached to the 4th Corps.

Moving forward in pursuit of the routed squadrons, Sebastiani

approached Ocaña, but halted on discovering that there was already

Spanish infantry in the town. The head of Areizaga’s long column had

reached it, while the cavalry combat was in progress: the rest was

visible slowly moving up by cross-roads from the east. Soult was

at once apprised that the enemy’s army was close in his front--so

close that it could not get away without fighting, for its train and

rearguard were still far behind, and would be cut off if the main

body moved on without making a stand.

Areizaga, though he had shown such timidity when faced by

Sebastiani’s 9,000 men at Aranjuez, and by Victor’s 20,000 on the

Tajuna, now offered battle to the much more formidable force which

Soult was bringing up. He was indeed compelled to fight, partly

because his men were too weary to move forward that night, partly

because he wished to give time for his train to arrive and get on to

the \_chaussée\_.

On the morning of the nineteenth his army was discovered drawn up in

two lines on each side of the town of Ocaña. There were still some

46,000 infantry and 5,500 cavalry under arms despite of the losses

of the late week[98]. The oncoming French army was smaller; though

it mustered 5,000 horse it had only 27,000 foot--the Germans and

Poles of Sebastiani, Mortier with nearly the whole of the 5th Corps,

a brigade of Dessolles’ division, the King’s guards, and the cavalry

of Milhaud, Paris, and Beauregard[99]. Victor was too far off to be

available; having found the flooded Tagus hard to cross, he was on

this day barely in touch with the extreme rearguard of Areizaga’s

army which was escorting the train. Being nearly twenty miles from

Ocaña, he could not hope to arrive in time for the general action, if

it was to be delivered next morn. If Areizaga stood firm for another

day, Victor would be pressing him from the flank and rear while the

main army was in his front: but it was highly probable that Areizaga

would not stand, but would retreat at night; all his previous conduct

argued a great disinclination to risk a battle. Wherefore Soult and

the King, after a short discussion[100], agreed to attack at once,

despite their great numerical inferiority. In the open plain of La

Mancha a difference of 16,000 or 17,000 infantry was not enough to

outweigh the superior quality and training of the French army.

[98] Colborne, in a letter dated December 5, says ‘we had 46,100

infantry and nearly 6,000 cavalry drawn out, in a very bad

position.’ He was present all through the campaign, but wrote no

full report.

[99] Viz.

Mortier’s Infantry Divisions (Girard and Gazan),

twenty-two batts. [one regiment deducted] about 12,000 men

Sebastiani’s Polish Division and German

Division (under Werlé and Leval) ” 8,000 ”

Rey’s Brigade of Dessolles’ Division of the

Central Reserve ” 3,500 ”

The King’s Reserves, viz. four guard battalions

and three others ” 3,500 ”

Milhaud’s Dragoons, five regiments ” 1,800 ”

Paris’s Light Cavalry, attached to 4th Corps,

three regiments ” 1,000 ”

Beauregard’s Cavalry of the 5th Corps, four

regiments ” 1,500 ”

The King’s Cavalry, one regiment of the Guards,

one of Chasseurs ” 700 ”

Artillery, Sappers, &c. ” 1,500 ”

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Total about 33,500 men

[100] Joseph declared that he urged instant attack when Soult

advised waiting for Victor. See his letter in vol. vii of

Ducasse’s \_Life and Correspondence of Joseph Napoleon\_.

There is, so to speak, no position whatever at Ocaña: the little

unwalled town lies in a level upland, where the only natural feature

is a ravine which passes in front of the place; it is sufficiently

deep and broad at its western end to constitute a military obstacle,

but east of the town gradually grows slighter and becomes a mere

dip in the ground. Areizaga had chosen this ravine to indicate the

line of his left and centre; but on his right, where it had become

so shallow as to afford no cover, he extended his troops across and

beyond it. The town was barricaded and occupied, to form a central

support to the line. There were olive-groves in the rear of Ocaña

which might have served to hide a reserve, or to mark a position for

a rally in case a retreat should become necessary. But Areizaga had

made no preparation of this sort. His trains, with a small escort,

had not arrived even on the morning of the nineteenth, but were still

belated on the cross-roads from Noblejas and La Zarza.

The order of the Spanish army in line of battle is difficult to

reconstruct, for Areizaga uses very vague language in the dispatch

in which he explained his defeat, and the other documents available,

though they give detailed accounts of some of the corps, say little

or nothing of others. It seems, however, that Zayas, with the

vanguard division, formed the extreme left, behind the deepest part

of the ravine, with a cavalry brigade under Rivas on its flank and

rear. He had the town of Ocaña on his right. Then followed in the

line, going from left to right, the divisions of Vigodet, Giron,

Castejon, and Lacy. Those of Copons, Jacomé, and Zerain appear

to have formed a second line in support of the other four[101].

Vigodet’s left was in the town of Ocaña and strongly posted, but

the other flank, where Lacy lay, was absolutely in the air, with no

natural feature to cover it. For this reason Areizaga placed beyond

it Freire, with the whole of the cavalry except the brigade on the

extreme left under Rivas. Unfortunately the Spanish horse, much

shaken by the combat of the preceding day, was a weak protection for

the flank, despite its formidable numbers. The sixty guns of the

artillery were drawn out in the intervals of the infantry divisions

of the first and second line.

[101] This order seems the only one consistent with the sole

sentence in Areizaga’s dispatch to the Junta in which he explains

his battle-array: ‘Inmediatamente formé por mi mismo la primera

linea en direccion de Ocaña, colocando por la izquierda la

division de Vigodet, defendida por la frente de la gran zanja,

y por su derecha las divisiones de Giron, Castejon y Lacy: la

de Copons formaba martillo, junta á las tapias de la villa,

inmediata á la de Giron, y las demás la secunda linea á distancia

competente para proteger á la primera.’ The unnamed divisions

which must have lain beyond Copons in the right of the second

line are Jacomé and Zerain.

Soult’s plan of attack was soon formed. The ravine made the Spanish

left--beyond Ocaña--inaccessible, but also prevented it from taking

any offensive action. The Marshal therefore resolved to ignore it

completely, and to concentrate all his efforts against the hostile

centre and right, in the open ground. The scheme adopted was a

simple one: Sebastiani’s Polish and German divisions were to attack

the Spanish right wing, and when they were at close quarters with

the enemy the main mass of the French cavalry was to fall upon

Freire’s horse, drive it out of the field, and attack on the flank

the divisions already engaged with the infantry. For this purpose

Milhaud’s, Paris’s, and Beauregard’s regiments, more than 3,500

sabres, were massed behind the Poles and Germans. For a time their

march would be masked by olive-groves and undulations of the ground,

so that they might come in quite suddenly upon the enemy. Mortier

with his first division--that of Girard--and a regiment of Gazan’s,

followed in the rear of the Polish and German infantry, to support

their frontal attack. Dessolles, with his own brigade and Gazan’s

remaining one, took post opposite Ocaña, ready to fall upon the

Spanish centre, when the attack to his left should have begun to make

way. He had in his front the massed artillery of the 4th and 5th

Corps, thirty guns under Senarmont, which took ground on a low knoll

above the great ravine, from which they could both play upon the town

of Ocaña and also enfilade part of the Spanish line to its immediate

right--Vigodet’s division and half of Giron’s. Finally the King, with

his guards and other troops, horse and foot, were placed to the right

rear of Dessolles, to act as a general reserve, or to move against

Zayas if he should attempt to cross the ravine and turn the French

right.

The plan, despite of some checks at the commencement, worked in a

satisfactory fashion. The German and Polish divisions of Leval and

Werlé attacked Lacy’s and Castejon’s divisions, which gave back

some little way, in order to align themselves with Vigodet who

was sheltered by the slight eastern end of the ravine. The enemy

followed and brought up six guns to the point to play upon the new

position which the Spaniards had taken up. The forward movement was

continuing, when suddenly to the surprise of the French, Lacy’s,

Castejon’s, and Giron’s men, leaving their places in the line, made

a furious counter-charge upon the Poles and Germans, drove them

back for some distance, and threw them into disorder. This movement

was no result of Areizaga’s generalship: he had betaken himself

to the summit of the church-tower of Ocaña, an inconvenient place

from which to issue orders, and practically left his subordinates

to fight their own battle. Mortier was forced to bring forward

Girard’s division to support his broken first line. It was hotly

engaged with Lacy and Giron, when suddenly it felt the Spaniards

slacken in their fire, waver, and break. This was the result of the

intervention of a new force in the field. The great mass of French

squadrons, which had been sent under Sebastiani to turn the Spanish

right, had now come into action. Arriving close to Freire’s cavalry

before it was discovered, it fell on that untrustworthy corps, and

scattered it to the winds in a few minutes. Then, while three or four

regiments followed the routed horsemen, the rest turned inwards upon

the hostile infantry. The flanks of the first and second lines of

Areizaga’s right were charged simultaneously, and hardly a regiment

had time to get into square. Brigade after brigade was rolled up

and dispersed or captured; the mass of fugitives, running in upon

the troops that were frontally engaged with Girard, wrecked them

completely. Of the five divisions of the Spanish left, a certain

number of steady regiments got away, by closing their ranks and

pushing ahead through the confusion, firing on friend and foe alike

when they were hustled. But many corps were annihilated, and others

captured wholesale. The last seems to have been the fate of nearly

the whole of Jacomé’s division of the second line, as hardly a single

unit from it is reported as rallied a month later, and the French

accounts speak of a whole column of 6,000 men which laid down its

arms in a mass before the light cavalry of the 4th Corps. Just as the

Spanish right broke up, Dessolles with his two brigades, followed

by the King’s reserve, crossed the ravine and attacked the town of

Ocaña, and the two divisions--Vigodet and Copons--which lay in first

and second line immediately to the east of it. These retired, and got

away in better order than their comrades to the right. Of all the

Spanish army only Zayas’s vanguard division, on the extreme left, now

remained intact. Areizaga had sent it an order to cross the ravine

and attack the French right, when he saw his army beginning to break

up. Then, a few minutes later, he sent another order bidding it close

to the right and cover the retreat. After this the Commander-in-Chief

descended from his tower, mounted his horse, and fled. Zayas

carried out the second order, moved to the right, and found himself

encompassed by masses of fugitives from Giron’s, Castejon’s, and

Lacy’s broken divisions, mixed with French cavalry. He sustained,

with great credit to himself and his troops, a rearguard action for

some miles, till near the village of Dos Barrios, where his line was

broken and his men at last mixed with the rest of the fugitives[102].

[102] The only detailed accounts of the Spanish movements that

I have discovered are the divisional reports of Lacy and Zayas,

both in the Foreign Office archives at the Record Office.

Areizaga’s dispatch is so vague as to be nearly useless.

[Illustration: BATTLE OF OCAÑA. Nov. 19, 1809.]

The whole routed multitude now streamed wildly over the plain, with

the French cavalry in hot pursuit. Thousands of prisoners were

taken, and the chase only ended with nightfall. The fugitives headed

straight for the Sierra Morena, and reached it with a rapidity even

greater than that which they had used in their outward march a

fortnight before. Victor’s cavalry arrived in time to take up the

pursuit next morning: they had on their way to the field captured the

whole of the trains of the Spanish army, on the road from Noblejas

to Ocaña. The losses of Areizaga’s army were appalling; about 4,000

killed and wounded and 14,000 prisoners. Thirty flags and fifty out

of the sixty guns had been captured. When the wrecks of the army had

been rallied in the passes, three weeks after the battle, only some

21,000 infantry[103] and 3,000 horse were reported as present. The

divisions of Lacy, Jacomé, and Zerain had practically disappeared,

and the others had lost from a third to a half of their numbers. The

condition of the cavalry was peculiarly disgraceful; as it had never

stood to fight, its losses represent not prisoners, for the most

part, but mere runaways who never returned to their standards. The

French had lost about 90 officers and 1,900 men, nearly all in the

divisions of Leval, Werlé, and Girard[104]. The cavalry, which had

delivered the great stroke and won the battle, suffered very little.

Mortier had been slightly wounded, Leval and Girard severely.

[103] Viz. Zayas, Vigodet, and Castejon, about 4,000 men each,

Copons 3,000, Giron 2,500, remains of the other three divisions

about 3,500. From the returns in the Madrid War Office.

[104] Martinien’s lists of officers killed and wounded show that

the German division lost 19 officers, the Polish division 23,

Girard’s division 28--in all 70 out of the total of 94 officers

hit in the whole army.

Even allowing for the fact that Areizaga had been the victim of the

Junta’s insensate resolve to make an offensive movement on Madrid,

it is impossible to speak with patience of his generalship. For a

combination of rashness and vacillation it excels that of any other

Spanish general during the whole war. His only chance was to catch

the enemy before they could concentrate: he succeeded in doing this

by his rapid march from the passes to La Guardia. Then he waited

three days in deplorable indecision, though there were only 10,000

men between him and Madrid. Next he resumed his advance, but by the

circuitous route of Villamanrique, by taking which he lost three days

more. Then he halted again, the moment that he found Victor with

20,000 men in his front, though he might still have fought at great

advantage. Lastly he retreated, yet so slowly and unskilfully that he

was finally brought to action at Ocaña by the 34,000 men of Mortier

and Sebastiani. He was sent out to win a battle, since Madrid could

not be delivered without one, and knew that he must fight sooner or

later, but threw away his favourable opportunities, and then accepted

an action when all the chances were against him. For he must have

known by this time the miserable quality of his cavalry, yet gave

battle in a vast plain, where everything depended on the mounted

arm. In the actual moment of conflict he seems to have remained in a

hypnotized condition on his church-tower, issuing hardly an order,

and allowing the fight to go as it pleased. Yet he was, by all

accounts, possessed of personal courage, as he had proved at Alcañiz

and elsewhere. Apparently responsibility reduced him to a condition

of vacillating idiocy. Perhaps the most surprising fact of the whole

business is that the Junta retained him in command after his fiasco,

thanked him for his services, and sent him an honorary present--as it

had done to Cuesta after Medellin with somewhat better excuse. He was

its own man, and it did not throw him over, even when he had proved

his perfect incompetence.

To complete the narrative of the deplorable autumn campaign of 1809,

it only remains to tell of the doings of Albuquerque and Del Parque.

The former played his part with reasonable success; he was ordered

to distract the attention of the enemy from the army of La Mancha,

and did what he could. Having got some 10,000 men concentrated at

Almaraz, he sent one column over the Tagus to demonstrate against

the 2nd Corps from beyond the river, and with another threatened

the bridge of Talavera from the near side. But Heudelet, now in

command of the 2nd Corps, soon found that there was no reality in

his demonstration, and that he was not supported by the English,

though he had given out that Wellington was close in his rear. After

skirmishing around Talavera from the 17th to the 22nd of November,

the Duke hastily recrossed the river on hearing the news of Ocaña,

and resumed his old positions.

Del Parque’s campaign was more vigorous and more unfortunate. While

he lay in the passes above Bejar and Baños, he got early news of the

withdrawal of Godinot’s and Marcognet’s troops toward Madrid, when

Soult summoned them off to reinforce the main army. He reasoned that

since he had now only the 6th Corps, shorn of one of its brigades,

in his front, he might repeat the success of Tamames, for Marchand

was weaker than he had been in October, while he himself was far

stronger. Accordingly he disregarded an order from the Junta to

extend his operations southward, and to join Albuquerque in the

valley of the Tagus. Instead, he marched once more upon Salamanca

on November 18, the day before the disaster of Ocaña. He drove in

an outlying brigade of Marchand’s force from Alba de Tormes, and

pressed it vigorously back towards the main body. Conscious that with

his 10,000 men he could not hope to face 30,000, Marchand promptly

evacuated Salamanca on December 19, and retired, just as he had done

in October, behind the Douro, concentrating his whole corps at Toro.

He sent urgent demands for help both to Kellermann at Valladolid,

and to Soult at Madrid. By the time that they arrived Areizaga had

been dealt with, and the army in New Castile could spare as many

reinforcements as were required. Marcognet’s brigade, the one which

had been borrowed from the 6th Corps, was first sent back from

Segovia, the point which it had reached in its southward march, and

Gazan’s division of the 5th Corps was ordered by Soult to follow.

Meanwhile Del Parque, still ignorant of the disaster in the south,

had occupied Salamanca on November 20, and on the following day moved

out towards Cantalapiedra and Medina del Campo, with the object of

throwing himself between Marchand and Kellermann and the capital.

This was an excellent move, and, but for what had happened at Ocaña,

might have had considerable results, since the Army of the Left ought

to have made an end of the small French force in Old Castile.

Kellermann, however, had seen the danger of Marchand’s retreat to

Toro, and had directed him to close in towards the east, and to

occupy Medina del Campo, as the strategical point that must be held

in order to maintain touch with Madrid. Thus it chanced that on

November 23 Labassée’s brigade and four regiments of cavalry, coming

from Tordesillas, reached Medina del Campo just as Marcognet’s

brigade, returning from Segovia, came into the town from the other

side. They had hardly met when the approach of Del Parque’s army

along the Salamanca road was reported. The two French brigadiers

thought for a moment of fighting, and the cavalry was ordered to

press back the Spanish advanced guard. They drove off with ease

Anglona’s horsemen, who rode at the head of the long column, but

were repulsed by Ballasteros’s infantry, which formed square in good

style, and drove them off with a rolling fire of musketry. Seeing

that the whole Spanish army was coming up, Marcognet and Labassée

then evacuated Medina del Campo, and retired to Valdestillas.

With one push more the Spaniards could have cut the line between

Valladolid and Madrid.

On November 24 the whole 6th Corps and Kellermann’s dragoons, with a

battalion or two from the garrisons of Old Castile, were concentrated

at Puente de Duero, with their van at Valdestillas. If attacked, they

must have gone behind the Douro and abandoned all touch with Madrid;

for there were not more than 16,000 men in line, and they were forced

to take the defensive. But, to their surprise, Del Parque made no

advance. He had heard on that morning of the disaster of Ocaña, and

guessed that reinforcements for Kellermann must already be on the

march. Wherefore he resolved to regain the mountains without delay,

and to give up Salamanca and his other conquests. With this prudent

resolve he broke up from Medina del Campo, and marched hastily away

in retreat, making, not for Salamanca, which was too much in the

plains to please him, but for Alba de Tormes. He had gained a day’s

start by his prompt action, but on the twenty-sixth Kellermann set

off in pursuit, leaving orders for the troops that were expected from

Madrid to follow him.

On the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh the French cavalry failed

even to get in touch with Del Parque’s rearguard, and found nothing

but a few stragglers on the road. But on the afternoon of the

twenty-eighth the leading squadrons reported that they had come upon

the whole Spanish army encamped in a mass around the town of Alba de

Tormes. The duke had flattered himself that he had shaken off his

pursuers, and was surprised in a most unfortunate position. Two of

his divisions (Ballasteros and Castrofuerte) were beyond the Tormes,

preparing to bivouac on the upland above it. The other three were

quartered in and about the town, while the cavalry was watching the

road, but had fallen in so close to the main body that its vedettes

gave very short notice of the approach of the enemy. Kellermann was

riding with the leading brigade of his cavalry--Lorcet’s \_chasseurs\_

and hussars; the six regiments of dragoons were close behind him, so

that he had over 3,000 sabres in hand; but the infantry was ten miles

to the rear. If he waited for it, Del Parque would have time to cross

the river and take up a defensive position behind it. The French

general, therefore, resolved to risk a most hazardous experiment,

an attack with unsupported cavalry upon a force of all arms, in the

hope of detaining it till the infantry should come up. The Spaniards

were getting into line of battle in a hurry, Losada’s division on the

right, Belveder’s and La Carrera’s on the left, the cavalry--1,200

sabres at most--in their front. The divisions beyond the river were

only beginning to assemble, and would take some time to recross the

narrow bridge: but 18,000 men were on the right bank prepared to

fight.

Without a moment’s delay Kellermann ordered Lorcet’s brigade to

charge the Spanish right and centre: it was followed by the six

regiments of dragoons in three successive lines, and the whole mass

came down like a whirlwind upon Del Parque’s front, scattering his

cavalry to the winds, and breaking the whole of Losada’s and the

right of Belveder’s divisions. A battery of artillery, and nearly

2,000 prisoners were taken. The wrecks of the broken divisions fell

back into Alba de Tormes, and jammed the bridge, thus preventing the

divisions on the further side from recrossing it. Kellermann then

rallied his squadrons, and led them against La Carrera’s division and

the remaining battalions of that of Belveder. These troops, formed in

brigade-squares upon a rising ground, held out gallantly and repulsed

the charge. But they were cut off from the bridge, which they could

only reach by a dangerous flank movement over rough ground. By

continually threatening to repeat his attacks, Kellermann kept them

from moving off, till, two hours and a half after the action had

begun, the French infantry and guns commenced to come up. La Carrera

saw that it would be fatal to await them, and bade his division

retreat and reach the bridge as best it could. This was naturally

done in disorder, and with some loss; but it was already growing

dusk, and the bulk of the Spanish left got away.

While the Spaniards were defiling over the bridge, Marchand’s leading

brigade attacked Alba, out of which it drove some rallied troops of

Losada’s division, who held the town to cover La Carrera’s retreat.

This was done with ease, for Del Parque had not brought over his two

intact divisions, preferring to use them as a second line behind

which the others could retire. Alba was stormed, and two guns, which

had been placed behind a barricade at its main exit, were taken by

the French.

Here the fighting stopped: the Spaniards had lost five flags, nine

guns, most of their baggage, and about 3,000 killed or taken--no

very ruinous deductions from an army of 32,000 men. The French

casualties were less than 300 in all[105]. Del Parque was determined

not to fight again next morning, and bade his army make off under

cover of the night. The disorder that followed was frightful: the

three divisions that had been in the battle dispersed, and went

off in all directions, some towards Ciudad Rodrigo, others towards

Tamames, others by the hill-road that leads towards Tala and the

Pass of Baños. Many of the raw Leonese troops, though they had not

been engaged, also left their colours in the dark[106]. It was a

full month before Del Parque could collect his whole army, which,

when it had been reorganized, was found to number 26,000 men,

despite all its misfortunes. It would seem, therefore, that beside

the losses in the battle some 3,000 men must have gone off to their

homes. The duke fixed his head quarters at San Martin de Trebejos

in the Sierra de Gata, and dispersed his infantry in cantonments

about Bejar, Fuenteguinaldo, and Miranda de Castanar. Having only

the ruined region around Coria and Plasencia, and the small district

about Ciudad Rodrigo, to feed them, these troops suffered dreadful

privations during the winter, living on half-rations eked out with

edible acorns. By the middle of January they had lost 9,000 men from

fever, dysentery, and starvation.

[105] Martinien’s lists show 4 officers killed and 14 wounded.

[106] There is a long report by Del Parque in the Record

Office, in which he states that the panic was caused by a stray

party of his own routed cavalry dashing in among the rearguard

in the dark, and crying that the French were pursuing them.

He afterwards court-martialled and shot some cavalrymen for

cowardice.

Despite all this, it is fair to say that Del Parque’s campaign

contrasts most favourably with that of Areizaga. He showed a laudable

prudence when he twice evacuated Salamanca rather than fight a

battle in the plain. His victory of Tamames was most creditable,

showing that when prudently conducted, and ranged in a well-chosen

hill-position, his army could give a good account of itself. But

for the disaster of Alba de Tormes his record might be considered

excellent. There, it is true, he committed a grave mistake, by

separating his army into two halves by the river when his enemy was

in pursuit. But in his defence it may be urged that his cavalry

ought to have had vedettes out for ten or fifteen miles to the rear,

and to have given him long warning of the approach of the French.

And when the enemy’s horse did make its sudden appearance, it was

contrary to the laws of probability that it would attack at once,

without waiting for its infantry and guns. Kellermann’s headlong

charge was a violation of all rules, a stroke of inspiration which

could not have been foreseen. If the Spanish cavalry had been of

any use whatever, and if Losada’s division had only known how to

form square in a hurry, it ought to have been beaten off. But the

resisting-power of a Spanish army was always a doubtful quantity.

Kellermann resolved to take the risk of attacking, and was rewarded

by a victory on which he was not entitled to reckon. He would

probably have justified his tactics by urging that failure could have

no severe penalty, for the Spaniards could not pursue him if he were

repulsed, while success would bring splendid results. This was true:

and if his infantry had been five miles more to the front, he might

have captured the whole of La Carrera’s division.

SECTION XVIII

THE CONQUEST OF ANDALUSIA

CHAPTER I

THE CONSEQUENCES OF OCAÑA. DECEMBER 1809-JANUARY 1810

The news of the disaster of Ocaña gave a death-blow to the Central

Junta. Its attempt to win back its lost credit by an offensive

campaign against Madrid having ended in such a lamentable

fashion, there was nothing left for it but to acquiesce in its

own supersession by the oft-discussed national Cortes. But that

assembly was not to meet till March 1, 1810--a date still four

months in the future,--and even its form and constitution had not

yet been settled. For it would have been absurd to have called it

together in the ancient and unrepresentative shape,--a legacy from

the time of Charles V,--in which it had been wont to meet under the

Bourbon kings. Many regions had few or no members; decayed mediaeval

towns of Old Castile had more deputies than the most populous

provinces. Moreover, it had yet to be settled how that larger half

of the realm which was now occupied by the French was to elect its

representatives. The commission was still sitting to determine these

vital points, and in this moment of dismay the day of the assembly

of the Cortes seemed very far distant. The French might be following

hard on the heels of Areizaga’s broken host, and might enter Seville,

long before it had been decided what sort of a Cortes was to take

over the power from the hands of the discredited Central Junta.

That most unhappy government, therefore, had to face both an acute

constitutional crisis and an acute military crisis. Something had

to be done without delay to satisfy public opinion concerning the

convocation of the Cortes, or the revolution which had been checked

by Wellesley’s aid in September would certainly burst forth again.

But even more pressing was the necessity for rallying and reinforcing

the army which had been crushed at Ocaña, before the French should

resume their advance. The actual administrative power was for

the moment in the hand of the first of those temporary executive

committees to which the Junta had agreed to delegate its authority by

the decree of September 19. This body, composed of six members, among

whom La Romana was numbered, had come into office on November 1. The

rest of the Junta were only too eager to throw on their comrades the

weight of the responsibility which should have fallen upon them all.

The executive committee was accused on all sides of slow and feeble

action. It published, as soon as possible, the details concerning

the constitution of the forthcoming Cortes, which (in pursuance of

the recommendation of the commission of inquiry) was to consist

of two classes of members, elected representatives who were to be

allotted in due proportion to all the provinces of the realm, and

‘privilegiados’ or chosen individuals from the nobility and the

higher clergy. The American colonies were to be given members no less

than the mother country, but their numbers were to be small. Such

an arrangement seemed to foreshadow a double-chambered legislature,

resembling that of Great Britain, and British precedents had no doubt

been running in the minds of the framers of the constitution. But--as

we shall see--the Cortes, when it actually met, took no such shape.

The mandate for the election of the assembly was duly published;

and so far public opinion was to a certain extent satisfied, for it

was clear that the Central Junta was at last about to abdicate. But

though the majority of the Spanish people were contented to wait,

provided that the executive committee should show signs of rising to

the occasion, and doing its best as an \_interim\_ government, there

were some politicians who saw in the crisis only an opportunity

for pushing their private ambitions. Those veteran intriguers, the

Conde de Montijo and Francisco Palafox, undismayed by the failure

of the September plot, began to make arrangements with the Seville

demagogues for a fresh attempt at a \_coup d’état\_. Their plots seem

to have distracted Romana and his colleagues from their obvious

military duties--the conspirator at home is always the enemy who

looms most large before the eyes of a weak government. But after some

search both were discovered, arrested and imprisoned.

Meanwhile the executive committee, with the Junta’s approval, issued

a long series of edicts concerning the reorganization of the army,

and the defence of Andalusia from the French attack, which might at

any moment begin. The ‘Army of the Centre,’ of which Areizaga was

still, strange to say, left in command, was to be raised to 100,000

men by a strenuous conscription. The press was to be all-embracing,

married men, novices in monasteries, persons in minor orders, only

sons of widows, all the classes hitherto exempt, were to be subject

to it. To provide funds the clergy were ordered to send in to the

mint all church plate save such as was strictly necessary for the

celebration of the sacraments, and all private citizens were bidden

to contribute one half of their table-silver. In order to provide

teams for the artillery--which had lost nearly all its horses and

guns at Ocaña--a strict requisition for draught animals was begun all

over Andalusia. Engineers were sent out to fortify all the passes

of the Sierra Morena, with permission to exact forced labour from

the peasantry of the hill country. Three members of the Junta--Rabe,

Riquelme and Campo Sagrado--were sent to Areizaga’s head quarters at

La Carolina as ‘field deputies,’ to stir up or support the energy of

the commander-in-chief. This was a device borrowed from the practice

of the French Revolution, and had no better effect than might have

been expected. As in 1793, the ‘Representatives on Mission’ were

either useless or positively harmful. They either wished to thrust

amateurish plans of their own upon the military men, or at least

distracted them by constant inquisitorial supervision.

On the whole the effect of this volley of violent decrees was small.

With six months to carry them out they might, no doubt, have produced

great results. But within nine weeks after the disaster of Ocaña

the French had commenced their attack, and in that space of time

little had been accomplished. The money was beginning to come in, the

recruits were being collected, but had not been armed or clothed,

still less drilled. Of the fortifications in the passes many had

been sketched out, but only a few had begun to take tangible shape.

To man them there was still only the wrecks of Areizaga’s old army,

which had hardly begun to receive its drafts of conscripts. Its

whole force at the New Year did not exceed 30,000 men, and these were

distributed over a front of more than 150 miles, for not only the

main group of passes in front of La Carolina had to be watched, but

also the eastern ingress into Andalusia by Baeza and Ubeda, and the

western defiles from Almaden and Benalcazar, which lead directly down

on to Cordova. The whole country-side was in a state of desperate

turmoil and excitement, yet very little in the way of practical

defence had been completed by the middle of January.

Meanwhile, in accordance with the ridiculous constitution of the

‘executive committee,’ half of its members went out of office at the

New Year, and were succeeded by other individuals of the Junta. Among

those superseded was La Romana, who was now directed to go off to

Valencia as captain-general. The Junta seems to have considered that

he would be less dangerous in company with his brother José Caro in

that province, than when posted at the seat of government, with his

brother to back him by threats of Valencian military interference.

Yet La Romana did not depart, and was still lingering at Seville when

the French crossed the Sierra Morena.

There was a larger military problem before the Junta and the new

‘executive committee’ than the mere defence of Andalusia. The whole

arrangement of the national armies had to be recast in consequence of

the black day of Ocaña. The corps of Del Parque and Albuquerque, as

well as all the smaller outlying bodies of troops, had to receive new

orders. Above all it was necessary to discover what were the plans of

Wellington, for the present position of the British army at Badajoz

was the most important factor in the whole situation. As long as it

remained there, in support of the small force under Albuquerque which

was guarding the passages of the Tagus at Almaraz and Arzobispo, the

western section of the front of Andalusia was secure. The defence of

the eastern section, too, was in no small degree helped by the fact

that Wellington’s solid troops were in a position to march up the

Guadiana, and to threaten the flank of any French army which might

intend to attack the Despeña-Perros, or any other of the passes which

lead from La Mancha down to the Andalusian plains.

It was a terribly disquieting fact for the Junta that, even before

Ocaña had been fought and lost, Wellington had begun to announce his

intention of leaving Badajoz and retiring within the boundaries of

Portugal. He had paid a flying visit to Seville on the 2nd-4th[107]

of November, just as Areizaga’s unhappy advance into La Mancha

was commencing. The project had been concealed from him[108], and

when he learnt of it he had expressed his entire disapprobation

of it, and had refused to give any promise to support the Spanish

armies in their offensive movements. For this reason he had been

bitterly provoked when Areizaga and Albuquerque both wrote him, a

little later, to say that they had been promised the assistance of

his army by the Junta[109]. He had consistently prophesied ill of

the adventure, and had recorded his opinion that both Del Parque

and Areizaga would probably lose their armies. In a dispatch of

November 20, six days before the news of Ocaña reached him, he

had announced his definite intention of leaving Badajoz with the

main body of his army, and transferring himself to the north of

the Tagus, where, by posting himself in the Portuguese province of

Beira, he would cover the high-roads to Lisbon from Old Castile. This

decision was founded on his belief that when the French had made

an end of Areizaga and Del Parque--a contingency which he regarded

as almost certain[110]--they would strike at Lisbon and not at

Seville. He had good reasons for holding this view; it was exactly

consonant with Napoleon’s own plan, which was only abandoned by

reason of King Joseph’s pleadings with his brother. For, from the

French standpoint, it was far more profitable to conquer Portugal

and to expel the British army from the Peninsula, than to overrun

Andalusia. Wellington and his troops formed the one solid nucleus of

resistance which still remained; it was clear that the dispersion of

the miserable wrecks of Areizaga’s host would present no difficulty.

And not only was it advisable, from the Emperor’s point of view,

to destroy the most formidable hostile force still surviving, but

the balance of strategical advantage was all in favour of subduing

Portugal, before Andalusia should be invaded. For Portugal flanks

the attack on southern Spain, and a good army based upon it could

check the advance on Seville and Cadiz by demonstrations aimed at

Valladolid or Madrid, which might wreck or delay the conquest of

Andalusia. It may be objected that Andalusia also flanks the attack

on Portugal; but the objection had no validity since the day of

Ocaña, as the Junta had now no longer any striking force in hand. It

would be many months before Areizaga’s host was in a proper condition

for undertaking even cautious defensive operations. A French attack

on Portugal, therefore, would be practically unmolested by external

interference.

[107] He then pushed on to Cadiz, where he was on the 6th-7th,

spent a night at Seville again on the 9th-10th, and was back at

Badajoz on the 11th of November. At Cadiz he parted with his

brother, who was just embarking for England, to take up his place

in the new Ministry.

[108] As late as Oct. 28 he had written to Colonel Roche, the

British officer attached to the staff of the Army of the Centre,

to beg him to press on the newly-arrived Areizaga the necessity

of adopting a defensive posture, and risking nothing. From the

wording of the letter it is clear that no hint of the orders

sent to Areizaga from Seville had reached Badajoz. \_Wellington

Dispatches\_, v. 248-9, see also the dispatch to Castlereagh on p.

267.

[109] See Wellington to Roche, and to B. Frère, Badajoz, Nov. 19.

\_Dispatches\_, v. 292-3 and 294.

[110] ‘Nothing can save them save a victory by Areizaga, and

the possession of Madrid, \_which are the most improbable of

events\_.... If Del Parque and Albuquerque are destroyed, \_which

is not unlikely, indeed pretty certain\_ ... we must make our

arrangements for the defence of Portugal.’ Wellington to

Beresford, Nov. 20, 1809.

At the present moment the strength of the French troops in Spain was

not sufficient to provide two armies for offensive purposes, the one

destined to march on Seville, the other on Lisbon. The numbers at the

front had not appreciably increased since the autumn, though already

the reinforcements which the Emperor had set upon the march, after

concluding his peace with Austria, had begun to appear at Bayonne,

and to cross the Bidassoa. But in December and January the roads were

bad, the days short, and provisions hard to procure. Hence Wellington

reckoned that, till the spring should arrive, the allies would have

to face no more than the forces which were already opposed to them.

When, however, the campaigning season should have come round, and the

reinforcements from Germany should have been incorporated with the

old Army of Spain, he thought that Portugal would be the enemy’s main

objective. It was therefore his intention to withdraw his army, or

at least the greater part of it, from Spanish Estremadura, and to

arrange it so as to cover Lisbon, even though by making this movement

he was weakening the left flank of the defence of Andalusia. If he

had to choose between the interests of Portugal and those of Spain,

he was prepared to sacrifice the latter. His reasons were simple: (1)

he considered Portugal more important in the grand strategy of the

defence of the Peninsula than Andalusia; (2) he regarded it as more

defensible, and he had already--as we shall presently see--sketched

out and commenced the construction of his great lines of Torres

Vedras, in which his trust as a final impregnable stronghold was

already fixed; (3) he held that although Great Britain was pledged

to assist both Spain and Portugal, yet her moral obligation to the

latter was far more binding, since Portugal had placed herself

entirely in the hands of her allies, had put her army at their

disposal, and had contributed all her resources to the common cause,

while the Spanish Junta had shown a jealous and suspicious spirit,

had refused to show confidence in Great Britain, and had persisted in

carrying out a military policy of its own, which led to a consistent

series of disasters; (4) the Portuguese army, though its fighting

power was not as yet ascertained, could be at least relied upon for

obedience; experience had shown that the promises of the Spaniards

could not be trusted, and that any campaign undertaken in their

company might be wrecked by some incalculable piece of slackness or

miscalculation[111].

[111] Wellington’s arguments must be culled from his various

dispatches to Lord Liverpool and other ministers in November

and December 1809. For the first of the motives quoted above

see Wellington to Liverpool Dec. 9. ‘The object in occupying

this proposed position [in Beira] is to be at the point of the

defence of Portugal, to divert the attention of the French from

the South of Spain, when they shall receive their reinforcements,

and thus to give time to the Spanish Government to repair

their losses.... It is absolutely necessary to cross the Tagus

immediately, as it may be depended upon that the enemy’s first

effort, after receiving his reinforcements, will be upon the

troops to the North of the Tagus.’ Very much the same opinion is

expressed in the earlier dispatch to Lord Liverpool of November

14. Expressions of Wellington’s conviction that it was impossible

to co-operate with the Junta or the Spanish generals may be found

\_passim\_ in all his confidential letters. See for example that to

Sir J. Anstruther, pp. 386-8 of \_Supplementary Dispatches\_, vol.

vi.

Accordingly on November 20 Wellington declared his intention of

withdrawing his army--save one single division--to the north of the

Tagus, and of placing it at various points in the province of Beira,

so as to cover all the practicable roads to Lisbon from the side

of Old Castile. On the twenty-sixth he sent formal notice of his

intentions to Seville, well knowing the storm of indignation that

would be roused thereby. At the same time he advised the Junta to

reinforce Albuquerque’s army of Estremadura with troops drawn from

Del Parque, adding that to keep Albuquerque well to the front, in his

present positions at Almaraz and Arzobispo, was the best means of

protecting the western approaches of Andalusia. Del Parque’s corps,

whose reason for existence was the ‘containing’ of the French troops

in Old Castile, would be able to spare troops to strengthen the

army of Estremadura, because the English host, in its new position,

would be behind it, and opposed to the forces under Kellermann and

Marchand, which had hitherto had nothing in their front but the ‘Army

of the Left.’ Moreover, it would be an appreciable relief to Del

Parque, who was finding the greatest difficulty in feeding his army

in the thinly-peopled mountain region between Ciudad Rodrigo and

Bejar, to be freed from the burden of maintaining one or two of his

five divisions.

The Junta, as might have been expected, took Wellington’s

determination to remove from Badajoz with the worst of graces. They

could hardly have failed to do so, when one of his main reasons for

departing, barely concealed in his dispatches to them, was his fear

of getting involved in their operations, and his reluctance to place

his troops in line with the Spanish armies. Nor could they have

been expected to agree with his strategical view that Lisbon, not

Cadiz, would be the main objective of the grand advance of the French

armies, when the spring should come round. To every man or body of

men their own possible dangers naturally seem more imminent and more

interesting than those of their neighbours. The departure of the

English from Badajoz was formally announced to the Junta on November

26, and began to be carried out on December 8, when the brigade of

Guards marched for Portalegre, and was followed on successive days by

the other brigades of the army. By the 24th of December Wellington

and his staff alone were left in the Estremaduran fortress, and next

day his head quarters were at Elvas, across the frontier. The second

division, under Hill, halted at Abrantes, where Wellington intended

to leave it, as the nucleus of a covering force which was to guard

Lisbon from any possible attack from the south side of the Tagus. The

rest of the army pursued its way across the mountains of Beira, and

by January 3, 1810, head quarters were at Coimbra, and the main body

of the British troops was beginning to take up billets in the small

towns of the valley of the Mondego.

Convinced that no more was to be hoped from Wellington, the Executive

Committee issued their orders for a new arrangement of the line of

defence of Andalusia. Albuquerque was ordered to leave no more than

a small corps of observation on the Tagus, in front of Almaraz,

and to bring back the main body of the army of Estremadura to the

line of the Guadiana, in order to link his right wing to the left

of Areizaga’s forces. On December 24 his new head quarters were

at Don Benito, and he had some 8,000 men collected there and at

the neighbouring town of Merida; the rest of his small army was

furnishing the garrison of Badajoz, and the detached force on the

Tagus, whose duty was to watch the movements of the French 2nd Corps,

which still lay in its old post at Talavera, and remained entirely

quiescent.

From Albuquerque’s post at Don Benito there was a gap of seventy-five

miles to the next force in the Spanish line. This consisted of the

wrecks of the two old divisions of Copons and Zerain from the army

of Areizaga, not more than 4,500 strong[112]. They were encamped at

Pozo Blanco and at Almaden, the mining town on the Alcudia, where the

frontiers of Estremadura, Andalusia, and La Mancha meet. This place

lies near the northern exit of the two passes, the Puerto Blanco and

Puerto Rubio which lead down from La Mancha on to Cordova, the one

by Villaharta, the other by Villanueva de la Jara and Adamuz. Both

are difficult, both pass through a desolate and uninhabited country,

but either of them might conceivably serve for the passage of an

army. Sixty miles east of Almaden was the main body of the rallied

Army of the Centre, occupying the group of passes which lie around

the high-road from Madrid to Andalusia. Head quarters were at La

Carolina, the central point upon which the routes from most of these

passes converge. About 13,000 men were disposed in front, covering

the main \_chaussée\_ through the Despeña-Perros, and the side defiles

of the Puerto del Rey and the Puerto del Muradal. Here Areizaga had

concentrated the remains of the divisions of Zayas, Castejon, Giron

and Lacy, of which the last two were mere wrecks, while the two

former counted about 4,000 bayonets apiece. Finally, some fifteen

miles off to the right, the remnants of the divisions of Vigodet and

Jacomé, perhaps 6,000 men in all, covered the two easternmost passes

from La Mancha, those of Aldea Quemada and Villa Manrique, which

descend not upon La Carolina, but on Ubeda and Linares, the towns at

the headwaters of the Guadalquivir in the extreme north-eastern angle

of the Andalusian plain. Areizaga’s artillery was all in the passes,

placed in the various new entrenchments which were being thrown up.

His cavalry had for the most part been sent back to recruit and

reform itself in the interior of the province, being useless in the

mountains.

[112] The papers in the Madrid archives show that Copons had

about 3,000 men, Zerain (whose division had been almost entirely

destroyed) about 1,500.

The mere description of this disposition of forces is sufficient to

show the hopeless condition of the defence of Andalusia. Areizaga

was trying to cover every possible line by which the French might

advance, with the result that his army and that of Albuquerque were

strung out on a front of 150 miles, and could not concentrate 15,000

men on any single point. The passes which they were trying to guard

were not only numerous, but in several cases very practicable,

where roads lay not between cliffs or precipices, but over slopes

which could be ascended by infantry on each side of the pass. The

fortifications and the troops holding them could be turned by enemies

who took the trouble to climb the side acclivities. It was clear that

if the French chose to attack the Sierra Morena with no more than the

60,000 men who had been concentrated after the battle of Ocaña, they

could bring an overwhelming force to bear on any one or two of the

passes which they might select, while leaving the garrisons of the

rest alone, or threatening them with trifling demonstrations. If

the enemy should choose to strike by Almaden at Cordova, the Spanish

centre and right wing would be cut off from their retreat on Seville,

and would have to take refuge in the kingdom of Murcia. If the

Despeña-Perros and its neighbours should turn out to be the selected

objective, Areizaga’s right wing must suffer the same fate. And, if

driven from the passes, the army would have to encounter, in the

broad plain behind, the overpowering force of French cavalry which

King Joseph could bring up. The problem set before the defence was

a hopeless one, and most of the generals under Areizaga were aware

of the fact--as indeed were the rank and file. Disaster was bound to

follow if the enemy managed his business with ordinary prudence.

[Illustration: \_Spanish Infantry 1808\_

(\_Showing the old Bourbon uniform\_)]

SECTION XVIII: CHAPTER II

THE CONQUEST OF ANDALUSIA. KING JOSEPH AND HIS PLANS

When considering the action of the French after the victory of

Ocaña, it is necessary to remember that King Joseph and Soult were

not in the position of ordinary invaders, who have just succeeded in

demolishing the last army of their enemy. In wars of a normal type

the victor knows that the vanquished will sue for terms when further

resistance appears hopeless; he proceeds to dictate the cessions of

territory or payments of indemnities that he thinks proper, as the

price of peace. But it was not a profitable treaty which Napoleon

desired: he had put it out of his own power to end the war in such a

fashion, when he declared his brother King of Spain. For him there

was no Spanish government in existence save that which he had set up

at Madrid: the Central Junta, and the Cortes when it should meet,

were mere illegal assemblies, with which he could not deign to enter

into negotiations. It was now perfectly clear that the Spaniards

would never submit of their own accord. Their position in December

1809, desperate as it might be, was no worse than it had been in the

March of the same year. Areizaga’s army had suffered no more at Ocaña

than had those of Cuesta and Cartaojal nine months before, on the

disastrous fields of Medellin and Ciudad Real. Indeed, there were

probably more men actually in line to defend Andalusia in December

than there had been in April. Moreover, in the early spring Soult had

been in the full career of conquest in Portugal, and nothing save

Cradock’s insignificant force appeared to prevent his onward march

to Lisbon. At mid-winter, on the other hand, the flank of Andalusia

was covered by Wellington’s victorious army, and by the reorganized

Portuguese host of Beresford. If the Junta had refused to listen to

the insidious advances of Sotelo in April[113], there was no reason

to suppose that it would lend a ready ear to any similar advocate of

submission in December. Indeed, its every action showed a resolve to

fight out the losing game to the end.

[113] See vol. ii. pp. 168-9.

Joseph Bonaparte would never be King of Spain till every province was

held down by French bayonets. Not only must each corner of the land

be conquered, but after conquest it must be garrisoned. For, where

there was no garrison, insurrection burst out at once, and the weary

process of pacification had to be repeated.

It was this last fact that restrained King Joseph from following up

his pursuit of the wrecks of the Spanish army to the Sierra Morena,

and the gates of Seville, on the morning after Ocaña. To make up

the host that had defeated Areizaga, and the other smaller force

that was dealing with Del Parque in Leon, the King had been forced

to concentrate all his divisions, and the consequence had been that

the control of the broad tracts behind him had been lost. We have

already had occasion to mention[114] that throughout Old Castile and

Leon, the open country was now in the hands of the guerrilleros,

who had been growing in force and numbers ever since the time of

Talavera, and had risen to the height of their confidence after the

day of Tamames, and Del Parque’s repeated occupation of Salamanca.

Navarre, and many parts of New Castile were equally disturbed, and

Aragon, which Suchet had tamed during the autumn, was beginning

once more to move. There were no French troops in the disturbed

regions save scanty garrisons at Burgos, Valladolid, Benavente,

Avila, Segovia, Guadalajara, Palencia, Tudela, Tafalla, and a few

other strategic points. These were cut off from each other, and from

Madrid, save when a governor sent out his messenger with an escort

many hundreds strong, and even such a force had often to fight its

way through half a dozen bands before reaching its destination. The

garrisons themselves were not always safe: so powerful were the

bands of some of the guerrillero chiefs that they aspired to waging

regular war, and did not confine themselves to blocking the roads, or

intercepting couriers and convoys. The Empecinado, whose sphere of

activity lay on the borders of Old and New Castile, got possession

of Guadalajara for a day, though he retired when reinforcements

from Madrid were reported to be approaching. Somewhat later, the

younger Mina--‘the Student,’ as he was called to distinguish him

from his more celebrated uncle Espoz, stormed the town of Tafalla,

and shut up the remains of its garrison in its castle, while the

flying-columns of the governor of Navarre were seeking him in every

other direction. He too, like the Empecinado, had to seek safety in

retreat and dispersion, when his exploit drew in upon him forces sent

from Suchet’s army of Aragon.

[114] See page 83.

The activity of the guerrilleros did not merely constitute a military

danger for King Joseph. It affected him in another, and an equally

vexatious, fashion, by cutting off nearly all his sources of revenue.

While the open country was in the hands of the insurgents, he could

raise neither imposts nor requisitions from it. The only regular

income that he could procure during the later months of 1809 was

that which came in from the local taxes of Madrid, and the few other

large towns of which he was in secure possession. And save in the

capital itself, his agents and intendants had to fight hard with the

military governors to secure even this meagre pittance[115]. The

King could not command a quarter of the sum which he required to pay

the ordinary expenses of government. His courtiers and ministers,

French and Spanish, failed to receive their salaries, and the Spanish

army, which he was busily striving to form, could not be clothed

or armed, much less paid. Nothing vexed Joseph more than this: he

wished to make himself independent of his brother’s generals, by

raising a large force of his own, which should be at his personal

disposition. He formed the \_cadre\_ of regiment after regiment, and

filled them with deserters from the foreign troops of the Junta, and

with any prisoners who could be induced to enlist under his banners

in order to avoid transportation to France. But the recruits, when

sent to join the new regiments, disappeared for the most part within

a few weeks. Joseph thought that it was from lack of pay and proper

sustenance, and raged at the idea that, but for the want of money,

he might have at his disposition a formidable army of his own. But he

deceived himself: the ‘juramentados’ had for the most part no desire

save to desert and rejoin their old colours: the real renegades were

few. In the ranks of the Junta’s army the soldier was even worse

clothed, fed, and paid than in that of Joseph. No amount of pampering

would have turned the King’s Spanish levies into loyal servants.

[115] For a typical example of the relations of French governors

and the King’s officials see Thiébault’s account of his quarrel

with Amoros in his autobiography, iv. 350-5. Cf. Miot de Melito,

chapters xi-xii of vol. ii.

Pending the reduction to order of the country-side of the two

Castiles, which he vainly hoped to see accomplished during the next

six months, Joseph found only one expedient for raising money. It was

a ruinous one, and could not be repeated. This was the confiscation

of property belonging to all persons who were in the service of

the Junta, and of all the religious orders. This would have given

him vast sums, if only he could have found buyers. But it was not

easy to persuade any one to pay ready cash for lands overrun by

the guerrilleros, or for houses in towns which were practically in

a state of siege, and were also subject to a grinding taxation.

Property of immense value had to be alienated for wholly inadequate

sums. The \_afrancesados\_, whom Joseph was most anxious to conciliate,

got such payment as he could afford, mainly in the form of vain

grants of property which they could not turn to account. The only

ready money which was in circulation was that which came from the

coining down, at the Madrid mint, of the considerable amount of

plate belonging to the monasteries and the churches on which the

King had laid hands. Naturally, he was regarded as a sacrilegious

robber by his unwilling subjects--though few, or none, murmured when

the Central Junta filled its exchequer by similar expedients. But

the Junta had not decreed the abolition of the religious orders--it

only purported to be raising a patriotic loan from their resources.

A minister of Joseph sums up the situation sufficiently well in

three sentences. ‘Spanish public opinion was inexorable: it rejected

everything coming from us--even benefits: thus the King and his

councillors spent themselves in fruitless labours. Nothing answered

their expectations, and the void in the Treasury, the worst danger,

showed no sign of diminution. On the contrary, the financial distress

increased every day, and the unpleasant means which we were compelled

to employ in order to supply the never-ceasing wants of the army

completely alienated the nation from us[116].’

[116] Miot de Melito, ii. p. 351.

The orders issued by the King and Soult after the battle of Ocaña,

show that they had no immediate intention of pursuing Areizaga’s

routed host, and entering Andalusia at its heels--tempting though

such a policy might be from the purely military point of view. After

Victor and the 1st Corps had joined him, on the day following the

battle, Joseph had nearly 60,000 men in hand. But his first move was

to disperse this formidable army: Gazan’s division of Mortier’s corps

was at once hurried off towards the north, to reinforce Kellermann in

Leon--for the battle of Alba de Tormes had not yet taken place, and

it was thought that the 6th Corps needed prompt assistance. Laval’s

division of Sebastiani’s corps was detached in another direction,

being told off to escort to Madrid, and afterwards to Burgos and

Vittoria, the vast mass of prisoners taken at Ocaña. Milhaud, with

his own dragoons, and an infantry brigade taken from Sebastiani’s

corps, was directed to push eastwards by way of Tarancon, and then

to march on Cuenca, where it was reported that many of the fugitives

from Areizaga’s army had rallied. The brigade of Dessolles’ division

which had been present at Ocaña and Joseph’s own troops returned to

Madrid, in company with their master. When the capital was again

adequately garrisoned, numerous flying-columns were sent out from

it, to clear the roads, and disperse the guerrilleros. Mortier, with

that part of the 5th Corps which had not been detached under Gazan,

was drawn back to Toledo. Thus of all the troops which had been

concentrated on November 20th, only Victor’s corps and the Polish

division, with the cavalry brigade of the 4th Corps, were retained in

La Mancha, facing the Sierra Morena. The 1st Corps was pushed forward

to Ciudad Real and its neighbourhood, with its advanced cavalry

watching the passes. The Poles remained at Ocaña and La Guardia,

with Perreymond’s three regiments of light horse in front of them at

Madridejos[117].

[117] For all these details see Soult’s dispatches to the

Minister of War at Paris, dated Nov. 21 and Nov. 24, from

Aranjuez and Madrid. Perreymond had received the cavalry brigade

of the 4th Corps when Paris fell in action.

In the dispatch which detailed to the Minister of War at Paris this

disposition of the army, Soult explained his reasons for holding

back. It was a more pressing necessity to restore order in the

provinces of the interior than to pursue the wrecks of Areizaga’s

force, which was so completely dispersed that no further danger

need be feared from it. Before undertaking any large general scheme

of operation, the King thought it best to consult his imperial

brother as to his wishes. It was rumoured that Napoleon himself

might appear on the scene within a few weeks, and it was certain

that the first columns of reinforcements from Germany, which might

prove to be the heralds of his approach, were just about to cross

the Bidassoa. Moreover, it would be prudent to discover what had

become of Albuquerque and of the English, before any great move to

the southward was made, as also to make an end of the army of Del

Parque, by means of the reinforcements which had just been sent to

Kellermann[118].

[118] Soult to Clarke, Nov. 21: ‘Sa Majesté a pensé qu’il était

inutile qu’elle s’engageât vers la Sierra Morena, à la poursuite

des débris de l’armée de la Manche, qu’on ne pourra plus joindre,

et qui se sauvent individuellement sur toutes les directions,

d’autant plus que tout porte à croire qu’il y aura encore des

mouvements sur la droite, et qu’il convient de se mettre en

mesure de repousser les nouveaux corps [Albuquerque, Del Parque,

and the English] qui pourraient se présenter pour la forcer. Il

est aussi pressant de prendre des dispositions pour rétablir

l’ordre et la tranquillité dans les provinces de l’intérieur, et

pour assurer la liberté des communications. Après la bataille

d’Ocaña le roi a aussi en vue de se mettre en mesure d’attendre

que Sa Majesté L’Empereur ait jugé à propos de faire connaître

ses intentions sur les opérations ultérieures qui devront être

faites.’ The entirely false supposition that Albuquerque and the

English were on the move was, as Soult afterwards explained, due

to a dispatch received from Heudelet at Talavera, who sent in an

alarming report that Wellington was expected at Truxillo in a few

days. As to the idea that Del Parque might join Albuquerque, the

Junta had actually given him an order to do so (see page 97), but

he had ignored it, and marched on Salamanca.

Within three weeks the situation had changed, and many of the reasons

which had induced the King and Soult to adopt a waiting policy had

disappeared. On November 28th, as we have already seen, Kellermann

routed Del Parque at Alba de Tormes, though he had not yet received

the succours which Gazan was bringing up to his aid. The Army of the

Left being no longer a source of danger, Kellermann not only sent

orders to Gazan--who had reached Segovia--to return to New Castile,

since he was no longer wanted in the North, but presently sent back

to the King Rey’s brigade of Dessolles’ division which had been lent

him early in November. Thus 10,000 men who had been detached came

back under the King’s control[119], and were once more available for

offensive operations.

[119] At the New Year Gazan had 6,600 men present with the

eagles, Rey 4,100. See Tables at the end of this volume.

Still more important was the fact that in the first days of December

the reinforcements from Germany had at last begun to cross the

Pyrenees, and were arriving in Navarre and Biscay in enormous

numbers. Two strong divisions, commanded by Loison and Reynier and

counting more than 20,000 bayonets, had already appeared, and the

head of the interminable column which followed them had reached

Bayonne. It was certain that at least 90,000 men were on the march,

to fill up the void in Old Castile which had been causing the King

and Soult so much trouble. The roads would soon be cleared, the

isolated garrisons relieved, and the communications with Madrid

made safe. The newly arrived generals had received orders to sweep

every valley on their southward march, and to disperse every band

of guerrilleros[120]. Another possible source of danger, which had

preoccupied the minds of Joseph and his Major-general after Ocaña,

had also been removed. The English had made no forward movement

towards the Tagus; they were reported to be still quiescent at

Badajoz, and rumours (which afterwards turned out to be correct)

had already reached the French head quarters, to the effect that

Wellington was just about to retire into Portugal. Moreover,

Milhaud’s expedition to Tarancon and Cuenca, and the excursions of

the flying-columns sent out from Madrid, had all proved successful.

The insurgents had been dispersed with ease, wherever they had been

met with.

[120] See Orders for Loison (in Napoleon to Berthier of Dec.

9), and for Reynier (in Napoleon to Berthier, Dec. 14), in the

\_Correspondance\_. Reynier was superseded by Lagrange, and sent to

command the 2nd Corps a little later.

Of all the reasons for delay which were valid on November 20th there

was now none left unremoved save the most important of all. The

Emperor had not yet made his intentions known; though pressed to

declare his will by every letter sent by his brother or by Soult,

he gave no answer as to a general plan of campaign. Several of his

dispatches had reached Madrid: they were full of details as to the

troops which he was sending across the Pyrenees, they contained some

advice as to finance, and some rebukes for the King concerning petty

matters of administration[121], but there was no permission, still

less any order, to invade Andalusia or Portugal; nor did Napoleon

deign to state that he was, or was not, coming to Spain in person.

It was only when Joseph received the first dispatch opening up the

matter of the divorce of Josephine[122], that he was able to guess

that, with such an affair on hand, his brother would not set out for

the Peninsula during the winter or the early spring.

[121] The Emperor scolds his brother for not sending to Paris the

flags taken at Ocaña, and for calling Sebastiani’s 3rd Division

‘the Polish division’ instead of ‘the division of the Grand Duchy

of Warsaw!’

[122] In a dispatch dated from the Trianon on Dec. 17.

By the middle of December Joseph had made up his mind that it would

be politic to attack Andalusia without delay. He had won over Soult

to his ideas--the Marshal having now abandoned the plan, which he had

urged so strongly in the autumn, that Lisbon not Seville should be

the objective of the next French advance. It is easy to understand

the King’s point of view--he wished rather to complete the conquest

of his own realm, by subduing its wealthiest and most populous

province, than to do his brother’s work in Portugal, where he had

no personal interest. It is less obvious why Soult concurred with

him--as a great strategist he should have envisaged the situation

from the military rather than the political point of view. Apparently

Joseph had won him over by giving him all that he asked, and treating

him with effusive courtesy: their old quarrels of the preceding

summer had been entirely forgotten. At any rate Soult had now become

the ardent advocate of the invasion of Andalusia, though--as his

predecessor Jourdan tersely puts it--‘the English army being now the

only organized force in a state to face the imperial troops, and its

presence in the Peninsula being the thing that sustained the Spanish

government and gave confidence to the Spanish people, I imagine that

we ought to have set ourselves to destroy that army, rather than to

have disseminated our troops in garrisoning the whole surface of

Spain[123].’ The same thought was in the Emperor’s mind when he wrote

in January--too late to stop the Andalusian expedition--that ‘the

only danger in Spain is the English army; the rest are partisans who

can never hold the field against us[124].’

[123] Jourdan, \_Mémoires\_, p. 294.

[124] Napoleon to Berthier, Jan. 31, 1810--giving directions

which could not be carried out, because the invasion of Andalusia

had begun ten days before the dispatch had been written.

On the 14th of December, 1809, Soult at last made a formal appeal,

in a dispatch to Berthier, for leave to commence the march on

Seville. ‘At no time since the Spanish War began,’ he wrote, ‘have

circumstances been so favourable for invading Andalusia, and it

is probable that such a movement would have the most advantageous

results. I have already informed your Excellency that preparations

would be made for this movement, while we waited for his Majesty to

deign to make known to us his supreme will.’ Soult adds that if only

Loison’s division of the reinforcements may be brought up to Burgos,

and a second division sent to Saragossa, in order to free Suchet for

field service, the invasion can be begun, as soon as the army in New

Castile has completed its equipment and received its drafts.

No direct reply was received to this dispatch, nor to several

subsequent communications, in which Soult and Joseph set forth the

arrangements which they were making, always subject to the Imperial

approval, for concentrating an army for the Andalusian expedition.

Strange as it may appear, it was only in a letter written on January

31, 1810, when the King had already crossed the Sierra Morena, that

Napoleon vouchsafed a word concerning the all-important problem[125].

It is clear that he had ample time to have stopped it, if such

had been his will; the ultimate responsibility, therefore, lay

with him. But he refrained from ordering it, or from approving it,

thus reserving to himself all the possibilities of \_ex-post-facto\_

criticism. Since no prohibition came, Joseph made up his mind to

strike; it was natural that he should be fascinated by the idea

of conquering in person the one great province of Spain which

remained intact. A brilliant campaign, in which he would figure

as commander-in-chief as well as king, might at last convince the

Spaniards of his capacity. He was prepared to play the part of a

merciful and generous conqueror. At the worst the revenues of the

wealthy Andalusia would be a godsend to his depleted treasury.

[125] Soult writes plaintively to Berthier, from Madrid, on

January 1, 1810: ‘Le Roi croit ne pouvoir différer davantage:

ainsi il se met en mesure d’exécuter les dispositions générales

de l’Empereur, lorsque Sa Majesté aura daigné les faire

connaître; et il est vraisemblable qu’avant que la Sierra Morena

soit passée, les ordres, qui out été demandés depuis plus d’un

mois, seront parvenus.’ But the order never came.

Two plans were drawn up for the invasion. The first was more

cautious, and more consonant with the strict rules of strategy. The

second was bolder and promised more immediate results. According to

the first the King was to concentrate his main army in La Mancha, and

to threaten the passes, while two great flanking columns carried out

the preliminary conquest of Estremadura and Valencia. Mortier was to

march with the 5th and 2nd Corps upon Badajoz, to crush Albuquerque,

and to occupy the valley of the Guadiana. Simultaneously Suchet

was to make a push from Aragon into Valencia with the bulk of his

corps, while his place at Saragossa was to be taken by a large force

drawn from the newly-arrived reinforcements from France. Only when

Badajoz and Valencia had fallen, and Suchet and Mortier could advance

parallel with him on either flank, was the King to march against

Seville. The weak point of the scheme was that either Badajoz or

Valencia might make a long resistance; if their garrisons fought like

that of Gerona the central advance on Andalusia might be delayed for

an indefinite time.

The second plan, the one that was adopted, was to leave the 2nd

Corps alone to watch Albuquerque and Estremadura, to order Suchet

to advance against Valencia, but to strike straight at Seville,

without waiting for the completion of either the Estremaduran or the

Valencian operations. In the original draft for this campaign[126],

nearly the whole of the King’s army was to concentrate at Almaden

and Ciudad Real, and from thence to strike straight at Cordova, by

the difficult and little-used passes of the central Sierra Morena.

Meanwhile Sebastiani, with no more than a single infantry division

and Milhaud’s dragoons, was to demonstrate against the main group

of passes in front of La Carolina, along the line of the high-road

from Madrid, so as to distract the attention of the Spaniards from

the real point of attack. More than 50,000 men were to descend

suddenly on Cordova, for the whole of the 1st and 5th Corps,

Dessolles’ Reserve division, the King’s Guard, and Latour-Maubourg’s

dragoons, were to march in a mass by the unexpected route via

Almaden, Villanueva de la Jara, and Adamuz. The Spanish centre would

undoubtedly be broken, and it was probable that Cordova, Seville, and

Cadiz would be carried by the first rush, for Areizaga’s army would

be cut off from them and driven eastward towards Murcia.

[126] It may be found set forth in full in Soult’s dispatch to

Berthier of Jan. 1, 1810.

The plan, an admirable one from the point of view of strategy, had

to be abandoned, for it was found that the country between Almaden

and Cordova was so absolutely barren and uninhabited, and the roads

so bad, that it would be impossible to carry a very large body of

troops across it at mid-winter. It was doubtful whether the passes

were practicable for artillery; it was certain that no food could

be obtained, and the train required to carry rations for 50,000 men

would be so large and heavy that it would probably stick fast in the

mountains.

On January 11, when Mortier, Dessolles, and the rest of the army had

already moved out of their cantonments and taken the road for La

Mancha, the revised draft of the plan of campaign was issued. It was

inferior in unity of conception to the first plan, and did not seem

likely to produce such good results; but it had the merit of being

practicable. By this scheme Victor alone was to march on Cordova,

with the 22,000 men of the 1st Corps: he was to endeavour to take his

artillery with him, but if the passes proved too rough, he was to

send it back by Almaden to join the main army. Mortier, Dessolles,

Sebastiani, Milhaud, and the King’s Reserves were to strike at the

group of passes in front of La Carolina, and to drive the Spaniards

out of them: it was hoped that they would thrust Areizaga’s host

into the arms of Victor, who would be descending into the valley of

the Guadalquivir just in time to meet the enemy retiring from the

defiles. For this operation the King was to take with him rather more

than 40,000 men.

It may be remarked that this plan divided the French army into two

separate columns entirely destitute of lateral communications,

and that, if the Spaniards had been stronger, considerable danger

would have been incurred. Areizaga might have concentrated every

man against one or other of the columns, and have brought it to a

stand, while merely observing the other. But to do so he would have

required a far larger force than he actually possessed: he had, as

we have seen, only 23,000 men under arms, and even if he collected

every available bayonet in one mass, either half of the French army

was strong enough to meet and to beat him. The King, therefore, was

running no real risk when he divided up his troops. As a matter of

fact, Areizaga had made matters easy for the enemy, by splitting his

small and dilapidated host into three sections--Zerain, with 4,500

men only, was on Victor’s road; the head quarters, with 13,000 men,

were at La Carolina opposite the King; Vigodet with 6,000, was far to

the right in the eastern passes[127]. Disaster was inevitable from

the first moment of the campaign.

[127] See for details pages 111-12.

On January 7 King Joseph and Soult moved out from Madrid in the wake

of the columns of Dessolles and the Royal Guard, which had already

started. On the 8th they were at Toledo, on the 11th at Almagro, near

Ciudad Real; here they conferred with Victor, and, in consequence of

his reports concerning the state of the passes in the direction of

Cordova, recast their plans, and adopted the scheme of operations

which has just been detailed. On the following day Victor and his

corps marched from Ciudad Real for Almaden, to carry out the great

turning movement. The main army waited for six days to allow him to

get far forward on his rugged route, and only on the 18th started out

to deliver the frontal attack on the Despeña-Perros and the other

passes in front of La Carolina.

It may be mentioned that Joseph had left behind him to garrison

Madrid the French division of the 4th Corps[128], and not Dessolles’

troops, who had been wont to occupy the capital during the earlier

operations. Both Dessolles’ and Joseph’s own reserves, his Royal

Guard and a strong brigade of his newly-raised Spanish army, joined

in the invasion. Since the German division of the 4th Corps was still

absent, escorting the prisoners of Ocaña, it resulted that Sebastiani

had with him only his Polish division, his cavalry, and some details

sufficient to muster up a total of just 10,000 men. His corps was

never properly reassembled during the whole of the rest of the war,

as some of the regiments which he now left behind never rejoined him

in Andalusia, but were left in garrison in New Castile till 1812, and

practically became part of the ‘Army of the Centre.’

[128] With the exception of the 58th Regiment, which went on with

Sebastiani to the front.

Besides the garrison of Madrid, Joseph left to cover his rear the

whole 2nd Corps, still under the provisional command of Heudelet,

which lay at Talavera and was charged to watch Albuquerque. If the

rumour of the departure of the English from Badajoz were true,

there would be no danger in this quarter. But Joseph was not yet

quite certain that Wellington had retired into Portugal. The only

serious preoccupation which vexed his mind, at the moment when he was

preparing to attack, was the idea that the English might still come

up by Truxillo and join Albuquerque in a raid on Madrid. Heudelet,

the constant purveyor of false information, did his best to scare his

master on January 13, by sending him a report that Wellington was

still at Badajoz with 23,000 men[129]. But later and more trustworthy

news from other quarters, showing that the English army had marched

off for Abrantes long before Christmas, at last set the King’s mind

at rest on this all-important topic.

[129] Heudelet, writing from Talavera on Jan. 13, assured the

King that he had certain information, by English deserters, that

Wellington’s army, 16,000 foot and 7,000 cavalry, was at Merida,

Badajoz, and Elvas on Dec. 31. As a matter of fact, the army had

marched off between Dec. 9 and Dec. 20, and Wellington himself

had retired into Portugal on Christmas Eve. On the day when

Heudelet wrote he and his head quarters were at Vizeu, in the

Beira.

There was nothing to be feared from the west when Wellington had

taken his departure. Albuquerque’s small force was powerless, and if

Del Parque moved down from the Sierra de Francia into the valley of

the Tagus, the 6th Corps could make a corresponding movement. Ney

had now returned to take command at Salamanca, and the confidence

of his troops, shaken somewhat by Marchand’s incapable leadership,

was now restored. Behind Ney and Kellermann were the innumerable

battalions of the new reinforcements from Germany, the head of whose

column had now reached Burgos. The King’s rear, therefore, was well

guarded when he began his great offensive movement against Andalusia.

SECTION XVIII: CHAPTER III

ANDALUSIA OVERRUN: CADIZ PRESERVED. JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1810

On the 19th of January, 1810, the unfortunate Areizaga began to

receive from all quarters dispatches which left him no doubt that

the fatal hour had arrived, and that the whole of his line, from

Villamanrique on the east to Almaden on the west, was about to be

assailed by the enemy. From every point on his front of 150 miles,

his subordinates sent him in reports to the effect that strong

hostile columns had come up, and had thrust in their outposts.

Indeed, Zerain, from his remote cantonment on the extreme left, had

announced that an overwhelming force, coming from the direction of

Ciudad Real, had beaten him out of the town of Almaden as early as

the 15th, and had compelled him to retire towards the south-west,

leaving the direct road to Cordova uncovered. This was, of course,

the corps of Victor, whose flanking movement was already threatening

to cut the line of communication between La Carolina and Seville.

But it would take some days for the 1st Corps to pass the rugged

defiles of the Sierra de Los Pedroches, which lie between Almaden

and the valley of the Guadalquivir. An even more pressing danger

seemed to be foreshadowed from the less-remote right of the Spanish

line, where Vigodet reported, from the pass of Villamanrique, that

he had been driven in to his final fighting position at Montizon, by

a French column marching up from Villanueva de los Infantes. In the

centre, the enemy had advanced to Santa Cruz de la Mudela, where the

roads to all the group of passes about the Despeña-Perros branch off,

but had not yet shown how many of them he intended to use. Areizaga

could not determine whether some of the French movements were mere

demonstrations, or whether every one of them portended a real attack

on the morrow. Zerain was too far off to be helped; but Vigodet’s

demands for assistance were so pressing that the Commander-in-Chief

sent off to his aid, on the night of the 19th, the one division

which he had hitherto kept in reserve at La Carolina, the 4,000

bayonets of Castejon. This left him only three divisions--those of

Zayas, Lacy, and Giron, not more than 9,000 men in all, to defend the

high-road to Madrid and the subsidiary passes on its immediate flank.

[Illustration: ANDALUSIA, to illustrate the Campaign of 1810.]

As a matter of fact, the appearance of the French advanced guards

implied a genuine attack at every possible point of access.

King Joseph had resolved to carry the whole of the defiles by a

simultaneous onslaught on the morning of the 20th. His policy seems

to have been one of very doubtful wisdom, for it would have been

as effective to pierce the Spanish line at one point as at four,

and he could have concentrated an overwhelming force, and have

been absolutely certain of success, if he had launched his main

body at one objective, while demonstrating against the rest. He

had preferred, however, to cut up his army into four columns, each

of which assailed a different pass. Sebastiani, on the extreme

French left, separated by a gap of twenty miles from the main

column, was the enemy who had driven in Vigodet at the opening of

the Villamanrique pass. He had with him the remains of his own 4th

Corps--of which such a large proportion had been left behind in New

Castile,--a body of about 10,000 men[130]. His orders were to force

the defile in his front, and to descend into the plain in the rear of

the Spanish centre, by way of Ubeda and Linares, so as to cut off the

enemy’s retreat towards Murcia, and to envelop him if he should hold

the Despeña-Perros too long.

[130] Viz. by the ‘morning states’ of January 15, in the French

War Office, Sebastiani had: Polish Division, 4,809 men; 58th of

the Line, 1,630 men; Milhaud’s Dragoons, 1,721 men; Perreymond’s

Light Horse, 1,349 men; Artillery and Engineers, 569 men; or a

total of 10,078 sabres and bayonets.

Next to Sebastiani in the French line was a column composed of

Girard’s division of the 5th Corps, the King’s Guards, and the

Spanish regiments in Joseph’s service[131]. It was nearly 14,000

strong, and advanced straight up the Madrid \_chaussée\_, aiming at

the Despeña-Perros and the Spanish centre. If the enemy should fight

well, and if the flanking movements should fail, this column would

have the hardest work before it: for, unlike the minor passes to east

and west, the Despeña-Perros becomes in its central length a narrow

and precipitous defile, easily capable of defence. The Spaniards had

run entrenchments across it, and had mined the road at more than

one point. But its fatal weakness lay in the fact that the by-paths

from the western passes descend into it to the rear of the point

where these obstructions had been placed. If they were seized by the

advancing French, the fortifications across the \_chaussée\_ would

prove a mere trap for the troops which held them.

[131] Strength apparently: Girard, 7,040; Royal Guards, about

2,500; Spaniards, about 2,000; Cavalry, about 1,500; Artillery,

&c., 800.

Mortier, with Gazan’s division of the 5th Corps and Dessolles’

troops, about 15,000 strong, was told off to assail these flanking

defiles on the Spanish left[132]. The two passes are the Puerto del

Rey and the Puerto del Muradal. The former got its name from Alfonso

VIII, who in 1212 had turned the position of the Almohad Sultan

Mohammed-abu-Yakub by this route, and so forced him to the decisive

battle of Navas de Tolosa, a few miles to the rear. In 1810 it was a

tortuous and rough road, but practicable for artillery: the slopes

on either side of it, moreover, were not inaccessible to infantry.

A mile or two to its left, nearer the Despeña-Perros, was the still

rougher path of the Puerto del Muradal, which was practicable for

infantry but not for guns. Between this defile and the entrenchments

across the Madrid \_chaussée\_, the crest of the Sierra was accessible

to troops advancing in loose order and prepared for a stiff climb:

the Spanish engineers had therefore placed a large earthwork on its

culminating point, known as the Collado de Valdeazores. Giron’s

weak division of no more than 3,200 bayonets was entrusted with the

defence both of the Puerto del Rey and the Puerto del Muradal. Those

of Lacy and Zayas, about 5,000 in all, held the Despeña-Perros and

the entrenchments on each side of it. Areizaga lay behind them, with

a reserve of 1,000 men at most--having sent off Castejon and his

division to join Vigodet on the preceding night, he had no more with

him than his personal guard, the ‘Batallón del General’, and some

detached companies.

[132] Gazan’s division, forming the third French column, had

6,414 bayonets; Dessolles’, the extreme right-hand column, 8,354.

Mortier, like the good general that he was, did not confine his

operations to an attack against the narrow fronts of the two passes,

but assailed the rough hillside on each side of them, sending out

whole battalions deployed as skirmishers to climb the slopes. Of

Gazan’s division, one brigade marched against the Puerto del Muradal,

but the other went up, in open order, on the space between the Puerto

and the Spanish redoubt at the Collado de Valdeazores. Similarly,

Dessolles attacked the Puerto del Rey with a few battalions, but sent

the rest up the less formidable portions of the flanking slopes.

Girard and the King’s Reserves, meanwhile, did not press their attack

on the Despeña-Perros, till the troops on their right had already

begun to drive the enemy before them.

The results of these tactics might have been foreseen from the first:

Giron’s 3,200 men, attacked by 15,000, were driven in at a pace that

ever grew more rapid. They could not defend the passes, because the

slopes on each side were turned by the enemy. Their line was broken

in two or three places, and they fled in haste down the rear of

the Sierra, to escape being captured by flanking detachments which

were pushing on at full speed to head them off. The moment that the

Despeña-Perros was turned by Mortier’s movement, the troops occupying

it had to retreat at headlong speed, just as Girard was commencing

his attack on them. All did not retire with sufficient promptness:

the battalion in a redoubt on the Collado de los Jardines, on the

right flank of the high-road, was cut off and captured \_en masse\_.

All the guns in the pass were taken, there being no time to get them

away down the steep road in their rear. After two hours of scrambling

rather than fighting, the main passages of the Sierra Morena were in

the hands of the French. The mines on the high-road had been fired

when the retreat was ordered, but did not wreck the \_chaussée\_ in

such a way as to prevent the enemy from pursuing. The losses of the

Spaniards were no more than a few hundreds killed and wounded, and

500 prisoners; those of the French were less than 100 in all[133].

There had, in truth, been hardly the semblance of a battle.

[133] Soult’s statement that he lost ‘some 25 men’ (Soult

to Berthier, Jan. 21) is no doubt a little exaggerated. But

Martinien’s invaluable tables show that Mortier’s corps, which

did nearly all the fighting, lost only \_two\_ officers out of 549

present, probably, therefore, it lost no more than forty men.

Dessolles must have lost about the same.

The full results of the disaster were only developed next day: the

troops which had defended the central passes escaped, though in

dreadful disorder. But those further to their right were destined

to a worse fate. While Mortier and the King were forcing the great

defiles, Sebastiani had been fighting all day with Vigodet, in the

defiles about Montizon and St. Esteban del Puerto. He had no such

superiority in numbers over his enemy as had the King on the main

field of operations[134], hence his progress was slower, and his

victory, though complete, was not so prompt and crushing. Vigodet

and his 6,000 men were dispersed by the afternoon, and fled down the

valley of the Guadalen towards the plains, with Sebastiani’s cavalry

in pursuit. Having fought much longer than Lacy and Giron, their

losses were heavier than those of the central division--probably

1,000 killed, wounded, or taken. Shortly after, there appeared on

the scene, moving along the steep hill-path from La Carolina, the

Spanish division of Castejon, which had been sent off on the previous

night to support Vigodet. It found the St. Esteban position in the

possession of the French, and turned hastily back to rejoin Areizaga.

But, while it had been on the march, the Commander-in-Chief and his

army had been routed, and La Carolina was in the hands of the French.

Castejon found himself enclosed between Sebastiani and the King, in

a most perilous position. On the morning of the 21st, he tried to

escape by the by-path to Linares, but on arriving near that place

found that Mortier’s troops were already across his road. A brigade

of Sebastiani’s corps was in hot pursuit in his rear, and Castejon,

seeing himself thus enclosed, surrendered at Arquillos, with his

whole intact division of over 4,000 men and ten guns.

[134] Of his whole 10,000 men only 6,400 were infantry, and

Vigodet (with the wrecks of Jacomé’s division) had nearly as many.

Already, before the capture of this Spanish corps, the King and

Sebastiani had joined hands, their reconnoitring parties having met

in the valley of the Guadalen. On learning of the complete success

of both columns, Joseph and Soult resolved to urge the pursuit in

two separate directions. Sebastiani was told to push forward by

way of Ubeda and Baeza to Jaen, while the main column marched by

Baylen on Andujar and Cordova. It was hoped that news of Victor would

soon be received: if all had gone well, he would have reached the

Guadalquivir somewhere in the neighbourhood of Cordova, so as to be

in the rear of any Spanish force that might have retreated from La

Carolina in the direction of Seville.

As a matter of fact, however, both Vigodet and also Areizaga with the

wreck of the troops from the central passes, had abandoned any hope

of covering Seville, and had retreated southwards on Jaen. There was

no force whatever left upon the Cordova road, and the King met no

resistance upon the 22nd or the 23rd. On the latter day Sebastiani,

arriving in front of Jaen, found the Spanish commander-in-chief with

some 7,000 or 8,000 men prepared to defend the town. He attacked at

once, and routed these dispirited troops, who made little or no show

of resistance. Practically the whole force went to pieces: the French

captured forty-six guns, mostly those of the reserve-park of the Army

of Andalusia, which had been deposited in Jaen. Of the wrecks of that

unhappy force, Areizaga carried off a small remnant to Guadix in the

eastern mountains, near the borders of Murcia. Lacy, with another

fraction, retired on Granada. But the large majority had left their

colours, and dispersed to their homes.

King Joseph and Soult meanwhile, advancing unopposed along the

high-road to Cordova and Seville, got into touch at Andujar with

the advanced cavalry of Victor on the night of the 22nd of January.

The march of the 1st Corps had been toilsome in the extreme, but

almost unopposed save by the difficulties of the road. After driving

Zerain’s little detachment out of Almaden on the 15th, they had

hardly seen an enemy. Zerain and his colleague Copons had retired by

the road towards Seville south-westward. Victor, though he sent out

flying parties of cavalry to threaten Benalcazar and Hinojosa, to

his right, had really pushed further to the left, on the easternmost

of the two rough passes which lead to Cordova. The day after

leaving Almaden he had sent his artillery back to La Mancha, the

dilapidated and abandoned road to which he had committed himself

proving absolutely impracticable for anything that travelled on

wheels. But he pushed on with his infantry and horsemen, and passing

Santa Eufemia, Torrecampo and Villanueva de la Jara, came down into

the plain of the Guadalquivir at Adamuz, fifteen miles to the east

of Cordova, on January 21st, the day after Soult and King Joseph

had forced the Despeña Perros and the Puerto del Rey. Wishing to

get into touch with them before attacking Cordova, he halted his

infantry, but sent out his cavalry to the gates of that city on the

one side, and on the other to Montoro and Andujar, where they met

the vedettes of the main army on the evening of the 22nd. Thus the

French host was once more concentrated: the march on Seville could

be continued without delay. Victor now became the advanced guard: he

entered Cordova, which opened its gates without resistance, on the

24th. There was no Spanish force in front of the French army, since

Zerain and Copons had retired towards Seville by a road far to the

west, while the wrecks of Areizaga’s army had been driven off in a

south-easterly direction.

Soult and King Joseph, therefore, had leisure to plan out the

remainder of their campaign without any disturbance from the enemy.

On the 25th[135] they resolved to detach Sebastiani and his 10,000

men for the conquest of Granada, to leave Dessolles’ division at

Cordova and Andujar, but to march on Seville in a single mass with

the remaining 50,000 sabres and bayonets of the Army of Andalusia.

The desire to seize the capital from which the Junta had so long

defied him, seems to have mastered every other idea in the mind of

the intrusive King. The rebel government should be captured, or at

least forced to take refuge in Portugal or the sea. Then at last

the provinces would submit, the regular armies would lay down their

arms, the guerrillero bands would disperse to their homes, and he

might reign as a real king, not as the mere tool of his imperious

brother. The capture of Seville would be the last act but one of

the drama: after that he would become the national monarch of a

submissive people, and carry out all the schemes of vague benevolence

on which his mind was wont to dwell in his more hopeful hours. That

the resistance would continue, even if Seville were his own and the

Junta were scattered and discredited, he did not dream. And Seville,

he knew, must fall; to defend it there could be, as he concluded,

nothing but a half-armed mob, backed by the few thousand dispirited

soldiers who had fled before Victor from the western section of

the Sierra Morena. Even if the rebel capital made itself a second

Saragossa, he had at his disposal an army double the strength of that

which had reduced the obstinate Aragonese city.

[135] For details of their plans see the dispatch of Soult to

Berthier, from Andujar under the date of that day.

In subsequent years critics, wise after the event, never tired of

declaiming against the policy which Joseph and Soult approved on

January 25, 1810. It was easy in 1811 or 1812 to point out that a

division or two might have been spared from the victorious army to

execute a march upon Cadiz, while the main force was dealing with

Seville. The island-fortress, which was to defy the French during

the next three years, might have been caught while it was still

ungarrisoned and panic-stricken, if only the invaders had detached

a column from Carmona, where the road from Cordova bifurcates to

Seville on the right and Cadiz on the left. It is certain that,

if any suggestion to that effect was made at the time, Soult,

Mortier, and the other generals present at the council of war passed

it over[136]. The fact was that Seville loomed large before the

imaginations of them all: Cadiz seemed but a secondary affair at

the moment. It appeared probable that the whole of the scattered

forces of the enemy would mass themselves to defend the insurgent

capital. On January 25th, when the original plan was drawn up, no one

realized that there was a Spanish army approaching, whose presence

in Andalusia had not yet become known, or that the general of that

army would deliberately leave Seville to its fate, as incapable of

defence and doomed to destruction, and hasten by forced marches to

throw himself into the island-city which was destined to become the

new capital of insurgent Spain. Unable to foresee such a development,

Joseph wrote to his brother on January 27 that Seville would probably

submit without fighting, and that he would then enter Cadiz ‘\_sans

coup férir\_.’

[136] There was a considerable controversy among French military

writers as to whether the omission to march on Cadiz was the

fault of Soult or of the King. The authors of \_Victoires et

Conquêtes\_, having put all the blame on the latter (vol. xx. page

7), his friends hastened to reply. His aide-de-camp Bigarré,

who was present with him at the time, explicitly says in his

autobiography (pp. 265-6) that the King raised the point, but

was talked down by Soult and Dessolles. Miot de Melito (ii. 385)

bears witness to the same effect, saying that he heard Soult

clinch his argument by crying ‘Qu’on me réponde de Séville, moi

je réponds de Cadix.’ Both say that the final decision was made

at Carmona. See also Ducasse’s \_Correspondance du roi Joseph\_,

vii. 142-3, and x. pp. 395-6, where the same story is given by

the King himself.

Albuquerque’s operations, which ultimately turned out to be the

most important section of the Andalusian campaign, need a word of

explanation. It will be remembered that, early in January, he had

assembled, at Don Benito and Medellin, the small field-force that he

could command, after providing the garrison of Badajoz and leaving a

detachment above Almaraz to watch the French 2nd Corps. It did not

amount to more than 8,000 men, of which some 1,000 were cavalry. His

position at Don Benito was intended to protect the flank of Zerain

and Copons, who lay to his right, covering the passes that lead from

Almaden on to Cordova. On January 15th he received from Zerain the

news that he was about to be attacked at Almaden by a French column

of at least 20,000 men. The Duke promptly began to march eastward to

join his colleague, and reached Campanario on January 16th. Here he

was met by the information that Zerain had been driven out of Almaden

on the preceding day, and had drawn back by Benalcazar and Hinojosa

on to the Seville road. Copons from Pozo Blanco was retiring in the

same direction. The Duke thereupon concluded that his duty was to

fall back by a route parallel to that of Victor’s advance, and to

draw nearer to Seville, strengthening himself as he approached that

city by Zerain’s and Copons’ small corps.

Accordingly he sent off three of his weakest battalions to strengthen

the garrison of Badajoz, which was very small at the moment, directed

his artillery (with a cavalry escort) to take the good but circuitous

high-road to Seville by Merida, Los Santos, and Santa Olalla, and

started off across the mountains with his infantry and 500 horse.

Marching very rapidly, though the roads were bad and the days short,

he moved by Zalamea and Maguilla to Guadalcanal, on the borders

of Andalusia, which he reached on January 18th. Here he received

from the Central Junta an absurd order, apparently based on the

idea that he was still at Campanario, which bade him stop Victor’s

advance, by falling on his flank and rear by the road to Agudo and

Almaden. But since the marshal had seized Almaden on the 15th, and

was known to have moved southward from thence, it was clear that he

must now be more than half-way to Cordova: if the Army of Estremadura

plunged back into the mountains to seek Agudo and Almaden, it would

only reach them on the 22nd or 23rd, and Victor would be at the

gates of Cordova on the 21st. The Junta’s order was so hopelessly

impracticable that the Duke took upon himself to disobey it, and

wrote in reply that he should move so as to place himself between

Victor and Seville, and would cover the Andalusian capital ‘so far as

was possible with the small force at his disposition.’

Accordingly Albuquerque, instead of returning northward into the

Estremaduran mountains, moved a stage further south, to El Pedroso,

on the road from Guadalcanal to Seville, and sent orders to Copons

and Zerain to join him with their small divisions. Two days later

he received the order which should have been sent him on the 18th,

instead of the insane directions that were actually given; by it

he was directed to march on Seville with all speed. On the 23rd,

therefore, he arrived at the ferry of Cantillana, twenty miles

north of Seville: here he received news that his artillery and its

escort had safely completed its round, and were about to cross the

Guadalquivir at Rinconada, fifteen miles to the south. At Cantillana,

however, the Duke got the last dispatch which the Central Junta ever

issued; it was dated on the 23rd, a few hours before the members

dispersed and fled. By this he was directed to march not on Seville

but on Cordova, which at the moment the document came to hand--the

morning of the 24th--had just been occupied by Victor.

That day Albuquerque crossed the Guadalquivir and occupied Carmona,

where he was joined by his artillery, and by part of Copons’

division, but not (apparently) by Zerain’s, which had retired into

Seville. He had now about 10,000 men, of whom 1,000 were horsemen,

and 20 guns. From Carmona he threw out a cavalry screen on all

sides: his vedettes on the 27th struck French cavalry at Ecija,

and were driven in; they reported that the enemy was advancing

in enormous force from Cordova--as was indeed the case. Meanwhile

news had come up from Seville that the Junta had fled on the night

of the 23rd-24th, that anarchy reigned in the city, and that a new

revolutionary government had been installed. There was no longer any

legitimate executive from which orders could be received. Albuquerque

had to make up his mind whether he would retire into Seville, and

put himself at the disposition of the mob and its leaders, or

whether he should seek some safer base of operations. Without a

moment’s hesitation he resolved to leave the Andalusian capital to

itself, and to retire on Cadiz, which he knew to be ungarrisoned,

yet to be absolutely impregnable if it were properly held. This wise

resolution, it may be said without hesitation, saved the cause of

Spain in the south. If Cadiz had been left unoccupied there would

have been no further resistance in Andalusia.

But we must return to the operations of the French. On the 25th

Victor had advanced from Cordova, taking the direct road to Seville

via La Carlota and Ecija, while Mortier and the Royal Guard followed

him at short intervals. The Duke of Belluno occupied Ecija on the

27th and Carmona on the 28th. On these two days his advanced guard

got into contact with Albuquerque’s cavalry screen, and learnt from

prisoners that the Army of Estremadura, whose presence in Andalusia

thus became known, was in front of them[137]. On reaching Carmona

Victor obtained the still more important news that Albuquerque, after

staying in that place for two days, had not retired into Seville,

as might have been expected, but had marched southward to Utrera on

the road to Cadiz, leaving the greater city uncovered. On the night

of the 29th the leading division of Victor’s corps, the dragoons of

Latour-Maubourg, appeared in front of Seville, and reported that

works were being hastily thrown up around it on all sides[138], and

that they had been fired on by masses of armed irregulars at every

point where they had pushed forward vedettes towards its suburbs[139].

[137] See Soult to Berthier, from Carmona, Jan. 31.

[138] Soult, in his dispatch of Jan. 31, says that the advanced

guard of the 1st Corps appeared before Seville \_hier au soir\_,

i. e. on the 30th. But the Spanish authorities give the evening

of the 29th as the true date, and seem to be correct. Possibly

Soult is speaking of the first solid force of infantry, and

does not count the cavalry as a real advanced guard, but only

as a reconnoitring force. As Latour-Maubourg was at Carmona on

the 28th, it seems certain that he must have reached Seville

(eighteen miles only from Carmona) on the 29th, not the 30th.

[139] Napier (ii. 298) seems unjust to the arrangements of the

King and Soult when he writes: ‘From Andujar to Seville is only

100 miles, and the French took ten days to traverse them, a

tardiness for which there appears no adequate cause.’ He then

attributes it to King Joseph’s wish to make spectacular entries,

and to display his benevolence to the Andalusian towns. But the

facts are wrong. Joseph reached Andujar late on Jan. 22; Victor’s

cavalry was in front of Seville on Jan. 29: this makes seven,

not ten, days: and the distance by the direct road via Ecija and

Carmona is not 100, but 130 miles. A rate of eighteen miles a day

is no bad record for an army advancing through a hostile country,

even if it is meeting with no actual resistance. And January days

are short, with sunrise late and sunset early.

Seville was at this moment, and had been now for six days, in a state

of chaos. The Central Junta had absconded on the 23rd, taking along

with it both its Executive Committee and the Ministers of State.

The panic had begun on the 18th, when the news had come in that

Victor’s corps had thrust Zerain out of Almaden three days before,

and was marching on Cordova. It had grown worse two days later, when

Areizaga reported that another French army was marching against the

Despeña-Perros. The Junta published a proclamation on the 20th,

exhorting the Andalusians to have no fear, for Albuquerque had been

directed to fall on Victor’s flank, and Del Parque with the Army of

Castile was on the march to join him, so that the enemy would be

forced to turn back to guard himself. Such orders were indeed sent,

but any man of sense could see that they must arrive too late. If

Victor was at Almaden on the 15th, he might be at Cordova on the

21st: if King Joseph was at the foot of the passes on the 19th, he

might be across them on the 20th. What use, therefore, would be a

summons sent to Albuquerque in Estremadura, or to Del Parque in the

mountains between Bejar and Ciudad Rodrigo? The French would be

in the valley of the Guadalquivir long before Del Parque had even

received his orders to move. As a matter of fact, that general got

his dispatch on January 24, the day that Victor entered Cordova, and

even Albuquerque was informed of the Junta’s behests only on the

18th, when he reached Guadalcanal.

The obvious ineptitude which the Government had shown, and the

imminent peril to which Seville was exposed, gave another chance

to the local conspirators, who had already twice prepared a

\_pronunciamento\_ against the Junta. On the 22nd riots broke out, and

demagogues were preaching at every street corner the necessity for

deposing these incapable rulers, and substituting for them a regency

of true patriots, and a Committee of Public Safety, which should

show the energy in which the Junta had been so lacking. The people

clamoured at the doors of the Arsenal, asking for muskets and cannon,

they mustered outside the prisons where Palafox, Montijo, and other

chiefs who had been arrested for their earlier plots, were still

confined. Many of the members of the Junta left Seville on this and

the following day, on the plausible pretext that it was necessary for

them to betake themselves to Cadiz--which, by a decree of Jan. 13,

had been designated as the meeting-place of the approaching National

Cortes--in order to make preparations for the meeting of that august

assembly. Indeed, the Junta had been directed to meet at Cadiz on

February 1 for that purpose. The news that King Joseph had forced the

passes of the Sierra Morena, which came to hand early on the 22nd,

sufficed to make an end of any shadow of power which the Junta still

possessed. Next day those members who had hitherto stuck to their

post, and the Ministers, left the town with elaborately contrived

secrecy. Seville fell into the hands of the mob, who, led by a

Capuchin friar riding on a mule and brandishing a crucifix, burst

open the prisons and the Arsenal, armed themselves, and nominated

a new ‘Supreme National Junta.’ Its executive was to be composed

of Palafox and Montijo, the Marquis of La Romana, General Eguia,

and Francisco Saavedra, an aged and respectable person, who had

been president of the old Junta of Seville, the original committee

which had been suppressed by the Central Junta. He is said to have

been used as a mere tool by Palafox and Montijo, and to have been

disgusted by their acts. This new, and obviously illegal, Government

issued decrees stigmatizing the fugitive ‘Centralists’ as cowards

and traitors, and claiming authority not only over Andalusia, but

over all Spain. They ordered the calling out of the levy \_en masse\_,

and issued commissions displacing generals and governors in all the

provinces. One of these documents declared Del Parque removed from

the command of the Army of the Left, and named La Romana as his

successor. The marquis, glad to escape from the tumult, rode off

at once, presented himself at the head quarters of the Castilian

army, and was recognized without difficulty as its chief--though his

authority might well have been contested if any general had chosen to

take up the cause of the discredited Central Junta.

But that unhappy body had no longer a single friend: its members

were mobbed and arrested on their flight from Seville to Cadiz; its

President the Archbishop of Laodicea, its Vice-President the Conde

de Altamira, and the War Minister Cornel were seized at Xeres by a

frantic mob, and would have been murdered, if General Castaños, whom

the Junta had treated so badly in December 1808, had not arrived

in time to save their lives. Twenty-three members reached Cadiz,

and there, by a proclamation dated January 29th, abdicated their

authority, and nominated a Regency, to which they resigned their

power, and the duty of receiving and welcoming the expected Cortes.

The Regents were Castaños, the Bishop of Orense, Admiral Escaño,

Saavedra--the president of the new and illegal Junta at Seville--and

Fernandez de Leon, an American Treasury-official, who was to

represent the Colonies[140]. It will be noted that the nominators

were wise enough to refrain from appointing any of their own number

to serve in the Regency.

[140] After a very short tenure of office Fernandez de Leon was

superseded by Lardizabal, another American.

Meanwhile, the duty of resisting the first shock of the French

advance fell not on the Regency, but on the Revolutionary Government

which had installed itself in power at Seville. These usurpers proved

themselves quite as incapable as the men whom they had superseded.

When once in possession of power, Palafox and his friends had to

count up their resources: they had at their disposal an armed mob

of 20,000 men, and a mere handful of regular troops, consisting of

the regiments which had served as the guards of the late Junta, and

four or five isolated battalions from the division of Zerain, which

had finally sought refuge in Seville. These troops seem to have been

about 4,000 strong at the most[141]. There was an immense quantity

of artillery from the arsenal; it had been dragged out to line the

new earthworks, on which the populace was busily engaged, but not two

hundred trained gunners existed to man the batteries. It was hoped

that Albuquerque’s Estremaduran army would come to their aid, but--as

we have already seen--the Duke deliberately refused to acknowledge

the authority of the Seville Junta, and, instead of falling back upon

the city, marched southwards to Utrera on the Cadiz road, leaving the

great \_chaussée\_ Ecija-Carmona-Seville open to the French.

[141] It is difficult to make out what precisely were the

battalions in Seville on January 23-29. But they certainly

included a battalion of the 1st Walloon Guards [the Junta’s old

guard], with 1st and 2nd of España and Barbastro from Zerain’s

division. It is almost certain that most of Zerain’s other

battalions were with these three.

On the 28th, the leaders of the Junta having taken stock of their

position, and discovered its danger (for the lines which the people

had thrown up would have required 50,000 men to man them, and not

half that force was forthcoming even if every rioter armed with

a musket was counted), copied in the most ignominious fashion

the prudence or cowardice of the Central Junta, which they had

so fiercely denounced five days before. Under the cover of the

night Eguia, Montijo, Saavedra, and Palafox absconded from Seville

without taking leave of their followers. Saavedra fled to Cadiz,

where it is surprising to find that he was made a member of the new

Regency, Palafox to Albuquerque’s camp, Montijo to the southern

mountains, where (as he announced) he was intending to collect an

army of succour for Seville. When, therefore, on the next evening

Latour-Maubourg’s dragoons appeared before the entrenchments of the

city, there was no longer any responsible government to turn the

ardour of the multitude to account. Nevertheless, mobs, headed by

frantic friars, ran to the entrenchments, and discharged musketry and

cannon-shot at every French vedette that showed itself.

On the afternoon of the 30th, Victor appeared to reinforce

Latour-Maubourg’s cavalry, bringing with him the bulk of the

infantry of the 1st Corps. The King, Soult, and Mortier were close

behind[142]. On this day it had been settled at a Council-of-War

held at Carmona that the whole of the army should march on Seville,

leaving Cadiz alone for the present, and detaching only a brigade of

cavalry to pursue the army of Albuquerque. On the next morning Victor

received assurances, from persons who had escaped from the city,

that it was doubtful whether he would be opposed, since the mob was

panic-stricken at the flight of its leaders, and the senior military

officers were convinced that resistance was impossible. Certain that

the defence would be feeble, if any were offered, Soult gave orders

that the 1st Corps should storm the lines on February 1st. But no

military operations were necessary: on the evening of January 31st

the corporation of Seville had sent out a deputation to negotiate for

surrender. They offered to admit the enemy, if they were guaranteed

security of life and property for all who should submit, and a

promise that no extraordinary war-contribution should be levied on

their city. To this the King, who was anxious to enter the place

as a pacific conqueror, without storm or bloodshed, gave an eager

consent. While the civil authorities were treating with Victor, the

small body of regular troops in Seville, under the Visconde de Gand,

quietly left the place by the bridge leading to the western side of

the Guadalquivir, and retreated in haste toward the Condado de Niebla

and the borders of Portugal.

[142] Dessolles’ division had been left behind at Cordova and

Andujar, to garrison Upper Andalusia, and to extend a helping

hand to Sebastiani, if he should meet with any resistance in his

conquest of the kingdom of Granada.

On the afternoon of February 1, Joseph entered Seville in triumph at

the head of his Guard, and lodged himself in the Alcazar, the old

residence of the Kings of Spain. He was welcomed by a deputation

which comprised some persons of mark. The impression made on the

citizens by the conduct of the two Juntas, and the turbulence of

the mob which had ruled during the last eight days, had been so

deplorable that a considerable number of the Sevillians despaired of

the national cause, and rushed to acknowledge the usurper. Indeed,

there were more ‘Josefinos’ found in this city than in any other

corner of Spain. The ‘intrusive king’ released a number of political

prisoners, whom the last Junta had arrested on suspicion of treason.

Apparently this suspicion had been well grounded, as many of the

captives, headed by the Swiss generals Preux and Reding[143], did

homage to Joseph, and accepted office under him.

[143] Younger brother of the victor of Baylen.

Encouraged by these defections to his cause, and by the fact that

deputations had presented themselves from Cordova and Jaen to bespeak

his protection, Joseph hastened to publish an absurd address to his

army, couched in the magniloquent style which all French writers of

proclamations at this time were wont to borrow from their Emperor.

‘The barriers placed by Nature between the North and the South of

Spain have fallen. You have met with friends only beyond the Sierra

Morena. Jaen, Cordova, Seville have flung open their gates.... The

King of Spain desires that between the Pillars of Hercules a third

pillar shall arise, to recall to posterity, and to the navigators of

both the new and the old world, the memory of the officers and men of

that French army which drove back the English, saved thirty thousand

Spaniards, pacified the ancient Baetica, and regained for France her

natural allies.’ The rather puzzling passage concerning the ‘thirty

thousand Spaniards saved’ refers to the prisoners of Ocaña and the

Sierra Morena, whom the French, according to the King, ‘recognized as

brethren led astray by the common enemy. You spared them, and I have

received them as my children.’

Some elation in the King’s language was, perhaps, pardonable at the

moment. The moral effect of the surrender of Seville was considerable

in France, England, and the rest of Europe, though less in Spain than

elsewhere. The tangible trophies of the conquest were enormous--the

place had been the central arsenal of Spain, and the amount of

artillery, ammunition, and warlike equipment captured was very

large. The cannon-foundry and other military factories were taken

over in excellent condition, and kept the French army of Andalusia

well supplied during the three years of its existence. Tobacco to

the value, as it was said, of £1,000,000 was found in the great

central magazine, and quinine, quicksilver, and other commodities of

government monopoly to a considerable additional sum. Nothing had

been done, since the news of the passage of the Sierra Morena had

arrived, to destroy or remove all this valuable state property.

On the day following their entry into Seville, Joseph and Soult

directed Victor to march in pursuit of Albuquerque, and to take

possession of Cadiz. So complete had been the \_débâcle\_ of the

Spanish armies since the Andalusian campaign began, that it seems

to have been supposed that the Army of Estremadura would offer no

serious resistance, even if it should succeed in throwing itself into

Cadiz before it was overtaken. Marching with laudable expedition, the

Duke of Belluno covered the eighty-three miles between Seville and

Cadiz in four days, and presented himself in front of the place on

the evening of February 5th. But Albuquerque, unmolested in his march

from Utrera, had arrived on the 3rd, bringing with him not only his

own troops and those of Copons, but several recruit-battalions picked

up at Xeres, Lebrija, San Lucar, and Puerto Santa Maria, where they

had been organizing. He had some 12,000 men in all, not counting the

civic militia of Cadiz, which had hitherto been its sole garrison.

Cadiz, in the days when the practicable range of the heaviest

artillery did not exceed 2,500 yards, was one of the strongest places

in the world. The town lies on the extreme point of a long sandy

peninsula, which runs out into the sea from the Isla de Leon, a large

island separated from the mainland of Andalusia by the salt-water

channel of the Rio Santi Petri, an arm of the sea varying from 300 to

400 yards in breadth, and flowing through marshes which make access

to its banks very difficult. The Isla, protected by this enormous

wet ditch, has a front towards the continent of about seven miles,

from the naval arsenal of La Carraca at its north end to the Castle

of Santi Petri at its south. Batteries had already been thrown up

at all the commanding points, and Albuquerque had broken the only

bridge, that of Zuazo, which crossed the marsh and the Rio. It would

be impossible to pass the channel save by collecting great quantities

of boats, and these would have to move under artillery fire. Venegas,

the military governor of Cadiz, had already ordered all the vessels,

small and great, of the villages round the bay to be destroyed or

brought across to the city. Moreover, there were a score of gunboats

in the channel, manned from the Spanish fleet, which could be used

to oppose any attempt to cross the Rio. Indeed, naval assistance to

any amount was available for the defence of Cadiz: there were a dozen

Spanish and four English line-of-battle ships in the harbour. All

through the three long years while the French lay in front of the

Isla, no attempt was ever made to throw a force in boats across the

channel: the venture seemed too hazardous.

If, however, Victor had, by some expedient, succeeded in crossing

the Rio, there were two lines of defence behind it, of far greater

strength than that formed by this outer ditch of the Cadiz works.

The triangular Isla de Leon forms with its apex a long sand-spit,

which projects for four miles into the Atlantic. Half way along it

the breadth of the spit is contracted to no more than 200 yards,

and here there was a continuous entrenchment from water to water,

called the Cortadura, or the battery of San Fernando, armed with many

heavy guns. Supposing this isthmus to have been passed, there lies,

two miles further along the sand-spit, the outer enceinte of Cadiz

itself, with a front of not more than 400 yards in breadth, and deep

water on either side.

Cadiz had been captured more than once in earlier wars, but always by

an enemy who could attack from the sea. Neither the Isla de Leon nor

the San Fernando line could be held against an attack supported by a

fleet which came close in shore, and battered the works from flank

and rear, or landed troops behind them. The sea, it may be remarked,

is four fathoms deep to within a short distance (about 300 yards) of

the shore, all along the south front of the Isla and the Isthmus,

so that there was nothing to prevent a fleet coming close to the

works. But against any naval attack Cadiz was, in 1810, absolutely

secured by the predominance of the English fleet. There was no armed

French vessel nearer than Bayonne or Barcelona, nor any possibility

of bringing one round. All that was done by the besiegers in a three

years’ leaguer was to build some gunboats in the northern inlets of

the bay, and these they never dared to bring out into the open water.

The real danger to Cadiz lay not from the sea side, nor on the Isla

front, but from the inner side of the harbour and the east. Here a

long spit of land runs out from beside the town of Puerto Real in

the direction of Cadiz. It is called the Trocadero, from a village

situated on its south-eastern side. At its extreme point is a fort

named San José, while another fort, named San Luis, lies alongside

of the other on a low mud-island. In advance of both, built right in

the marsh, and surrounded by water at high-tide, was a third called

Matagorda. These three forts were the outer defences of the harbour

against a naval attack, and could cross fires with the town batteries

and a castle called Puntales, which lies on the easternmost point

of the isthmus, a mile from the battery of San Fernando. Matagorda

is only 1,200 yards from Puntales, and 3,000 yards from the eastern

point of the city of Cadiz. If the French took possession of it, and

of the neighbouring San José and San Luis, they could bombard the

Puntales castle and all the neighbouring section of the Isthmus,

to the grave danger and discomfort of all who had to pass between

the city and the Isla de Leon. They would also be able to annoy

ships lying in all the eastern reaches of the great harbour. But

before Victor arrived in front of Cadiz, San José, San Luis, and

Matagorda were blown up, with the leave of the governor Venegas, by a

detachment of seamen from the British fleet. There could, therefore,

be no trouble from this direction, unless the enemy succeeded in

restoring and rearming the three forts,--no easy task under the fire

of the Puntales castle and the fleet. It was not till some months

had passed that the struggle began for these ruined works, the only

points from which the defence could be seriously incommoded.

On his first arrival Victor summoned the town, and received a prompt

and angry answer of refusal from the governor and the local Junta.

The marshal inspected the city’s outer defences, and was forced to

report to the King at Seville that it seemed that nothing could

be done against the place till he had brought up heavy artillery,

and built himself boats. Joseph, unwilling to believe anything

that contradicted the hopes of complete triumph that he had been

nourishing ever since the passage of the Sierra Morena, came up to

Puerto Santa Maria, on the bay of Cadiz, looked at the situation,

did not find it reassuring, and wrote to his imperial brother to

propose that he should send out his Toulon fleet to attack the place

on the sea side[144]. Napoleon, still smarting under the memory of

how Admiral Martin had destroyed an important section of that fleet

in the preceding October, ignored this proposal. He did not forget,

though his brother had apparently done so, the fact that the British

Mediterranean fleet was still in existence.

[144] ‘Sire, il paraît que Cadix veut se défendre. Nous verrons

dans quelques jours ce qu’elle fera lorsque nous aurons quelques

batteries montées. Si votre Majesté pouvait disposer de l’escadre

de Toulon, l’occasion pourrait être bonne.’ Joseph to Napoleon,

Sta. Maria, Feb. 18.

Thus the position in front of Cadiz assumed the shape which it was to

maintain for months, and even for years. Victor’s corps could provide

enough men to observe the whole shore of the bay, and to blockade

the garrison. But the Spaniards recovered their courage when they

saw the enemy reduced to inactivity, and began ere long to receive

reinforcements. The first to arrive were 3,000 of the regular troops

which had been at Seville. This corps, under the Visconde de Gand,

had escaped westward after the capitulation, and, though pursued

by a brigade of Mortier’s corps, reached Ayamonte, at the mouth of

the Guadiana, and there took ship for Cadiz. Somewhat later there

arrived some troops sent by Wellington. The Spaniards in their day of

disaster had forgotten their old jealousy about Cadiz, and asked for

aid. Wellington, though loath to spare a man from Portugal, sent them

in the early days of February three British[145] and two Portuguese

battalions from Lisbon, under General William Stewart. So promptly

were these troops shipped and landed, that they arrived at Cadiz

between the 10th and the 15th of February, to the number of about

3,500 bayonets[146]. Thus the town was placed in security from any

\_coup de main\_ on Victor’s part.

[145] 79th, 2nd batt. 87th, and 94th regiments, and the 20th

Portuguese line regiment.

[146] See Wellington to Bart. Frère and General Stewart, from

Torres Vedras, Feb. 5th, and Vizeu, Feb. 27, 1810.

[Illustration: CADIZ AND ITS ENVIRONS.]

The internal situation in Cadiz, however, left much to be desired.

The town had elected a local Junta of defence, of which the governor

Venegas was made President, and this body had frequent disputes

with the new Regency, nominated by the Central Junta at the time

of its abdication, and also with Albuquerque, whom Venegas did not

wish to recognize as his hierarchical superior. The local body could

make a fair show of objections to recognizing the legitimacy of the

Regency: the old Central Junta itself had a doubtful origin, and the

government nominated by those of its members who had taken refuge in

Cadiz could not claim a clear title. But to raise the point at this

moment of crisis was factious and unpatriotic, and the conduct of the

local Junta became merely absurd when it tried to arrogate to itself

authority extending outside its own city, and to issue orders to

the outlying provinces, or the colonies of America. Still worse, it

refused to issue clothing and footgear to Albuquerque’s army, whose

equipment had been worn out by the long march from Estremadura, or

to subsidize the military hospitals, though it had a considerable

stock both of money and of military stores at its disposition. At the

end of February the Regency nominated Venegas Viceroy of Mexico, and

having bought him off with this splendid piece of preferment, made

Albuquerque his successor in the governorship of Cadiz. But even thus

they did not succeed in getting proper control over the city, for the

Junta refused to allow the Duke to place his head quarters within the

walls, or to issue orders to the civic militia. A \_modus vivendi\_

was only reached when the Regents made an ignominious pact with the

local oligarchy, by which the latter, in return for recognizing their

legitimate authority, and undertaking to pay and feed the garrison,

were granted the control of the port-revenues and other royal taxes

of Cadiz, as well as of all the subsidies arriving from America. How

the functions of government became still further complicated, when

the members of the long-expected Cortes began to arrive, and to claim

their rights as the sole legitimate representatives of the nation,

must be told in another chapter[147].

[147] For a scathing account of the conduct of the Cadiz Junta

and its doings see Schepeler, vol. iii. 550-5. Napier very

rightly calls it ‘an imperious body without honour, talents, or

patriotism’ (ii. 334).

Leaving matters at a deadlock in and about Cadiz, we must turn back

to the operations of the French in the outlying parts of Andalusia.

Sebastiani, it will be remembered, had taken Jaen on January 23rd.

He was directed to march from thence on Granada and Malaga, to

scatter the remains of Areizaga’s army, and to subdue the valleys

of the Sierra Nevada and the long sea-coast below them. All this

he accomplished with ease. On the 28th he routed at Alcala la Real

a force composed of some of Areizaga’s fugitives, which had been

joined by Freire and all the cavalry of the Andalusian army. These

regiments, which had been cantoned in the valley of the Guadalquivir,

since they were useless in the passes, had been collected by Freire

to the number of 2,000 sabres. They were routed and dispersed by

Milhaud’s and Perreymond’s dragoons and chasseurs, losing over 500

men and the whole of their artillery. The survivors dispersed, and

retired in small parties eastward, only rallying in the province of

Murcia. That same evening Sebastiani pushed on towards Granada, and

was met by a deputation of its magistrates, who brought the keys of

the city and a promise of submission. The French vanguard entered it

next day. Lacy, who had taken refuge there with the small remains

of his division, retired to Guadix. Sebastiani levied a military

contribution of 5,000,000 reals on the city, placed a garrison of

1,500 men in the Alhambra, and marched with a mixed force on Malaga,

the only place in this quarter where organized resistance showed

itself. Here the local magistrates had been deposed by a popular

rising, and several thousand irregulars had been collected by a

Colonel Abello, a Capuchin friar named Fernando Berrocal, and three

brothers, notaries, of the name of San Millan. They seized the passes

of the Sierra de Alhama, and called all the hill-country to arms.

Sebastiani, marching by Antequera, cleared the passes on February

5th, beat the half-armed insurgent bands outside the suburbs of

Malaga, and stormed the town. He exacted a contribution of 12,000,000

reals, and hung the three San Millans and several other leading

insurgents. After this he extended his troops along the coast, and

occupied Velez Malaga, Motril, and Almunecar. The roads and the

towns were his, but many of the insurgents took to the hills, and

maintained a guerrilla warfare, which never ceased throughout the

next three years. There were always bands on foot in the Alpujarras

and the Sierra de Ronda, though the 4th Corps expended much energy

in hunting them down.

Meanwhile Giron, Lacy, Freire, and the rest of the fugitive generals

had retired eastward. They had now come under the orders of Blake,

who superseded Areizaga and took over charge of 3,000 or 4,000

dispirited men at Guadix on January 30th. He retired at once within

the borders of the kingdom of Murcia. Small parties and stragglers

continued to come in for many weeks, and by March there were 10,000

foot and 1,500 horse collected--all in the worst state of equipment,

and thoroughly demoralized by their late disasters.

We must now turn to the other end of Andalusia: King Joseph, when

departing to inspect the outworks of Cadiz, had left Mortier in

command in this quarter. The Marshal, after hunting the little force

of the Visconde de Gand out of the Condado de Niebla, had been

directed to deal a stroke at Badajoz. Accordingly, leaving a brigade

in Seville and another in the Condado, he marched with one infantry

division and his light cavalry into Estremadura. He reached Olivenza

with 9,000 men, and summoned Badajoz on February 12th, but he had

arrived too late. A considerable Spanish force was now before him,

the old host of Del Parque, which the Central Junta had called down

to the Guadiana when the original Army of Estremadura marched under

Albuquerque to succour Andalusia. How Mortier and La Romana, the

successor of Del Parque, dealt with each other in the months of the

spring must be told in a later chapter[148].

[148] See Section xix, chapter iv of this volume.

The King, meanwhile, spent the months of February and March in a

circular tour through Andalusia, where he affected to perceive

nothing but friendly feeling among the inhabitants. He visited

Ronda, Malaga, Granada, Jaen, celebrating \_Te Deums\_, and giving

bull-fights and banquets. It is certain that a sufficient show of

submission was made to nourish his happy illusions as to the finality

of his conquest. Threats or bribes induced many notables to present

themselves at his receptions, and it seems that a considerable

portion of the Andalusians hoped to save themselves from the rapacity

of the military authorities by professing an enthusiasm for the

King. He, for his part, did his best to protect them--but he was

soon gone, and the native officials whom he appointed were powerless

against Sebastiani, the church plunderer, and Soult, the judicious

collector of works of art. ‘At the very moment when the King was

lavishing assurances and promises,’ writes his devoted servant Miot,

‘and everywhere extolling the thorough disinterestedness of France,

severe and crushing exactions were being laid on the provinces in our

occupation. An iron hand was grinding them to the dust. The King was

powerless to resist the open violation of the promises which he was

daily giving[149].’

[149] Miot, ii. 432. Compare Joseph’s hysterical letter to

the Emperor (Ducasse, vii. 236): ‘La pacification générale de

l’Andalousie sera opérée.... Mais, sire, au nom du sang français

et du sang espagnol rappelez Loison, Kellermann, Thouvenot! Ces

hommes nous coûtent bien cher!’ It is curious that he, in the

same letter, quotes as ‘hommes honnêtes,’ along with Mortier,

Suchet, and Reynier, both Soult and Sebastiani, who were

plunderers on as large a scale as Kellermann or Loison.

Open resistance, however, had ceased, save at Cadiz and in the

inaccessible recesses of the Sierra Nevada. Andalusia had been

subdued from end to end, and neither the King nor Soult yet realized

that a lamentable strategic mistake had been made when 70,000 veteran

troops had been pinned down to garrison the newly conquered realm,

while Portugal and Wellington’s army remained untouched. In their

conception, as in that of the Emperor, the conquest of Portugal was

to be sufficiently provided for by the new reinforcements which were

now pouring over the Ebro, to the number of over 100,000 sabres and

bayonets.

SECTION XIX

THE PORTUGUESE CAMPAIGN OF 1810.

THE PRELIMINARIES: JANUARY-AUGUST 1810

CHAPTER I

THE MILITARY GEOGRAPHY OF PORTUGAL

The continual existence of Portugal down to the present day in

face of the persistent hostility and immensely superior force of

its neighbour Spain seems at first sight to be one of the most

inexplicable phenomena in modern history. It appears all the more

astounding when we remember that the lesser kingdom was once

conquered, and held down for sixty years, by the greater power.

Few states have won back and maintained their independence in such

masterful fashion as did Portugal, in the long ‘War of Independence’

that followed the insurrection of 1640 under the house of Braganza.

But intense national spirit and heroic obstinacy on the part of the

smaller people are not sufficient to account for the survival of the

Portuguese kingdom as a separate entity. Its geography, which at the

first sight seems hopelessly unfavourable to its defence, turns out

on investigation to be eminently suitable for resistance against an

attack from the east. On a first glance at the map it appears as if

Portugal was composed of no more than the lower valleys of three

great Spanish rivers, the Douro, the Tagus, and the Guadiana, so

that the state which owns three-quarters of the course of each of

these streams has but to send down its armies from the uplands of

Leon and New Castile, to conquer the narrow land which lies about

their estuaries. But nothing can be more deceptive than the map, when

the Iberian Peninsula is in question. As we observed in our earlier

volume[150], the rivers of Spain and Portugal are not highways, or

lines of communication, but barriers--torrents sunk in gorges cut

deep below the level of the face of the land. The chief roads, with

few exceptions, avoid, instead of courting, the neighbourhood of

the great streams. The leading routes which descend from Spain into

Portugal in no case follow the lines of the Douro or the Tagus.

Though the coast-plains, which form the heart of the kingdom of

Portugal, its most wealthy and populous regions, lie about the mouths

of those rivers, it is not by descending their banks that conquest

or trade arrives most easily at its goal. As a matter of fact, Spain

and Portugal turn their backs upon each other: the smaller realm

looks out upon the sea; her strength and wealth lie upon the Atlantic

coast: the inland that touches Spain is rugged and unpeopled, in many

parts a mere waste of rock and heath. Nor, on the other hand, do

Leon and New Castile look towards Portugal: the real ports of Madrid

are Valencia and Alicante, not Lisbon, and that not from political

reasons, but simply because those are the points where the sea can

be reached with the minimum of mountain and desert to be passed

through. The way down from the central tableland of Spain to the

Mediterranean is less difficult than the way down to the Atlantic.

Hence comes the fact that the high-roads leading from Spain into

Portugal are so surprisingly few, and that the two main alternative

routes from Madrid to Lisbon run, the one much further north, the

other much further south, than might have been expected. There is not

now, and never has been, any straight road down the Tagus between

the two capitals, obvious though the line looks upon the map. The

two main gates of Portugal are at Almeida and Elvas; at Alcantara,

which appears the natural point of approach, there is but the most

miserable of posterns--as Junot discovered in November 1807, much to

his discomfiture. Marshal Berwick had made the same experience in

1705, during the War of the Spanish Succession[151].

[150] See vol. i. pp. 75, 76.

[151] A student of the War of the Spanish Succession is always

surprised to see how much fighting took place on fronts which

were left severely alone by the English and French in 1809-12.

In the old wars between Spain and Portugal the whole land frontier of

the smaller kingdom was exposed to attacks from the larger. But the

circumstances of 1810 differed from those of 1705 or 1762 or 1801,

in that the subsidiary campaigns in the extreme north and south,

which had always accompanied the main clash along the frontiers of

Beira and Alemtejo, could not on this occasion take place. The French

were no longer in possession of Galicia, from which the Spaniards had

been wont to demonstrate against Oporto, nor, at the other extremity

of the line, had they a firm grip on Huelva, and the Condado de

Niebla, from which alone an attack could be directed against the

remote southern province of Algarve.

Portugal presents three sections of frontier to an invader coming

from the side of Spain. The northernmost, that from the mouth of the

Minho to Miranda-de-Douro, was not within the scope of operations

in 1810. It can only be approached from Galicia; that province was

not subdued, nor had the French any intention of dealing with it

till after they should have dealt with Portugal. An invasion of

the Tras-os-Montes and the Entre-Douro-e-Minho would have been an

objectless operation: they would fall of themselves if once Lisbon

were captured and the English expelled from the Peninsula. A move

against Oporto by some flanking division of the invading army might

have been conceivable, but such an attempt would be made, if made at

all, from the south of the Douro, through northern Beira, and not

through the mountains of the Tras-os-Montes.

There remain two other sections of the Portuguese frontier: the

one from the Douro to the Tagus, and the other from the Tagus to

the Guadiana. Both of these were accessible to the French in 1810,

since they were in possession alike of the plains of Leon and of La

Mancha, and of northern Andalusia. It was open to them to choose one

or the other front for attack, or to attack both at once. Lisbon

being the objective, it was clear that an attack on the northern or

Beira frontier possessed a paramount advantage over an attack on

the southern or Alemtejo frontier. A successful advance north of

the Tagus brings the invader directly to the gates of Lisbon; one

south of the Tagus brings him only to the heights of Almada, where

he is separated from the Portuguese capital by the broad estuary of

the Tagus. Napoleon’s power, like that of the devil in mediaeval

legends, ended at the edge of the salt water; and in face of the

naval strength which the English always maintained at Lisbon, a

victorious French army camped on the heights of Almada would be

almost as far from final success as when it started from Spain. The

1,900 yards of strait which protected the Portuguese capital could

not be crossed. The most that the invader could accomplish would

be to worry the ships in the port, and the lower quarters of the

city, by a distant bombardment, if he could bring up heavy guns from

Spain[152]. For nearly twenty miles inland from Lisbon the estuary of

the Tagus expands into a broad brackish lagoon four to eleven miles

broad, a complete protection against any attack from the east. Only

at Alhandra does this inland sea contract, and for some further miles

northward from that point the eastern bank of the Tagus is formed

by broad salt-marshes (\_lezirias\_) cut up by countless channels of

water, and practically inaccessible. It is only at Salvaterra, thirty

miles north of Lisbon, that the Tagus assumes its ordinary breadth,

and becomes an ordinary military obstacle. From that point upwards

an invader from the Andalusian side might endeavour to cross it,

and it presents no more difficulties than any other broad river.

But, though even Rhines and Danubes may be passed in the face of

an enemy, the operation is not one which a prudent general courts,

and the Tagus is broad, absolutely bridgeless, and fickle in the

extreme in its alternations of high and low water. To fight one’s

way from the valley of the Guadiana in order to meet such a problem

at the end does not seem inviting. And even if the Tagus is passed,

there are still thirty miles of road, including some formidable

defensive positions, between the invader and Lisbon[153]. Yet there

was one contingency under which an advance on the left bank of the

river might be advantageous to the invader, and so possible was this

contingency that Wellington from the very first had declared that

he thought it probable that the French would move troops in that

direction. If the Anglo-Portuguese army were drawn away to the Beira

frontier, between Tagus and Douro, in order to resist a front attack

delivered from the plains of Leon, and if it became involved in an

active campaign somewhere far to the north, on the line of the Coa,

or the Mondego, or the Alva, a subsidiary French force, striking

south of the Tagus from the direction of Spanish Estremadura, might

give dreadful trouble. If it could cross the Tagus anywhere between

Abrantes and Salvaterra, it might get between the Anglo-Portuguese

army and its base, and either fall upon its rear or capture Lisbon.

For this reason Wellington, so far back as October 1809, had made

up his mind that, if the French had an army on foot anywhere in

the direction of Badajoz and Elvas, he must leave a considerable

proportion of his own forces to watch them, and to defend, if need

be, the line of the lower Tagus[154]. As long as the enemy had not

yet subdued Badajoz and the neighbouring fortresses, and while

there was still a strong Spanish army in that quarter, the need for

precaution was not so pressing. Nevertheless, all through the summer

of 1810 Wellington kept Hill with one English and one Portuguese

division at Portalegre, south of the Tagus, though he withdrew this

detachment when Masséna marched on Coimbra. Matters were much more

perilous after the battle of the Gebora and the fall of Badajoz in

February 1811. From that time onward, all through 1811 and 1812,

nearly a third of the Anglo-Portuguese army was kept in the Alemtejo,

first under Beresford, then under Hill, in order to guard against

the possible stab in the back from the French army of Andalusia.

[152] See Map of the Lines of Torres Vedras, in Section xx of

this volume, for the environs of Lisbon.

[153] Eliot, in his very judicious remarks on p. 100 of his

\_Defence of Portugal\_, published just before Masséna’s invasion,

sums up the situation with--‘a passage may without any difficulty

be forced to the left bank of the Tagus: but then the enemy is as

far from the accomplishment of his project as before, the river

forming an insuperable barrier if well defended.’

[154] Wellington to Col. Fletcher, commanding Royal Engineers,

Oct. 20, 1809 (\_Dispatches\_, v. 235): ‘The enemy will probably

attack on two distinct lines, the one south, the other north of

the Tagus, and the system of defence must be founded upon this

general basis.... His object will be, by means of the corps south

of the Tagus, to turn the positions which we shall take up in

front of the corps north of that river, to cut off from Lisbon

the corps opposed to him, and to destroy it by an attack in front

and rear. This can be avoided only by the retreat of the right,

centre, and left of the allies to a point at which (from the

state of the river) they cannot be turned, by the passage of the

Tagus by the enemy’s left corps.’

Six days later (\_Disp.\_ v. 245) Wellington wrote to Admiral

Berkeley in similar terms: ‘It is probable that in the event

of the enemy being enabled to invade this country in force, he

will make his main attack by the right of the Tagus: but he

will employ one corps on the left of the river, with the object

of embarrassing, if not of preventing, the embarcation of the

British army.’

But the attack south of the Tagus was in Wellington’s, and also, we

may add, in Napoleon’s conception[155], only a secondary operation.

The main invasion was almost inevitably bound to take place on the

Beira, not on the Alemtejo frontier. Between Fregeneda, where the

Portuguese border line quits the Douro, to the pass of Villa Velha

on the Tagus there is a distance of somewhat more than 100 miles.

The division between Portugal and Spain does not lie along any

well-marked natural feature, such as a mountain range or a broad

river--though two small sections of the frontier are coincident with

the insignificant streams of the Elga and the Agueda. It is rather

drawn, in a somewhat arbitrary and haphazard fashion, through the

midst of the desert upland, where Spain and Portugal turn their

backs to each other. For the only piece of flat plain-land on the

whole border is that from the Douro to Almeida, a mere ten or twelve

miles, and immediately behind the Coa, only three or four miles

from Almeida, the mountains begin. The rest of the frontier runs

through thinly-peopled, barren highlands, from which the Coa, the

Mondego, the Zezere, and the Ponçul fall away towards Portugal, and

the Agueda and the Alagon towards Spain. The mountains are not,

for the most part, very high--the culminating peak of the Serra da

Estrella is only 6,540 feet--but they are singularly rugged and

scarped, and much cleft by ravines, along whose sides the few roads

crawl miserably, in constant precipitous dips and rises. This broad

belt of upland, one long series of defiles for an invader, is some

hundred miles broad, and does not cease till Coimbra, on the one

side, or Abrantes, on the other, is reached: only then does the

plain-land begin, and the country-side become fertile and thickly

peopled. Only from those points onward is it possible for an army

to live on the local produce: in the upland it must carry its food

with it; for a single division would exhaust in a day the stores of

the poor villages of the mountains; and the small poverty-stricken

towns of Guarda, Celorico, Sabugal, Penamacor, and Idanha have few

resources. Castello Branco and Vizeu are the only two places in the

upland where there is a valley of some breadth and richness, which

can supply an army for many days. In this simple fact lies the

explanation of the difficulties of the Portuguese campaigns of 1810

and 1811. Both the invader and the defender must bring their food

with them, and protracted operations can only be kept up by means

of incessant convoys from the rear. The campaign not infrequently

became a starving-match, and the combatant who first exhausted his

provisions had to retire, and to disperse his divisions in search of

the wherewithal to live. Thanks to Wellington’s providence it was

always the French who were forced to this expedient.

[155] So much so that in \_Corresp.\_, xx. p. 552, we find him

informing Masséna that Badajoz and Elvas need not be touched till

after Lisbon has fallen. The first contrary view, ordering a

demonstration on the Lower Tagus, appears in the dispatch on p.

273 of vol. xxi.

The Beira frontier is divided into two sections by the range of

mountains which crosses the border at right angles, half way between

Douro and Tagus: it is known as the Sierras de Gata and de Jarama

while in Spain, as the Serra da Estrella when it reaches Portugal.

Its central ganglion lies between the high-lying towns of Sabugal

and Penamacor in Portugal and the pass of Perales in Spain. From

this point run off the great spurs which separate the valleys of

the Ponçul, the Zezere, the Agueda, the Coa, and the Alagon. An

invader must make his choice whether he will advance into Portugal

south or north of the Serra da Estrella: to attempt to do so on both

sides of the range would be risking too much, if there is an enemy

of any strength in the field, since the columns to the right and to

the left would be hopelessly separated, and liable to be beaten in

detail. In the whole Peninsular War there was only one invasion made

by the southern route, that of Junot in the winter of 1807-8. It was

successful because it was absolutely unopposed. Nevertheless the

French lost many men, had to leave their artillery behind them, and

only arrived with the shadow of an army at Abrantes. It is true that

Junot chose absolutely the worst path that could be found between the

Serra da Estrella and the Tagus--the pass of Rosmarinhal, close above

the latter river--and that he would have fared not quite so badly if

he had marched from Zarza on Idanha and Castello Branco. But even at

the best this region is most inhospitable: there are points where

water is not procurable on stretches of eight or ten miles, others

where the main road is so steep that a six-pounder requires not

only a dozen horses but the assistance of fifty men to get it up the

slope. Except in the immediate neighbourhood of Castello Branco, the

country-side is almost uninhabited[156]. The whole ‘corregidoria,’

which took its name from that town, and extended from the Elga to the

Zezere, had only 40,000 souls in its broad limits--it was forty miles

long by thirty broad, the size of a large English county. Junot’s

experiences served as a warning to his successors, and no French

army during the rest of the war endeavoured to cross this corner of

Portugal when advancing on Lisbon. Castello Branco was seized once or

twice by a raiding force, but it was never used as the starting-point

of an army making a serious attempt to advance towards the Portuguese

capital.

[156] The above notes on the Castello Branco country and its

roads are mostly derived from Eliot’s \_Defence of Portugal\_.

Eliot has marched all over the region; see his pages 78-81.

There remains to be considered only the section of the frontier

between the Douro and the Serra da Estrella, the front on which

Masséna’s great blow was delivered in the autumn of 1810. It was

a region which had from the earliest times been the battle-ground

of the Spanish and Portuguese. Half a dozen times since the Middle

Ages armies from the plains of Leon had invaded the Beira on this

front. Such campaigns always began with a siege of Almeida, the

sentinel-fortress pushed out in front of the mountains to face the

Spanish Ciudad Rodrigo. Almeida generally fell--it is too advanced a

position for safety, and (as Dumouriez remarked in his military study

of Portugal) its value would have doubled if it had only been placed

upon the west instead of the east bank of the Coa, close to the

friendly mountains, and not on the outskirts of the perilous plain.

But rare, indeed, were the occasions on which the Spaniard succeeded

in piercing the broad belt of tangled upland beyond Almeida, and

appearing at the gates of Coimbra or Oporto.

[Illustration: CENTRAL PORTUGAL.]

There are four lines of further advance open to an invader who has

captured Almeida. The first, a march on Oporto via Pinhel and Lamego,

may be mentioned only to be dismissed from consideration. It is of

no use to an army which aims at Lisbon, and proposes to conquer

Portugal by a blow at its heart. Masséna, whose directions were to

drive the British into the sea in the shortest and most effective

fashion, could not have contemplated such a secondary object as the

capture of Oporto for a moment. There remain three other roads to be

investigated.

(1) The road north of the river Mondego, by Celorico, Vizeu, Bussaco,

and Coimbra. (2) The corresponding and parallel road south of the

Mondego, from Celorico by Chamusca, Maceira and Ponte de Murcella to

Coimbra. (3) The road which, striking south from Celorico, crosses

the headwaters of the Zezere, by Belmonte and Fundão, and then,

climbing the Serra de Moradal, descends to Castello Branco, and from

thence reaches Abrantes by the Sobreira Formosa. It may be remarked,

by the way, that nothing in all the geography of Portugal seems more

astonishing than that there should not be a fourth alternative road,

one down the long valley of the Zezere, which, running in a straight

line from Belmonte to Abrantes, looks on the map as if it ought to

be a main artery of communication, and seems to indicate the obvious

road to Lisbon from Almeida, since a straight line drawn between

these points would run along the river for some forty miles. But as a

matter of fact there was neither a first nor a second-rate road down

the Zezere: the only towns on its course, Covilhão and Belmonte, lie

hard by its sources, and its central reaches were almost uninhabited.

The only good line of communication running near it is a by-road or

duplication of the third route mentioned above, called the \_Estrada

Nova\_, which, leaving the upper Zezere at Belmonte, keeps high up

the side of the Serra de Moradal, and rejoins the Castello Branco

road at Sobreira Formosa. This route was much employed by Wellington

in later years, as a military road from north to south, usable even

when Castello Branco was threatened by the French. But in 1810 he

had ordered it to be rendered impassable, and this had been done by

making several long cuttings at points where the track passed along

precipices, the whole roadway being blown or shovelled down into

the gulf below[157]. The French were, of course, unaware of this,

and Masséna is said by his confidant Foy to have taken the \_Estrada

Nova\_ into serious consideration, and to have decided against it

because of the necessity for forcing the passage of the Zezere when

the defiles were passed, and for laying siege to Abrantes[158].

A far more practical objection was its extreme wildness: it runs

along an absolutely uninhabited mountain-side, and the neighbourhood

is destitute not only of food but of water for great sections of

its length. This Masséna ought to have known, if his Portuguese

advisers had been competent. Apparently he was wholly unaware of its

character, just as he was necessarily ignorant of the fact that his

prescient adversary had blasted away huge sections of it, so that it

was absolutely impassable for guns or wagons, as also that earthworks

had been carefully constructed to cover the point where it debouches

on to the Zezere.

[157] For the perilous adventure among these cuttings of a

small French column which crossed the Estrada Nova, that which

escorted Foy back to Santarem in Feb. 1811, see the autobiography

of General Hulot, pp. 325-33. A considerable number of men and

horses fell down these cuttings in a forced night-march, and in

all several hundred men of Foy’s column perished, starved and

storm-beaten on this inhospitable road. The survivors only got

through by cutting a slippery foot-track along the precipices:

nothing on wheels could have passed that way.

[158] In Foy’s interesting minute of his conversation with

Napoleon about the invasion, on Nov. 23, 1810, when he had taken

home Masséna’s dispatches: ‘Montrez-moi les deux routes de Ponte

de Murcella et de Castello Branco,’ says the Emperor. Then after

a pause: ‘Et l’Estrada Nova? Pourquoi Masséna n’a-t-il pas

débouché par l’Estrada Nova?’--‘Sire, à cause d’Abrantès et du

Zézère.’--‘Oui, Masséna a bien fait; maintenant il faut prendre

Abrantès: Elvas ne nous servirait de rien.’ See Foy’s \_Mémoires\_,

p. 111.

The Castello Branco road, therefore, with this dependent by-road,

the Estrada Nova, was practically left out of consideration by

the Marshal. There remains the choice between the two northern

routes, Celorico-Vizeu-Coimbra, and Celorico-Chamusca-Ponte de

Murcella-Coimbra. Both traverse rough ground--but ground less rough

than that to be found on some parts of the Castello Branco road.

Along both there is an intermittent belt of cultivated land, and

not unfrequent villages. Both are intersected by many good military

positions, on which a defending army can offer battle to an invader

with advantage. In especial, the northern road strikes and climbs the

granite ridge of Bussaco with every disadvantage for the attacking

side, and the southern road is contracted into a difficult defile

at the passage of the Alva near Ponte de Murcella. On the whole,

however, this last is the better line for advance:--the strongest

testimonial to the fact is that Wellington expected Masséna to take

it, and erected at the passage of the Alva almost[159] the only

earthworks, save those of the lines of Torres Vedras, which he

constructed in his preparations for the reception of the invader.

When he first heard that the Marshal was moving forward from

Almeida to Celorico, and was clearly aiming at the Mondego valley,

he announced that he should endeavour to stop the invader on the

Alva[160], not apparently thinking it at all probable that Masséna

would move by Vizeu and the north bank of the Mondego. On realizing

that this was really his adversary’s design, he observed with some

exultation that, while there were certainly many bad roads in

Portugal, the enemy had taken decidedly the worst of those open to

him[161]; moreover, he had committed himself to attack the heights

of Bussaco, the most formidable position in the whole of northern

Portugal. How the French commander came to make this choice we shall

discuss in its proper place. Suffice it to say that Wellington had

not realized how bad was Masséna’s information, how worthless his

maps, and--what is most surprising of all--how entirely destitute of

local knowledge were the Portuguese traitors--Alorna, Pamplona, and

the other renegade officers--whom the Emperor had sent as guides and

advisers to the Marshal. And in truth, the unsuspected ignorance of

Masséna and his advisers added an incalculable element of chance to

the problem set before Wellington. He was obliged to make his plans

on the hypothesis that the enemy would make the correct move: and not

unfrequently the enemy, for reasons which the English general could

not possibly foresee, made the wrong one.

[159] There were some others thrown up on the extreme lower

course of the Zezere, by Barca Nova and Punhete, to guard against

a possible but unlikely use of the Castello Branco road by the

enemy.

[160] Wellington to Hill (\_Disp.\_, vi. p. 441), Sept. 15.

[161] Wellington to Chas. Stuart, Sept. 18.

The French invasion was bound to commence with a preliminary

clearance of the outlying fortresses still in the hands of the

Spaniards. These to some extent protected the Portuguese frontier

in 1810, though they had been built with the express purpose, not

of protecting, but of threatening it, and had never before been

attacked by an enemy coming from the east. Only three of these

fortresses were of any importance--Astorga, Ciudad Rodrigo, and

Badajoz. The other strongholds of Spanish Estremadura, Alcantara

(which had stood a siege in the War of the Spanish Succession),

Albuquerque, Olivenza, were either not in a state of defence at all,

or were hopelessly antiquated, and little suited to face modern

artillery and modern siegecraft.

Astorga lies so far to the north that it might have been neglected

without much peril to the French scheme of invasion. But the Emperor

had ordered that it should be reduced before the great enterprise

began: it gave the Spanish army of Galicia a foothold in the plains

of Leon, from which it might operate against Masséna’s rear, if he

should pass it by. Its capture, too, was considered a matter of

small difficulty, for it was but a mediaeval walled town, to which

some hasty outworks had been added during the last year. It will be

remembered that when Moore passed that way in January 1809, Astorga

had been treated by both sides as an open town, and no attempt had

been made to garrison or defend it. Since then La Romana had repaired

its dilapidated enceinte, stockaded its suburbs, and armed it with

guns brought from Ferrol. As late as January 11, 1810, Napoleon

seems hardly aware of this fact: in a dispatch of that date he

orders Loison to make his head quarters there, evidently under the

impression that it is not held by the Spaniards, or at least that

it is a place which they will evacuate at the first appearance of a

serious attack[162]. It is only in March that he writes to Junot that

Astorga must be besieged and taken, in order to occupy the attention

of the Galicians and to thrust them back into their mountains[163].

[162] \_Nap. Corresp.\_, xx. p. 117. Napoleon to Berthier.

[163] Ibid., p. 271.

Ciudad Rodrigo was a more serious business. It was a regular

fortress, though only one of the second class; its prestige, as the

only Spanish stronghold on the Portuguese frontier, was great. It

commands the whole southern stretch of the plains of Leon, being

the only place out of the control of an invader who is superior in

cavalry, and therefore master of the defenceless \_Tierra de Campos\_.

There was also a small Spanish army depending upon it, and clinging

to the skirts of the Sierra de Gata. This was the division of Martin

de la Carrera, which had been left behind when the greater part

of Del Parque’s Army of the Left marched down into Estremadura in

January 1810, in order to replace there the troops which had gone

off to the defence of Cadiz. It was clear that Ciudad Rodrigo must

be taken, and Martin de la Carrera brushed away or destroyed, before

any serious attempt to invade Portugal was begun. If the Emperor

thought that such a remote place as Astorga was worth his notice,

it was obvious that he would regard Ciudad Rodrigo as absolutely

indispensable to his designs. It was for its reduction that he gave

Masséna the great battering train of fifty heavy guns, with 2,500

artillerymen and sappers, which was assigned to him, independent of

the artillery of the three corps of the Army of Portugal.

Badajoz, far to the south, in Spanish Estremadura, stood to the

defence of Southern Portugal exactly as Ciudad Rodrigo to the defence

of Northern Portugal. It possessed also in Elvas a counterpart to

Almeida. But Badajoz is immensely larger and stronger than Rodrigo,

just as Elvas is infinitely more formidable than Almeida. The two

fortresses on the frontier of Leon are small places crowning mere

mounds set in a plain. Badajoz and Elvas have towering citadels

set on rugged hills, and overlooking the whole country-side. They

have also strong detached forts on dominant positions: the circuit

of ground that must be taken up by an army that intends to besiege

them is very large, and at Badajoz there is a first-class river,

the Guadiana, which cuts in two the lines which the assailant must

occupy. It may be added that based on Badajoz there was a whole

Spanish army of 15,000 men, not a mere division of 3,000, like that

which lurked in the mountains above Rodrigo. Noting the strength of

Badajoz and Elvas, the Emperor had made up his mind that they should

be observed and ‘contained’ by troops from the Army of Andalusia,

but not attacked till Lisbon had been conquered and the English

expelled from Portugal. ‘Les Anglais une fois battus et rembarqués,

Badajoz et Elvas tombent d’eux-mêmes,’ he wrote in a holograph minute

addressed to Masséna, just before the advance across the Portuguese

frontier began[164]. It was only when the invasion had been brought

to a standstill before the lines of Torres Vedras, that he came to

the conclusion that pressure must be applied south of the Tagus, to

distract Wellington, and that Soult, as a preliminary to an attack

on the Alemtejo, must capture Badajoz and Elvas, and disperse the

Spanish Army of Estremadura. The idea came to him tardily: thanks to

Wellington’s careful starvation of the main French army, Masséna was

forced to retreat into Leon when Soult had only recently captured

Badajoz, and had not yet shown a man in front of Elvas. The scheme

was hatched, like so many of Napoleon’s Spanish plans, about three

months too late for effective realization. As late as November 1810

the orders to Soult are merely to demonstrate against Badajoz, and

to hinder the departure of La Romana’s army for the lines of Torres

Vedras, but not to besiege the Estremaduran fortress. Probably it was

Foy’s information as to the existence and strength of the unsuspected

lines of Torres Vedras, which reached him late in November, that made

the Emperor realize the advisability of that secondary attack by

the south bank of the Tagus which Wellington had foreseen and taken

means to meet a full year before. Fortunately a capable general on

the defensive always knows his own weak spots long before they are

discovered by the enemy. By the time that Soult had at last captured

Badajoz and the small dependent places--Olivenza, Albuquerque, Campo

Mayor--Wellington had got rid of Masséna from the neighbourhood of

Lisbon, and was preparing to chase him home across Northern Portugal.

Within a few weeks of its surrender by the traitor Imaz, Badajoz was

being besieged by a detachment of the British army, and Soult had

his hands full, as he strove at once to hold down Andalusia and to

relieve the beleaguered fortress.

[164] Napoleon to Masséna, July 29, 1810, \_Corresp.\_, xx. p. 552.

SECTION XIX: CHAPTER II

WELLINGTON’S PREPARATIONS FOR DEFENCE

As far back as September 1809, while his army still lay at Badajoz

and the Talavera campaign was hardly over, Wellington had foreseen

the oncoming invasion of Portugal, which did not actually begin till

August 1810[165]. Writing to his brother, then on his special mission

to Seville, he had laid down his conclusions. Bonaparte would, in

consequence of the cessation of the Austrian war, be enabled to

pour unlimited reinforcements into Spain. The British army, even

if raised to 40,000 men, would not be strong enough to cover both

Seville and Lisbon. Considering the temper of the Spanish government

and the Spanish troops, he thought it would be most unadvisable to

commit himself to the defence of Andalusia. But he was prepared to

undertake the defence of Portugal. He implored the British Ministry

not to sacrifice its strong position on the Tagus in order to

embark upon a hazardous campaign in the South[166]. His views as to

Portugal were simply the development of those which he had drawn up

for Castlereagh’s eye on his first sailing for the Peninsula[167].

Portugal though ‘all frontier’ might be defended against any French

army of less than 100,000 men, if its resources were placed at his

disposal, and he were given a free hand to utilize them according

to his own plan. The Portland Cabinet, though much doubting whether

Wellington could carry out his pledge, and though reluctant to

abandon the idea that Andalusia might be defended and Cadiz made

secure by British troops, finally yielded to the General’s appeal.

[165] For his views just after Talavera see vol. ii. of this

work, pages 609-10.

[166] ‘I strongly recommend to you, unless you mean to incur the

risk of the loss of your army, not to have anything to do with

Spanish warfare, on any ground whatever, in the existing state

of things.... If you should take up Cadiz you must lay down

Portugal.’ Wellington to Castlereagh, \_Dispatches\_, v. 90.

[167] See vol. ii. pages 286-8.

But on December 2, 1809, the Portland Cabinet gave place to Spencer

Perceval’s new administration, and Wellington had to reiterate

the arguments which he had used to Castlereagh and Canning to new

correspondents, Lord Liverpool and Lord Bathurst. Fortunately the

incoming ministers resolved to adhere to the promises made by their

predecessors, and to persist in the defence of Portugal. It was of

immense value to Wellington that his brother Wellesley soon replaced

Lord Bathurst at the Foreign Office, so that he could command in

this Ministry a supporter as firm as Castlereagh had been in the

last. Nevertheless his position was not entirely fortunate: the

new administration was being fiercely assailed by the Whigs over

the general policy of risking British armies on the Continent. The

calamities of the Walcheren expedition supplied a text on which the

Opposition could preach interminable sermons. The men who were not

ashamed to allege, for party reasons, that Wellington was a rash

general, and that the Talavera campaign had been a disaster, were

continually harassing the Ministry, by their suggestions that when

the French Emperor marched in person to Spain the British army in the

Peninsula must inevitably be destroyed. It was probably to aid them

that Napoleon kept inserting in the \_Moniteur\_ articles in which it

was asserted that the maintenance of the incapable ‘Sepoy General’ at

the head of the British forces was the thing which France must most

desire. In Lord Liverpool’s correspondence with Wellington it is easy

to see that the idea that it might be necessary to evacuate Portugal,

when the French attack was delivered, almost preponderated over that

of preparing for the defence of that realm. While Wellington’s whole

mind is set on working out the details of a campaign from which he

hopes great things, his correspondent is always thinking of the

possibility of a disastrous embarkation at the end of it. The General

could not pledge himself that Portugal might be defended against any

odds whatever: it was possible that the Emperor might lead or send

against him an army of absolutely overpowering strength, though he

did not think such a contingency probable. But since he could not

say that his position was impregnable, he was being continually

worried with suggestions as to all the possible contingencies that

might occur to his discomfiture. The ministers dreaded that the

Peninsular venture might end in a fiasco, like the Duke of York’s

Dutch expedition of 1799, and thought that such a failure would lose

them their offices. Hence they were nervous about every false rumour

that reached them from France concerning the Emperor’s approaching

departure; and the more certain information about the immense numbers

of troops that were passing the Pyrenees filled them with dread.

It required all Wellington’s robust self-confidence to keep them

reassured. He had to be perpetually repeating to them that all his

preparations for retreat and embarkation, if the worst should happen,

had been already thought out--they might make up their minds that he

would do nothing rash. But he was inclined to think that there would

in the end be no need to depart. ‘I shall delay the embarkation,’ he

wrote, ‘as long as it is in my power, and shall do everything that is

in my power to avert the necessity of embarking at all. If the enemy

should invade this country with a force less than that which I should

think so superior to ours as to create a necessity for embarking, I

shall fight a battle to save the country, and for this I have made

the preparations.’ He did not think he could be beaten; but if, by

some mischance, the fortune of war went against him, he had still

no doubt that he could bring off the army in safety. ‘If we do go,

I feel a little anxiety to go like gentlemen, out of the hall door

(particularly after all the preparations I have made to enable us to

do so), and not out of the back door or by the area.’

It is curious to find that in this most interesting dispatch to

Lord Liverpool Wellington distinctly asserts that his worst enemy

was the ghost of Sir John Moore[168]. ‘The great disadvantage under

which I labour is that Sir John Moore, who was here before me, gave

his opinion that Portugal could not be defended by the army under

his command. It is obvious that the country was in a very different

situation at that time from what it is at present, and that I am in a

very different situation from that in which he found himself ..., yet

persons who ought to be better acquainted with these facts entertain

a certain prejudice against the adoption of any plan for opposing

the enemy of which Portugal is to be the theatre. I have as much

respect as any man for the opinion and judgement of Sir John Moore,

and I should mistrust my own if it were opposed to his in a case

where he had had the opportunity of knowing and considering. But he

positively knew nothing about Portugal, and could know nothing about

its existing state[169].’

[168] See also vol. ii. page 286, of this book.

[169] All these quotations are from Wellington to Lord Liverpool,

April 2, 1810, a long dispatch written from Vizeu, every word of

which is well worth study.

The most vexatious thing for Wellington was that ‘the persons who

ought to have known better,’ yet were perpetually uttering melancholy

vaticinations as to the approach of disaster, included some of

his own senior officers. I have seen a letter from a general in

Portugal to his friend in England containing such phrases as this:

‘I most strongly suspect that before many months are over our heads

there will be no opportunity for this employment (that of a cavalry

brigadier) left to \_any one\_, on the Continent at least. The next

campaign will close the eventful scene in the Peninsula, as far as we

are concerned; for I am decidedly of opinion that neither (Marshal)

Wellington nor (Marshal) Beresford will prevent the approaching

subjugation of Portugal.’ Or again: ‘I am quite surprised at Lord

W.’s pliant disposition. I suspect he feels himself tottering on his

throne, and wishes to conciliate at any sacrifice[170].’ The frequent

complaints in Wellington’s correspondence as to the sort of letters

that were going home to England in the spring of 1810 sufficiently

show that these down-hearted views were not uncommon among his

subordinates. If the generals on the spot foresaw disaster, it is no

wonder that the ministers in London felt anxious, and refused to be

comforted by the confident dispatches of the Commander-in-Chief.

[170] I found these passages in letters to Sir John Le Marchant,

then in command at the Staff College at High Wycombe, from a

highly-placed friend in Portugal. It is notable that other

contemporary epistles from younger men, old pupils of Le

Marchant, show a far more cheery spirit. The correspondence (from

which I shall have many other passages to quote) was placed at my

disposition by the kindness of Sir Henry Le Marchant, grandson of

Sir John.

The preparations which Wellington was making during the winter of

1809-10 and the ensuing spring, for the reception of the inevitable

French invasion, may be arranged, in the main, under three heads. We

must first treat of the complete reorganization of the Portuguese

military forces, not only the regulars but the militia, and the old

\_levée en masse\_ of the Ordenança. Second come the elaborate plans

for the construction of enormous field-works for the protection of

Lisbon, the famous lines of Torres Vedras, and the fortification of

certain other, and more advanced, points. The third, and in some

ways the most important of all, was the arrangement of the great

scheme for devastating the country-side in front of the invader, and

fighting him by the weapon of starvation, a device new to the French,

but not unprecedented in the earlier history of Portugal.

The Portuguese regular army had taken hardly any part in the

campaigns of 1809. The only sections of it that had been under fire

were Silveira’s two regiments, the four battalions that marched with

Wellington to Oporto in May, and Wilson’s Loyal Lusitanian Legion,

which had fought with more valour than success at the bridge of

Alcantara and the Pass of Baños[171]. Beresford, with the greater

part of the troops that were in a condition to take the field, had

been out on the border in July, and had remained for some days in

Spain, on the side of Coria and Zarza Mayor, but he had never been in

contact with the enemy[172]. The fighting power of the reorganized

Portuguese army was still a doubtful quantity.

[171] See vol. ii. pages 440-1 and 620.

[172] See vol. ii. pages 600-1. Beresford had some 18,000 men

with him.

The field-strength of the Portuguese regular forces should have

been, according to its establishments, 56,000 men. In September 1809

there were only 42,000 men with the colours[173], and of these much

more than half were recruits, who had recently been thrust into the

depleted \_cadres\_ of the old army. There were many regiments which

had been practically destroyed by the French, and which showed,

when Beresford first marched out to the frontier, only 200 or 300

men instead of their normal 1,500[174]. Many others had less than

half their complement. The first thing that required to be done was

to fill up the gaps, and this was accomplished during the winter

of 1809-10 by a stringent use of the conscription law already

existing. The line regiments in the Bussaco campaign showed, with

hardly an exception, 1,200 or 1,300 effectives present--i.e. if the

sick and ‘details’ are added they were nearly or quite up to their

establishment of 1,500[175]. The cavalry was less effective: the

number of men could be filled up, but horses were hard to find,

and in the end Wellington sent four of the twelve regiments to do

dismounted duty in garrison, and served out their mounts to the

remaining eight, which nevertheless could never show more than 300

or 400 sabres present, out of their nominal 594. Portugal is not a

horse-breeding country, and the British cavalry was competing with

the native for the small supply of remounts that could be procured.

The artillery, on the other hand, was high in strength and very

satisfactory.

[173] See tables in vol. ii. pages 629-31.

[174] On Sept. 15, 1809, the 22nd, which had been destroyed by

Soult at Oporto, had only 193 men. The 8th had but 369, the 15th

577, the 24th 505.

[175] Ten regiments present at Bussaco had over 1,100 men each,

only one less than 800. This was the 22nd, mentioned above as

practically non-existent a year before. It had only recruited

up to the strength of one battalion: all the rest had two. The

strongest regiment was the 11th with 1,438 men.

Mere numbers are no test of the efficiency of a host. The weak

point of the old national army had been--as we mentioned in

another place--the effete and unmilitary character of its body of

officers--more especially of its senior officers[176]. The junior

ranks, filled up since the French invasion with young men who had

taken up the military career from patriotic motives, were infinitely

better. By the second year of the war there were many admirable

officers among them. But it was men capable of handling a battalion

or a regiment that were wanting. We saw how Beresford had been forced

to introduce many British officers into the service, though he was

aware that the personal pride of the Portuguese officers was bitterly

hurt thereby. His justification may be deduced from a confidential

memorandum written for him by his chief-of-the-staff, Benjamin

D’Urban[177], which is well worth quoting:--

[176] See vol. ii. pages 210-15.

[177] This unpublished document here quoted, along with the whole

of Sir Benjamin’s journal and correspondence, has been placed at

my disposal by his grandson, Mr. D’Urban. They are invaluable for

the Portuguese aspect of the War.

‘There are yet among the field officers, captains, and older

subalterns a number of incorrigible officers of the old school, who

are a dead weight upon their respective regiments, and mischievous in

the way of example. Whenever it may be thought expedient, from time

to time, to get rid of them, there will be no difficulty in finding

excellent young men to replace them from the ranks respectively

below.... But I feel it incumbent upon me to give it you as my

decided opinion, resulting from a close investigation into the causes

of the defects of the Portuguese, that it will be utterly impossible

either to make a regiment fit for service, or to preserve it when

made so, without giving it an English commanding-officer and at least

two English captains.

‘The Portuguese soldier is naturally indolent. He falls with the

greatest facility into slouching and slovenly habits, unless he is

constantly roused and forced to exert himself. But many a Portuguese

officer, if not constantly spurred and urged to do his duty, is at

least as indolent as his men. Nothing (I am persuaded by experience)

will counteract this, and create activity among the officers and

consequent diligence and care among the men, but the strictness,

energy and vigilance of an English commanding-officer.

‘Even supposing a sufficient energy of character in the native

officer, he does not and will not, if he be not a \_Fidalgo\_ himself,

exercise coercive or strong measures to oblige one of that class

to do his duty. He is aware that in doing so he makes a powerful

enemy, and all the habits of thought in which he has been educated

inspire him with such a dread of this, that no sense of duty will

urge him to encounter it. Thus, whenever a regiment is commanded by a

non-Fidalgo, it never fails to suffer extremely: for the noblemen are

permitted to do as they please, and afford a very bad example, for

they are at least as indolent as the ordinary Portuguese.

‘The English captains will be found invaluable, especially in the

hands of an English commandant. Their example is infinitely useful.

The Portuguese captains are piqued into activity and attention,

when they see their companies excelled in efficiency by those

of the English, and they do from emulation what a sense of duty

would perhaps never bring them to. There are a variety of by-paths

and oblique means by which the parts of a Portuguese corps are

constantly, and almost insensibly, endeavouring to return to the old

habits that they are so much attached to. To nip this, from time to

time, in the bud, it is necessary to be aware of it: without the

faithful surveillance of English subordinate officers (who, ever

mixing with the mass of the men, can’t well be ignorant of what is

going on) the commanding-officer can rarely be warned in time.’

Beresford replied that all this was true, but that ‘the national

feeling required management,’ and that to place every regimental

or brigade command in British hands would provoke such fierce

jealousy that he was ‘compelled to humour the prejudices and satisfy

the pride of the nation.’ His device for doing this was to make

a general rule that wherever a Portuguese officer was in chief

command he should have a British officer second in command under

him, and vice versa[178]. When a brigade was given to a Portuguese,

he managed that the two colonels of the regiments forming it should

be Englishmen; similarly, if a Portuguese commanded a regiment

his senior major was always an Englishman. By this means it was

secured that a fair half of the higher pieces of promotion should

be left to the native officers, but that every Portuguese placed

in a responsible position should have a British officer at his

back. In addition there were from two to four British captains in

each battalion, but no subalterns; for, to encourage good men to

volunteer into the Portuguese service, it was provided that all who

did so should receive a step of promotion, and a British lieutenant

became a Portuguese captain on exchange, and a British captain a

Portuguese major. The system seems to have worked well, and with

far less friction than might have been expected[179]. The better

class of native officers were piqued into emulation, just as D’Urban

had expected; the worst was gradually eliminated[180]. It must be

noted that to every battalion there were added one or two British

sergeants, whose services were needed for the drilling of the men in

the English exercises, which now superseded the old German system

left behind by La Lippe, the last reorganizer of the Portuguese army.

For the whole drill of the infantry was changed, and the British

formations and manœuvres introduced. Dundas’s ‘Eighteen Manœuvres’

were translated, and became the Bible of the Lusitanian no less than

the British officer[181]. The employment of the two-deep line, the

essential feature of the system, was made the base of all Portuguese

drill; at Bussaco it justified itself. The Caçadores were trained

on the ‘Rifle Regulations’ of Coote Manningham, and their uniform

was modified in cut, though not in colour, to a close resemblance

of that of the British rifleman[182]. The net result of all these

changes was that for the future the British and Portuguese units of

Wellington’s army could be moved by the same words of command, and in

the same formations, and that all the disadvantages resulting from

the coexistence of two different systems of drill disappeared.

[178] This rule I find definitely laid down in a letter of

Hardinge, Beresford’s Quartermaster-general, written as late as

1812, but the practice was already in full use by 1810.

[179] For narratives of the daily life of a British officer in a

Portuguese regiment see Bunbury’s \_Reminiscences of a Veteran\_,

and Blakiston’s \_Twelve Years of Military Adventure\_. Both had

their difficulties, but both, on the whole, got on well with

their colleagues. D’Urban’s correspondence supplies a frequent

commentary on regimental problems.

[180] How this was done may be read in Blakiston.

[181] See Bunbury, p. 54.

[182] They were dressed in dark brown instead of in the rifle

green. The shako, coat, and trousers were of the British model.

Two principal difficulties still remained in the administration of

the Portuguese army. The first was, what to do with the few senior

officers of undoubted patriotism but more doubtful capacity, who

were too important and influential to be placed upon the shelf,

yet might cause a disaster if placed in a critical position of

responsibility. The most notable of them was Silveira, who had

acquired much popularity by his obstinate, if ill-managed, resistance

to Soult in the spring of 1809. Wellington, with many searchings

of heart, placed him in command of the Tras-os-Montes, where it

was most unlikely that any serious irruption of the French would

take place[183]. He had a large force placed under him, but it did

not include a single regular regiment, and, with militia only at

his disposition, it was hoped that he would be discouraged from

attempting any hazardous experiments. Moreover, he was given a

British second-in-command, first John Wilson and afterwards Miller,

to curb his eccentricities so far as was possible. Baccelar, another

officer of doubtful merit, but more dangerous from torpidity than

from rashness, was given charge of the militia of the three northern

provinces, so that Silveira was technically under his orders--though

the nominal subordinate would seem to have paid little attention

to his superior. The most important post, however, assigned to a

Portuguese officer was the governorship of Elvas, the strongest

fortress of Portugal, and one which would stand in the forefront of

the battle if the French made the subsidiary invasion south of the

Tagus, which Wellington was inclined to expect. The command of this

great stronghold and the 6,000 men of its garrison (of whom half

were regulars) was given to General Leite, an active and ingenious

officer, and (what was more important) a man who obeyed orders. Of

all the Portuguese he was the one whom Wellington most trusted; every

British narrator of the war who came in contact with him has a word

of praise in his behalf. Of the other native generals, Lecor, in

command of a division, and Fonseca, in command of a brigade, were

with the field army. Miranda was given charge of the militia of

Northern Estremadura, who were likely to be in the thickest of the

trouble. But the other Portuguese units of the allied host were under

British officers: Pack, Archibald and Alexander Campbell, MacMahon,

Coleman, Harvey, Collins, and Bradford had charge of the regular

brigades of the field army. The native generals, save those above

mentioned, were placed in administrative posts, or in charge of

those sections of the militia which were probably destined to see no

service.

[183] Silveira was the despair of Beresford and his

chief-of-the-staff D’Urban. The latter writes (Apr. 19, 1810):

‘This general is the most extraordinary of all the people in this

extraordinary country. Perpetually fluctuating--incapable of

standing still--always wishing to move backward or forward--all

his movements to no purpose but that of harassing his troops. The

man is either very weak or very designing--perhaps both. Anyhow

he is a mischievous charlatan, and I wish the Marshal would not

yield to the prejudices of the people by employing him.’

The second point of difficulty in the organization of the Portuguese

army was the commissariat. In the old days it had been a purely

civilian branch of the service, non-military intendants dealing with

contractors and merchants. For this had been substituted a \_Junta de

Viveres\_ mainly composed of officers, which proved as ineffective,

if not as corrupt, as the body which had preceded it. The British

government had taken over the responsibility of paying half the

Portuguese army[184], but not that of feeding it, and despite of

the handsome subsidies that it paid to the Regency for the general

purposes of the war, the native troops, especially those quartered

far from Lisbon, were often in a state of semi-starvation. ‘The

Portuguese corps ought to have a commissariat attached to them, and

I believe each brigade has a commissary,’ wrote Wellington, ‘but

they have no magazines and no money to purchase supplies[185].’ One

main difficulty arose from the fact that the Junta de Viveres shrank

from the heavy expense of organizing a proper transport train, and

tried to make shift with requisitioned carts and oxen, which were

difficult to get (since the British army was competing with the

Portuguese for draught animals) and still harder to retain--for the

peasant driver always absconded with his beasts when he found an

opportunity. Another difficulty was that the Junta tried to feed

the troops with requisitioned corn, instead of paying for it with

money down; hence it got grudging service. ‘I know from experience,’

observes Wellington, ‘that the Portuguese army could not be in the

distress under which it suffers, from want of provisions, if only

a part of the food it receives from the country were paid for.’

And he suggested as a remedy that the British ministers should

earmark part of the subsidy for use on the commissariat and no other

purpose[186]. It was long before this matter was set to rights.

Beresford’s correspondence in 1810 bristles with complaints as to the

inefficiency of the Junta de Viveres[187].

[184] Viz. the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 7th, 10th, 11th, 13th, 14th,

15th, 16th, 19th of the line, and the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Caçadores.

[185] Wellington to Hill, Jan. 24, 1810.

[186] Wellington to Villiers, Jan. 25, 1810.

[187] D’Urban writes, May 4, ‘Such is the poverty, imbecility,

and want of arrangement of the Portuguese government, that any

regular system of supply is not to be expected. The whole civil

branch of the army is in such a state of confusion, that I hold

it impossible to carry on active operations for more than a few

weeks.’

If the regular army was badly fed, so that desertion and sickness

were both too prevalent in some corps, it was not to be expected

that the militia would fare better. Wellington had ordered, and

Beresford had arranged for, the embodiment of every one of the 48

militia regiments of the national establishment. They should properly

have given 70,000 men, but such a figure was never reached. Some of

the regimental districts were too thinly peopled to give the full

1,500 men at which each was assessed. In others the officers placed

in charge were incapable, or the local magistrates recalcitrant.

Many regiments could show only 500 or 600 bayonets in 1810, few over

1,000[188]. The total number under arms at the time of Masséna’s

invasion may have reached 45,000 bayonets. Of the 48 regiments eight

belonged to the lands south of the Tagus, and were never brought up

to the front; they furnished the garrisons of Elvas and Campo Mayor,

and a corps of observation on the lower Guadiana, destined to watch

the French in the direction of Ayamonte and the Condado de Niebla,

lest any unexpected raid might be made in that quarter[189]. The

five regiments from the district immediately round the capital were

at work on the ever-growing lines of Torres Vedras. One regiment

was in garrison at Peniche, two at Abrantes, three at Almeida. The

main force, consisting of the remaining units contributed by the

North and the Beira, was divided into five corps, destined partly

for active operations against the enemy’s flanks and rear, when

he should enter Portugal, partly for the defence of Oporto and

the Tras-os-Montes, if any assault should be threatened in that

direction. These divisions stood as follows:--three regiments under

Lecor were left in the Castello Branco country, to protect it against

raids from Spanish Estremadura. Seven under Trant, all corps from

the coast-land between the Douro and the Mondego, were to cover

Oporto from the south, or to operate against the rear of the invading

army, if it should leave that city alone and keep on the direct

road to Lisbon. Six under Silveira guarded the Tras-os-Montes, and

watched the French detachments in the northern part of the plains of

Leon. Eight under Miller lay around Oporto, ready to support either

Silveira or Trant if occasion should arise[190]. After the campaign

began, and Masséna’s intention to leave the North alone became

evident, half Miller’s division was placed under John Wilson (who had

originally been Silveira’s chief-of-the-staff and second-in-command)

and sent south into the Beira to co-operate with Trant. Finally,

four regiments under the Portuguese brigadier Miranda lay at Thomar,

apparently for the purpose of aiding Lecor or strengthening the

garrison of Abrantes. This division ultimately retreated into the

lines of Torres Vedras.

[188] I note in D’Urban’s diary, when he was making an inspection

tour with Beresford at the end of the winter, ‘At Sardão a very

good regiment of militia, 1,100 strong, that of Maia.’ ‘Abrantes,

two regiments of militia, Lousão 1,035, Soure 1,035, all armed.’

But, on the other hand, ‘Vizeu, Arganil, Trancoso, ordered to be

assembled at Almeida, have only--the first 867, the second 600,

the last 505 firelocks, and the description of troops the very

worst.’ Of course the numbers were somewhat higher by the next

August.

[189] These regiments were Lagos, Tavira, Beja, Evora,

Villaviciosa, Portalegre, Alcazar do Sul, Setubal.

[190] It may be well to name, once for all, the composition of

these Militia Brigades. They were distributed as follows:--

Garrison of Abrantes:

Lousão

Soure

Garrison of Almeida:

Vizeu

Arganil

Trancoso

In the Lines:

1, 2, 3, 4 of Lisbon

Torres Vedras

With Lecor about Castello Branco:

Idanha

Covilhão

Castello Branco

Under Miller about Oporto:

Guimaraens

Viana

Braga

Basto

Villa do Conde

Arcos

Barcellos

Barco

With Trant, between the Douro and the Mondego:

Aveiro

Feira

Coimbra

Porto

Maia

Penafiel

Oliveira do Azemis

With Silveira about Braganza:

Lamego

Chaves

Villa Real

Braganza

Miranda

Moncorvo

With Miranda about Thomar:

Tondella

Santarem

Thomar

Leiria

Of Miller’s division, I think, but am not sure, that the last

four were those detached under Wilson in September.

All these troops were entirely unfitted for a place in the line of

battle; Wellington refused to mix them with the regular brigades,

save in the garrisons of Almeida, Abrantes, and Elvas. He directed

the brigadiers never to risk them in battle, even against a much

inferior force of the French. Their sole purpose was to cut lines of

communication, to render marauding by the enemy’s small detachments

impossible, and to restrict his power of making reconnaissances far

afield. They were told that they might defend a pass or a ford for

a time, so as to delay the advance of a hostile column, but that

they were never to commit themselves to a serious combat with any

considerable body. Convoys, stragglers, small detachments, were the

game on which they must prey. The programme was not a brilliant

one to lay down before an ambitious officer, and more than once

Silveira, Trant, and Wilson disobeyed orders, and tried to withstand

a full French division in some chosen position. Such experiments

almost always ended in a disaster. It was not surprising, for the

militia were not troops from whom much could be expected. The best

men in every district had been taken for the regular army; all

the trained officers were also needed there. The militia \_cadres\_

were composed of civilians who had to learn their duties just as

much as the privates whom they were supposed to instruct. All the

patriotic and energetic young men of the governing classes had

sought commissions in the line; the less willing and active were

driven into the militia. Service therein brought neither much credit

nor much promotion. If the Regency half-starved the regulars, it

three-quarter-starved the militia, which was normally in a state

of destitution of clothing, shoes, and food. Hardly a regiment was

provided with uniforms; as a rule only the officers showed the

regulation blue and silver. As long as the corps was in its own

district it was fed somehow, but when moved to some strategical point

in the rugged mountains of the Beira, it was liable to go wholly

to pieces from sheer privation. Fortunately the Portuguese peasant

led a frugal life at all times, and expected little; the desertion,

though large, was not nearly so great as might have been expected.

The fact was that the men were essentially loyal, and hated the

French with a perfect hatred. They might be very poor soldiers, but

they were very bitter personal enemies of the invader. Nevertheless,

they were liable to panics on very slight provocation. ‘At the best

they are a very daily and uncertain sort of fighting people[191],’

remarked one of their leaders. Another wrote in a more forcible

language, ‘Scripture says, Put not your trust in princes--I say,

Fool is the man who puts his trust in a damnable militia.’ Each of

these sentences was indited the day after a disastrous and wholly

unnecessary rout.

[191] D’Urban to Wilson, and Trant to Wilson, after two

unfortunate incidents in 1812, when the militia had been more or

less under arms for two whole years. The former are in D’Urban’s,

the latter in Wilson’s correspondence.

Over and above the regular army and the militia, the Portuguese

military system contemplated the utilization of the whole \_levée

en masse\_ of the nation under the name of the Ordenança. This was

no foreshadowing of the modern idea of universal service, but a

survival of the mediaeval practice which, in Portugal as in England,

made every freeman liable to be called out in time of extremity,

at his own cost and with his own weapons. Every peasant between

sixteen and sixty was theoretically supposed to be enrolled in one

of the companies of 250 which each group of villages was supposed

to possess. The organization had been effective enough in the old

mediaeval wars with Castile: it had even proved serviceable in the

‘War of Independence’ that followed the successful rising of 1640.

But against modern regular armies it was comparatively useless; when

called out in the war of 1762 the Ordenança had not justified its

old reputation. Little could be expected of mobs armed with pikes

and fowling-pieces, save that they should cut off a few convoys and

stragglers, or occasionally obstruct a defile. A French officer who

deeply studied this forgotten campaign wrote that, ‘whatever the

Spaniards may say to the contrary, this war of the peasantry is

by no means important, except against ignorant and undisciplined

troops[192].’

[192] Dumouriez, \_State of Portugal\_, page 22. There was,

however, one notable combat at Villa Pouca in the Tras-os-Montes

where a whole Spanish column of 3,000 men was defeated by the

Ordenança.

When Wellington resolved to call out the Ordenança in 1810 he was

ignorant of none of these facts. Nevertheless, he insisted that

the Regency should issue the old royal ‘Ordinance’ to call out the

levy. His object was threefold: from the political and moral point

of view it was necessary to take this measure, because it was the

ancient and established method of proclaiming that the country was

in danger. It was so understood by the peasantry, in whose memories

the traditions of the Spanish invasions were still fresh; they

expected to be summoned, and would have doubted the imminence of the

emergency if they had not been. The call was at once an appeal to

their patriotism, and equivalent to a proclamation of martial law.

Secondly, Wellington hoped to find assistance to a certain degree

for the work which he had set aside for the militia, by the aid of

the Ordenança. Pervading the whole country-side, and knowing every

goat-track and inaccessible fastness, their motley companies would

surround the invading army as it marched, prevent marauding by small

parties, and render inter-communication between columns impossible,

save by large detachments. French narrators of the campaign speak of

‘the cruel callousness with which Wellington exposed these half-armed

peasants to the wrath of the most efficient army in the world,’ and

wax sentimental over the miseries of the Portuguese. But sentiment

from such a quarter is suspicious: it is absurd to find old soldiers

writing as if the main duty of a general defending a country were

to spare its peasantry as much inconvenience as possible. Did not

Napoleon in 1814 make every endeavour to raise Lorraine and Champagne

\_en masse\_ in the rear of the Allies, and has any French critic

ever blamed him for doing so? Was the actual misery suffered by

the inhabitants of Beira so much greater than what they would have

endured if they had remained at home, and offered no resistance? The

country-side would have been stripped bare by an army forced to make

‘war support war,’ and one can hardly believe, judging from parallel

incidents in Spain, that outrages would have been conspicuous by

their absence.

But it would seem that the third of Wellington’s reasons for calling

out the Ordenança was far more cogent, and lay nearer to the heart

of his scheme than the other two. Throughout Portuguese history the

summons to the levy \_en masse\_ had always been combined with another

measure, from which indeed it could not be disentangled--the order

to the whole population to evacuate and devastate the land in face

of the advancing enemy. The use of the weapon of starvation against

the French was an essential part of Wellington’s plan for defending

Portugal. When he told the British Ministry that he would undertake

the defence of the realm, this was one of the main conditions of his

pledge. He had realized the great fact that the conduct of the war

in the Peninsula depended on supplies: the old aphorism that ‘beyond

the Pyrenees large armies starve and small armies get beaten’ was

at the back of all his schemes for the year 1810. He calculated

that the French would find the greatest difficulty in accumulating

stores sufficient to feed an army of invasion large enough to attack

Portugal, and that, even if such stores could be gathered, there

would be a still greater difficulty in getting them to the front as

they were needed. For not only would it be hard to collect the mass

of transport required for an army of 70,000, 80,000, or 100,000 men,

but the convoys which it formed would find it impossible to move

over the vast stretch of bad roads between Salamanca and Lisbon,

when the communications were cut and the Militia and Ordenança were

infesting every pass and hillside. It was almost certain that the

invaders would make no such attempt to feed themselves from the

rear, but would start with a moderate train, carrying no more than

provisions for a week or two, and hoping to subsist (in the usual

French style) on the resources of the invaded country. Such resources

Wellington was determined that they should not find. They would ere

long be starved out, and forced to fall back on their magazines,

certainly losing a large proportion of their men from privations by

the way. If this scheme had been carried out with rigid perfection,

Masséna’s invasion would have amounted to no more than a promenade

to Torres Vedras, and a prompt return to the borders of Spain with

a famished army. Unfortunately the device, though it worked well

and was ultimately quite successful, was not perfectly executed in

every corner and by every subordinate, so that the French, showing

a magnificent obstinacy, and suffering untold privations, remained

before the Lines for three months before they retired. But retire

they did, and with a loss of a third of their army, and a deplorable

decadence of their morale, so that Wellington’s scheme was fully

justified[193].

[193] Unlike the many French writers who content themselves

with denouncing Wellington’s inhumanity, Pelet (Masséna’s

chief confidant) confesses that the English general’s plan was

perfectly logical. In his \_Aperçu de la Campagne de Portugal\_,

he writes, ‘On a critiqué sans raison son système de guerre.

Il était à peu près infaillible contre un ennemi inférieur en

nombre. Mais peu de généraux oseront “sauver un pays” d’une telle

manière.’

The plan for defeating the enemy by the system of devastation was

neither ‘dictated by the hard heart of a general trained in the

atrocious wars of the East,’ as certain French authors have written,

nor was it (as some of the English authors have supposed) suggested

to Wellington by the measures which had been taken in 1803-4 for

withdrawing all food and transport from the south coast of England,

if Napoleon should be successful in crossing from Boulogne. It was

an ancient Portuguese device, practised from time immemorial against

the Castilian invader, which had never failed of success. Nor had

it come to an end with the War of Independence of 1640, or the war

of the Spanish Succession of 1704. When Spain had made her last

serious assault on Portugal in 1762 (Godoy’s miserable mock-war of

1801 does not deserve to be counted), the plan had worked admirably.

When the Conde d’Aranda invaded the Beira ‘the country had been

“driven” in the most systematic style, and everything that could

not be carried off had been destroyed, so that the Spaniard found

himself in a desert, being unable to discover either provisions,

cars, or peasants: the inhabitants had abandoned their villages,

and carried off everything. The enemy had to be supplied with every

necessary from Spain: the infantry were harassed with fatigue in

remaking the roads, and the cavalry-horses destroyed in conducting

provisions. At last d’Aranda retreated, leaving his sick and wounded

at Castello Branco, with a letter commending them to the attention

of the allies[194].’ Of this same war Dumouriez wrote: ‘As soon as

the Spaniards enter Portugal the King publishes a declaration, by

which he enjoins on his subjects to fall upon the invaders, and the

national hatred always excites them to execute the “Ordinance.” As

the Spanish army pushes on, the villages are depopulated, and the

inhabitants fall back on the capital. The peasantry arrive there in

crowds with wives and children, so that the king at the end of three

months has 200,000 or 300,000 extra mouths to feed[195].’

[194] Continuation of Vertot’s \_History of Portugal\_, ii. 51.

[195] Dumouriez’s \_State of Portugal\_, p. 21, \_n.\_

This sounds like a description of the great migration of 1810, but

was actually written in 1766. It is clear, then, that Wellington

did not invent the system of devastation, but simply utilized, and

carried out to its logical end, an old custom essentially national,

and familiar to the Portuguese from time immemorial. It was the

regular device of the weak against the strong in the Middle Ages,

and differed in nothing from ‘Good King Robert’s Testament,’ the

time-honoured system applied by the Scots to the English in the

fourteenth and fifteenth centuries.

‘In strait placis gar hide all store,

And byrnen ye plaineland thaim before,

Thanne sall thei pass away in haist,

When that thai find na thing but waist,

So sall ye turn thaim with gret affrai,

As thai were chasit with swerd awai.’

Fortunately for himself, for England, and for Europe, Wellington

had to deal with a peasantry almost as frugal, as tough, and as

stubborn in their hatred as the mediaeval Scot. They saw nothing

strange in the demand now made to them, and obeyed. The difficulty

lay with the townsfolk of large places, such as Coimbra, Thomar,

or Santarem, which lay far from the frontier, and had not the

old traditions of the peasantry, since the Spaniards had never

penetrated to their doors since the seventeenth century. Here

there was much recalcitrance, as was but natural; the burgher had

much to abandon where the peasant had little. Yet, as we shall see,

the scheme was carried out in the end, and those who stayed behind

to greet the French could be counted on one hand in places of the

size of Vizeu, Coimbra, or Leiria. That fanatical patriotism went

far towards producing such a result is true, but does not explain

the whole matter: quite as strong a motive was the unforgotten tale

of the horrors that had followed Soult’s entry into Oporto. To the

Portuguese citizens the approach of the French meant probable murder

and rape, hence came the readiness that they showed to depart. There

were exaggerated rumours abroad of the ruthlessness of the French:

was not Loison, the ‘Maneta’ of whom so many atrocious (and mostly

false) stories were told, known to be in high command?

Wellington’s scheme for the clearing of the country-side in face

of the enemy had long been thought out. It included not merely the

evacuation of the towns and villages, but the destruction of bridges,

mills, even ovens; the removal of all animals and means of transport,

the destruction of all food-stuff that could not be carried off, the

burning of all ferry-boats and other small craft on the navigable

rivers. ‘The moment that the enemy crosses the frontier,’ he wrote to

Beresford, ‘the governor of the province of Estremadura must be told

that it is necessary to order all carts, carriages, and other means

of conveyance, with all the provisions they can carry, away. He ought

to have all his arrangements prepared for ordering them off as soon

as the French approach. The Captains Mor[196] and their Ordenança

must be prepared to give the enemy all the opposition in their power,

not by assembling in large bodies, but by lying out in the mountains

and the strong parts of the roads, annoying their patrols and small

parties, and interrupting their communications[197].’ This comes from

an order of February: by August, when a new harvest had been gathered

in, the question of the destruction of food stuffs became more

difficult. The peasantry, as was natural, persisted in hiding rather

than burning what could not be carried off. By one means or another

a certain number of these concealed stores, even when buried in pits

or removed to remote ravines, were discovered by the French, and

enabled them to prolong their precarious stay in front of the Torres

Vedras lines.

[196] For these officers and their duties see vol. ii. pp. 221-2.

[197] Wellington to Beresford, Vizeu, Feb. 28, 1810, long before

the actual invasion.

As to the displacement of the population, Wellington considered

that in many parts it would be sufficient if it took to the hills

for a few days, while the French army was passing. His military

arrangements were such that he thought it impossible that the enemy

would be able either to leave small posts behind him, or to maintain

his lines of communication with Spain. It would suffice, therefore,

that the peasantry in parts off the main roads, and remote from large

towns or points of strategical importance, should make ready for a

merely temporary migration. They must always, however, be ready to

flit again, if fresh columns of the enemy, advancing or retreating,

should come near their abodes. The townsfolk and the inhabitants

of the fertile coast plains of Estremadura and Western Beira were

recommended to retire either to Lisbon or to Oporto, according as

they were nearer to one or to the other. It was clear that the

problem of feeding them there would be a matter for the Government,

for individuals of the poorer classes could not be expected to carry

or to buy provisions for many weeks. Hence there was a need for the

accumulation of immense stores, over and above those required for

the army. The Portuguese Regency did what it could, but in its usual

slip-shod and inefficient fashion, and there is no doubt that much

misery and a certain amount of starvation fell to the lot of the

unhappy emigrants. Fortunately Lisbon and Oporto were great ports

and full of food; but despite of this, the position of the refugees

became deplorable, when Masséna tarried at Santarem two months longer

than Wellington had considered probable. But their suffering was not

in vain: the French were starved out, even if it was a few weeks

later than had been expected.

Having dealt with the organization of the military force of Portugal,

and the arrangements for the depopulation of the country, we have

still to explain the third section of Wellington’s great scheme of

defence--that consisting of fortifications. We have already mentioned

that Almeida and Elvas had been repaired and garrisoned, the former

with 5,000 men, consisting of one regiment of regulars and three of

militia, under the English general William Cox, the other by 8,000

men,--two regiments of regulars and five of militia,--under General

Leite. These were the outer bulwarks of the realm. Campo Mayor, a

small and antiquated fortress, a sort of outlying dependency of

Elvas, was held by one militia battalion under a Colonel Talaya,

a retired engineer officer. It was not expected to make a serious

resistance, but did so in the time of need, and detained a French

division before its walls for some precious days in the spring of

1811, to the great glory and credit of its governor.

Only two other of the ancient fortresses of Portugal were placed in

a state of defence, and made to play a notable part in Wellington’s

general scheme for checking the French. These were Peniche and

Abrantes. The former is a very strong isolated sea-fortress, on a

projecting headland in the Atlantic, forty miles north of Lisbon. It

commands several good creeks and landing-places, suitable for the

embarkation and disembarkation of troops, and is nearly impregnable,

because of the narrowness of the isthmus connecting it with the

mainland. Placed where it is, just in the rear of the position which

an enemy must take who is meditating an attack on Lisbon, it offers

unique opportunities for making incursions on his rear and his

communications. Moreover, it afforded a refuge and a safe point of

departure by sea, for any section of the allied troops which might

become isolated, and be pressed towards the water by the advancing

enemy. Some of Wellington’s officers considered that it was an even

better place for embarkation than Lisbon, if the French should

prove too strong, and the British should be compelled to abandon

Portugal. The Commander-in-Chief thought otherwise, but caused its

fortification to be carefully restored, and garrisoned it with a

picked regiment of militia[198].

[198] D’Urban says in his diary (Dec. 8, 1809): ‘Inspected

Peniche. The isthmus over which the peninsula is approached is

covered with water at high tide, and from the line of works

describing a sort of arc, very powerful cross-fires may be

established upon every part of it. There are nearly 100 good

guns upon the work, the brass ones especially good. This is the

most favourable position that can he conceived for embarking

the British army, should it ever be necessary to do so. The

circumference abounds with creeks and clefts in the rocks, inside

which there is always smooth water, and easy egress for boats.

They are out of the reach of fire from the mainland: indeed,

there is sufficient room to encamp a large force perfectly beyond

the range of the enemy. If it should be thought worth while, this

peninsula could be held by England, even if Portugal otherwise

were in the power of the enemy. There is abundance of water. If

it be the wish of Lord Wellington he can retire upon Lisbon, give

battle in front of it, and, if the day go against him, retreat

upon Peniche and defend it so long as he pleases.’

Even more important than Peniche was Abrantes, the one great

crossing-place of the Tagus above Lisbon where there was a permanent

bridge, and free communication by good roads between Beira and

Alemtejo. It lies at the point where the road from Spain by way

of Castello Branco crosses the road from north to south down the

Portuguese frontier, from Almeida and Guarda to Evora and Elvas. An

invader who has advanced towards Lisbon through Beira has it on his

flank and rear, equally so an invader who has advanced on the same

objective from Badajoz and the Guadiana. It is the natural point

at which to move troops north and south along the frontier, though

Wellington had established an alternative temporary crossing-point at

Villa Velha, thirty miles higher up the river, by means of pontoons.

But this secondary passage was inferior in safety, since it was not

protected by a fortress like Abrantes. Orders were given to burn the

pontoons if ever a French force from the East should came near. At

Abrantes, on the other hand, the boat-bridge could be pulled up and

stacked under the city walls in the event of an attack, and did not

need to be destroyed. The town is situated on a lofty eminence upon

the north bank of the Tagus. Its fortifications were antiquated in

1809, but had been for many months in process of being rebuilt and

strengthened by the English engineer Patton. With new earthworks

and redoubts it had been made a strong place, which could not be

taken without a regular siege and plenty of heavy artillery. Here

Wellington had placed a garrison of two militia regiments under the

Portuguese general Lobo, whose orders were to resist to the last,

and to make sure of burning the boat-bridge, down to the last plank,

before surrendering. The French never put him to the test, since they

had no heavy guns with them, and therefore regarded it as hopeless

to attempt an attack on the place[199].

[199] D’Urban has a long disquisition on Abrantes in his diary.

Its weak points, he says, were an outlying hill on the Punhete

road, which gave a favourable position for hostile batteries, and

the friable nature of the gravelly soil, which did not bind well

in trenches and outworks.

Almeida and Elvas, Peniche and Abrantes, were regular fortresses with

large garrisons. There were, however, other points where Wellington

ordered fortifications of a less permanent kind to be thrown up,

because he thought them of first-rate strategical importance. The two

most important were one on the northern line of advance which the

French might take, the other on the central or Castello Branco line.

The first was a line of redoubts behind the river Alva, just where it

joins the Mondego, on either side of the bridge and village of Ponte

de Murcella. It was here, he thought, that Masséna would choose his

road, along the south bank of the Mondego, if he marched on Lisbon

by the Beira line. But the Marshal moved by Vizeu, partly (as it

seems) because he had heard of the fortifications of this defile, and

the works were never used. Equally unprofitable (so it chanced) was

another important series of field-works, constructed to cover the

lowest reach of the Zezere against an invader who should come by the

Castello Branco road, and should have masked or taken Abrantes. This

was a line of redoubts and trenches, almost a fortified camp, on the

east bank of the river from Tancos to opposite Martinchel, blocking

both the roads which lead from Castello Branco into Estremadura.

Masséna, coming not by the route which was guarded against, but from

Leiria and Thomar, took the lines of Zezere in the rear, and they

proved useless.

Along with the precautions taken on the banks of the Alva and the

Zezere, two other pieces of engineering must be mentioned. The one,

the destruction of the \_Estrada Nova\_,--the mountain-road which leads

from Fundão and Belmonte to the lower Zezere without passing through

Castello Branco,--has already been noticed, when we were dealing

with the possible lines of invasion in Portugal. The other move was

constructive, not destructive, in character. Foreseeing that Abrantes

might be masked, or besieged on the northern bank of the Tagus, and

all the roads in that direction thereby blocked, while it might

still be very profitable to have free communication between Lisbon

and the Castello Branco region, he caused the road above the south

bank of the Tagus, from opposite Abrantes to the flying-bridge at

Villa Velha, to be thoroughly reconstructed. This route, by Gavião

and Niza, was so much easier in its slopes than the old high-road

Abrantes-Castello Branco, that, even when the latter was safe, troops

moving from east to west, along the Tagus often used it during the

next two years of the war, though it involved two passages of the

river instead of one.

But all the matters of engineering hitherto mentioned were

unimportant and merely subsidiary, when placed beside the one great

piece of work which formed the keystone of Wellington’s plan for

the defence of Portugal. His whole scheme depended on the existence

of an impregnable place of refuge, available both for his army, and

for the emigrant population of the country-side which he was about

to devastate. He must have a line on which the invader could be

finally checked and forced to halt and starve. If such a line had not

existed, his whole scheme would have been impracticable, and after

a lost battle he might have been driven to that hurried embarkation

which the ministers in London foresaw and dreaded. But his eye had

been fixed upon the ground in front of Lisbon ever since his second

landing in the Peninsula in April 1809, and there he thought that the

necessary stronghold might be found. A full year before Masséna’s

invasion he had informed the British cabinet that though he could not

undertake to defend all Portugal, ‘for the whole country is frontier,

and it would be difficult to prevent the enemy from entering by

some point or other,’ he yet conceived that he might protect the

essential part of the realm, the capital, against anything save the

most overwhelming odds[200]. The scheme had taken definite shape in

his head when, on October 20, 1809, he wrote his famous dispatch to

Colonel Fletcher, the commanding engineer at Lisbon, directing him to

draw up without delay a scheme for the construction of two successive

lines of trenches and redoubts, covering the whole stretch of country

from the Atlantic to a point on the estuary of the Tagus twenty miles

or more north of the capital. This was, in its essentials, the order

for the construction of the lines of Torres Vedras, for though the

front designated does not exactly tally with that ultimately taken

up, it only differs from it in points of detail. Fletcher is directed

to survey a line from the mouth of the Castanheira brook to the mouth

of the Zizandre, and another, a few miles behind, from Alhandra on

the Tagus by Bucellas and Cabeça de Montechique towards Mafra. These

roughly represent the two lines of defence ultimately constructed,

though in the end the extreme right flank was drawn back from the

Castanheira to the Alhandra stream. Fletcher is told that the works

will be on the largest scale: the fortified camp above Torres Vedras

is to hold 5,000 men, the works at Cabeça de Montechique alone will

require 5,000 workmen to be set to dig at once; great operations,

such as the damming up of rivers and the creation of marshes many

miles long, are suggested.

[200] For these views of Aug. and Sept. 1809, see vol. ii. p. 610.

How the great scheme worked out, and how the works stood when

Masséna’s long-expected army at last appeared in front of them, will

be told in a later chapter, in its due place. Suffice it here to say

that all through the spring and summer of 1810 they were being urged

forward with feverish haste.

It must not be supposed that it was an easy matter to carry out all

these preparations. The Portuguese government ended by adopting

all Wellington’s suggestions: but it was not without friction that

he achieved his purpose. While he was planning works at the very

gates of Lisbon, and making provisions for the devastation of

whole provinces in view of the approaching invasion, he was often

met by suggestions that it would be possible to defend the outer

frontiers of the realm, and that his schemes were calculated to

dishearten the Portuguese people, rather than to encourage them to

a firm resistance. The Regency, moreover, had enough national pride

to resent the way in which a policy was dictated to them, without

any reference to their own views. The governing party in Portugal

had accepted the English alliance without reserve, but it often

winced at the consequences of its action. There was a view abroad

that the little nation was being set in the forefront of the battle

of European independence mainly for the benefit of Great Britain.

Fortunately the memory of Junot’s dictatorship and Soult’s ravages

was still fresh enough to overcome all other considerations. A

moment’s reflection convinced Wellington’s most ardent critics that

though the British yoke might sometimes seem hard, anything was

better than a return to French servitude. The Regency murmured, but

always ended by yielding, and issued the edicts necessary to confirm

all the orders of the general.

The state of the Portuguese government at this moment requires a

word of explanation. The original Regency confirmed by Sir Hew

Dalrymple in 1808 had been somewhat changed in its personnel. It

was now a more numerous body than at its first installation; of the

original members, only the Patriarch (Antonio de Castro, late bishop

of Oporto), and the Marquez de Olhão (Francisco de Mello e Menezes,

the Constable or Monteiro Mor, as he is more frequently called), now

survived. But four new members had been appointed in 1810. The most

important of them was José Antonio de Menezes e Sousa, generally

known as the ‘Principal Sousa,’ an ecclesiastic who was one of

the band of three Sousa brothers, who formed the backbone of the

anti-French party in Portugal. The eldest of them, Rodrigo de Sousa

Coutinho, Conde de Linhares, was prime minister of the Prince Regent

at Rio de Janeiro. The third, Domingos Antonio de Sousa Coutinho,

afterwards Conde de Funchal, was Portuguese minister in London. Thus

when the Principal entered the Regency, this busy and capable family

could pull the strings alike at Rio, London, and Lisbon, in the

interests of their relations and dependants. This they did without

scruple and without ceasing. Domestic politics in Portugal had always

been a matter of family alliances, as much as of principles. They

presented, indeed, a considerable resemblance to those of Great

Britain during the Whig domination of the eighteenth century. Hence

there was considerable danger that the policy of the alliance against

Napoleon might become identified in the eyes of the Portuguese nation

with the domination of the Sousa faction. That this peril was avoided

was not their fault: they did their best to keep all promotion,

civil and military, for their own adherents; hence came interminable

quarrels on petty personal questions both with Wellington and

Beresford. Fortunately the two Marshals could generally get their way

in the end, when large interests were at stake, because the Sousas

were pledged to the British alliance, and dared not break with it.

To do so would have brought other politicians to the front. But,

meanwhile, unending controversies wasted Wellington’s time and soured

his temper: more than once he is found writing in his dispatches

to Lord Liverpool that the ‘impatient, meddling, mischievous’[201]

Principal ought to be got out of the Regency and promoted to some

foreign embassy, or great civil post, where he could do less harm.

But the British government thought, and probably was right in

thinking, that it was better to bear with known evils than to quarrel

with the Sousa family, and thereby to break up the pro-British party

in Portugal. Wellington had to endure the Principal’s small intrigues

and petty criticism till the end.

[201] Wellington to Lord Liverpool, \_Dispatches\_, vi. p. 435.

The other members who entered the Regency in 1810 were the Conde

de Redondo, Fernando Maria de Sousa Coutinho--another of the Sousa

clan--Doctor Raymundo Nogueira, a law professor of the University of

Coimbra[202] and--far the most important of all--the newly appointed

British Minister at Lisbon, Mr. Charles Stuart. The nomination of

a foreigner to such a post touched Portuguese pride to the quick,

and was looked upon by all enemies of the Sousa faction as an act

of miserable weakness on the part of the Conde de Linhares and the

Prince Regent. It was considered doubtful policy on the part of the

Perceval Cabinet to consent to the appointment, considering the

offence which it was certain to give. In their justification it must

be pleaded that both the Patriarch and the Principal Sousa were men

capable of causing any amount of difficulty by their ill-considered

plans and their personal intrigues, and that a colleague who could

be trusted to keep an eye upon their actions, and to moderate their

ambitions was much needed. Stuart was a man of moderate and tactful

bearing, but could be neither cajoled nor overruled. It was on his

influence in the Regency that Wellington relied most for support. At

this moment there were two questions in process of discussion which

rendered it most necessary that the Portuguese government should

not be left entirely to its own guidance. Taking advantage of the

unhappy condition of Spain, and the weakness of the newly appointed

executive at Cadiz, the Portuguese were pressing for the restoration

of Olivenza, Godoy’s old conquest of 1801, and for the recognition

of the Princess Carlotta of Spain, the wife of the Prince of the

Brazils, as the person entitled to act as Regent of Spain during the

captivity of her brothers at Valençay. Dom Pedro de Sousa Holstein,

the Portuguese minister at Cadiz--a kinsman of Linhares and the

Principal--was actively urging both these demands on the Spanish

government. If he had succeeded in imposing them on Castaños and

his colleagues there would have been desperate friction between the

allies. But by promising the active support of the Portuguese army

within the Spanish frontiers--which he had no power to guarantee, and

which Wellington had absolutely refused to grant--the minister won

some support at Cadiz. Extra pressure was brought to bear upon the

Spaniards by the massing of Brazilian troops on the South American

frontier, on the side of Rio Grande do Sul--a most unjustifiable act,

which might have led to an actual rupture, a thing which the British

government was bound to prevent by every means in its power. The

only way to prevent an open breach between Spain and Portugal was

to check the activity of Sousa Holstein, an end which Stuart found

much difficulty in accomplishing, because the objects for which the

minister was striving, and especially the restoration of Olivenza

to its old owners, were entirely approved by his colleagues in the

Regency. When it is added that there were numerous other points of

friction between the British and the Portuguese governments--such as

the question of free trade with Brazil, that of the suppression of

the slave trade, and that of the form to be adopted for the payment

of the subsidies which maintained the Portuguese army--it is easy

to understand that Stuart’s position on the Council of Regency was

no easy one. He often found himself in a minority of one when a

discussion started: he frequently had to acquiesce in decisions

which he did not approve, merely in order to avoid friction on

matters of secondary importance. But in matters of really primary

moment he generally succeeded in getting his way, owing to the simple

fact that Portugal was dependent on Great Britain for the continuance

of her national existence. Conscious of this, the other members of

the Regency would generally yield a reluctant assent at the last

moment, and Wellington’s plans, when set forth by Stuart, though

often criticized, delayed, and impeded, were in the end carried out

with more or less completeness.

[202] A man of whom all Portuguese writers speak with

respect; even Napier notes him (ii. 386) as ‘a man of talent

and discretion.’ But Wellington seems to have disliked him.

‘The admission of Dr. Raymundo Nogueira to the Regency, and

the reasons of his admission, were truly ludicrous ... his

appointment is to be agreeable to the lower orders--from among

whom he is selected!’ (Wellington to Charles Stuart, Celorico,

Aug. 4, 1810.)

SECTION XIX: CHAPTER III

THE FRENCH PREPARATIONS: MASSÉNA’S ARMY OF PORTUGAL

During the summer campaign of 1809 the French Army of Spain had

received hardly any reinforcements from beyond the Pyrenees. Every

man that the Emperor could arm was being directed against Austria

in May and June. But when Wagram had been won, and the armistice

of Znaym signed, and when moreover it had been discovered that the

British expedition to the Isle of Walcheren need not draw off any

part of the Army of Germany, the Emperor began to turn his attention

to the Peninsula. The armistice with Austria had been signed on July

12: only six days later, on the 18th of the same month, Napoleon

was already selecting troops to send to Spain, and expressing

his intention of going there himself to ‘finish the business’ in

person[203]. But he had made up his mind that it was too late in the

year for him to transport any great mass of men to the Peninsula in

time for operations in the autumn, and had settled that the expulsion

of the English and the conquest of Cadiz, Seville, and Valencia must

be delayed to the spring of 1810. On September 7 he wrote[204] to

approve King Joseph’s decision that Soult should not be allowed to

make any attempt on Portugal in the autumn, and a month later he

advised his brother to defend the line of the Tagus, and drive back

Spanish incursions, but to defer all offensive movements till the

reinforcements should have begun to arrive[205].

[203] ‘Faites-moi connaître la marche que vous faites faire aux

66e, 82e, 26e, etc., etc.: \_lorsque j’entrerai en Espagne\_ cela

me pourra faire une force de 18,000 hommes.’ Napoleon to Clarke,

Schönbrunn, July 18.

[204] Napoleon to Clarke, Schönbrunn, Sept. 7.

[205] Napoleon to Clarke, memoranda for King Joseph, Oct. 3, 1809.

The composition of the new army that was to enter Spain was dictated

in a minute to the Minister of War on October 7, in which the

Emperor stated that the total force was to be about 100,000 men,

including the Guard, that it was all to be on the roads between

Orleans and Bayonne by December, and that he should take command

in person[206]. It may be noted that the troops designated in this

memorandum were actually those which took part in the campaign of

1810, with the exception of the Old Guard, which was held back when

Napoleon determined to remain behind, and to send a substitute as

commander-in-chief in Spain. Since the bulk of the immense column was

only directed to reach Bayonne at the end of the year, it was clear

that it would not be within striking distance of the enemy till March

1810.

[206] Same to same, Oct. 7, 1809.

Down to the month of December 1809, Napoleon’s correspondence

teems with allusions to his approaching departure for Spain. They

were not merely intended to deceive the public, for they occur in

letters to his most trusted ministers and generals. We might be

inclined to suspect an intention to cajole the English Ministry in

the magnificent phrases of the address to the Corps Législatif on

December 3, when the Emperor declares that ‘the moment he displays

himself beyond the Pyrenees the Leopard in terror will seek the Ocean

to avoid shame, defeat, and death.’ But business was certainly meant

when Berthier was advised to send forward his carriages and horses

to Madrid, and when the Old Guard’s departure for the frontier was

ordered[207]. Suddenly, in the third week of December, the allusions

to the Emperor’s impending departure cease. It would appear that his

change of purpose must be attributed not to the news of Ocaña, where

the last great Spanish army had perished, but to a purely domestic

cause: this was the moment at which the question of the Imperial

Divorce came into prominence. It would seem that when Napoleon had

conceived the idea of the Austrian marriage, and had learnt that

his offers were likely to be accepted, he gave up all intention of

invading Spain in the early spring in person. The divorce was first

officially mooted when the ‘protest’ was laid before a Privy Council

on December 15[208], and after that day there is no more mention of

a departure for the South. All through January, February, and March

the negotiations were in progress, and on April 1-2[209] the Emperor

married his new wife. The festivities which followed lasted many

days, and when they were over the Emperor conducted his spouse on a

long tour through the Northern Departments in May, and did not return

to the vicinity of Paris till June, when the army of invasion, which

had long since reached the Peninsula, had been already handed over to

a new chief.

[207] Napoleon to Berthier, Nov. 28.

[208] Napoleon to Clarke, Dec. 5. Minute for the Privy Council

dated Dec. 15, in the \_Correspondance\_.

[209] The civil ceremony took place on the first, the religious

on the second of these two days.

In the months during which the marriage negotiations were in

progress, and the columns of reinforcements were pouring into

Navarre and Old Castile, it is not quite certain what were the

Emperor’s real intentions as to the allocation of the command.

Nothing clear can be deduced from an order given to Junot in the

middle of February ‘to spread everywhere the news of the arrival of

the Emperor with 80,000 men, in order to disquiet the English and

prevent them from undertaking operations in the South[210].’ This

is but a \_ruse de guerre\_; the marriage project was so far advanced

that the ratifications of the contract were signed only four days

later than the date of the dispatch[211], and Napoleon must have

known that he could not get away from Paris for another two months

at the least. But it was only on April 17 that an Imperial Decree,

dated at Compiègne, was published, announcing that not the whole

French force in Spain, but three army corps (the 2nd, 6th, and 8th),

with certain other troops, were to form the Army of Portugal and to

be placed under the command of Masséna, Duke of Rivoli and Prince of

Essling. After this it was certain that the Emperor would not cross

the Pyrenees. Five days later this was made still more clear by an

order to the Commandant of the Guard to recall the old Chasseur and

Grenadier regiments of that corps from the various points that they

had reached on the way to Bayonne, and to send on to Spain only the

Tirailleur and Voltigeur regiments recently raised in 1809, and

generally known as the ‘Young Guard’[212]. Napoleon never took the

field in person without the veteran portion of his body-guard.

[210] Napoleon to Berthier, Paris, Feb. 12.

[211] On Feb. 16: see Napoleon to King Joseph, Paris, Feb. 23.

[212] Napoleon to Clarke, April 22, 1810. Not in the

\_Correspondance\_, but given at length by Ducasse in his \_Memoirs

of King Joseph\_, vii. 275.

The non-appearance of the Emperor had one most important result. If

he had taken the field, every marshal and general in Spain would have

been subject to a single directing will, and would have been forced

to combine his operations with those of his neighbours, whether he

wished or no. On determining to devote the spring and summer of 1810

to nuptial feasts and state progresses, instead of to a campaign

on the Tagus, he did not nominate any single commander-in-chief

to take his place. Masséna, from his seniority and his splendid

military record, might have seemed worthy of such promotion. He was

not given it, but only placed in charge of three army corps, and of

certain parts of Old Castile and Leon and the garrison troops there

residing. This was a vast charge, embracing in all the command of

138,000 men. But it gave Masséna no control over the rest of the

armies of Spain, and no power to secure their co-operation, save

by the tedious method of appeals to Paris. Indeed, the Emperor had

chosen the precise moment of King Joseph’s conquest of Andalusia to

break up such hierarchical organization of command as existed in

the Peninsula. By a decree of February 8 he took the provinces of

Aragon and Catalonia, with the army corps there employed, completely

out of the sphere of the authority of King Joseph: Augereau and

Suchet were forbidden to hold any communication with Madrid, and

were directed to make every report and request to Paris. This would

not have been fatal to the success of the main operations of the

French army, for Aragon and Catalonia were a side-issue, whose

military history, all through the war, had little connexion with

that of Castile and Portugal. But their severance from the military

hierarchy dependent on the King was followed by that of Navarre,

the Basque provinces, Burgos, Valladolid, Palencia, and Toro, which

were formed into four ‘Military Governments’ under Generals Dufour,

Thouvenot, Dorsenne, and Kellermann. These governors were given

complete civil and military autonomy, with power to raise taxes,

administer justice, to name and displace Spanish functionaries, and

to move their troops at their own pleasure, under responsibility to

the Emperor alone. The ‘6th Government’ (Valladolid, Palencia, Toro)

was afterwards placed under the authority of Masséna; the others

remained independent Viceroyalties. Thus military authority in the

Peninsula was divided up for the future between (1) the Commander of

the Army of Portugal, who controlled not only his army but all the

regions which it occupied--Leon, the greater part of Old Castile, and

part of Estremadura; (2) the military governors of Catalonia, Aragon,

Navarre, Biscay, Burgos; (3) the King, who practically controlled his

Army of the Centre and the kingdom of New Castile alone, since Soult,

in Andalusia, though not formally created a ‘military governor,’

practically acted on his own responsibility, without any reference

to the King’s wishes. All the viceroys reported directly to Paris,

and kept the Emperor fully employed with their perpetual bickerings.

How Napoleon came to create and continue such a vicious system it

is hard to conceive. Apparently the explanation must be sought in

the fact that he feared servants with too great power, and acted on

the principle of \_divide et impera\_, despite of the fact that he

knew, as a soldier, that the want of a commander-in-chief is ruinous

in practical war. At the bottom was the idea that he himself could

manage everything, even when his armies were a thousand miles away,

and when it took three weeks or a month to transmit orders to them.

He sometimes acknowledged in a moment of self-realization that this

was a bad arrangement, and that it was impossible for him to conduct

or criticize the details of strategy at such a distance, or under

such conditions. But after a lucid moment he would fall back into

his usual ways of thought, and proceed to give orders and directions

which were obsolete before the dispatches that conveyed them could be

delivered to the hands of his marshals.

To proceed to details--the old Army of Spain had come to a standstill

after it had overrun Andalusia in February 1810. Three corps

under Soult were absorbed by that new conquest, some 73,000 men

in all[213]. Suchet with his 3rd Corps, 26,000 men, held Aragon;

Augereau with the vast 7th Corps, 56,900 in all, did not hold down,

but was executing military promenades in, the turbulent Catalonia.

The 2nd and 6th Corps lay observing Portugal, the former with head

quarters at Talavera, the latter with head quarters at Salamanca. Ney

had now returned to take charge of the 6th Corps, and Reynier (an old

enemy of the English, who had beaten him at Alexandria and Maida) was

named chief of the 2nd Corps. This last had now been shorn of its

third division,--that which had been composed of so many fractional

units in 1809; these had been made over to the 6th Corps, which in

1810 possessed three divisions[214] and no longer two. Reynier had

about 18,000 men, Ney no less than 38,000 after this rearrangement;

he had been assigned Lorges’ dragoon-division as well as the troops

transferred from the 2nd Corps. The King had 14,000 men in Madrid

and New Castile: the old garrisons of the Northern Provinces,

excluding the newly arrived reinforcements, made up nearly 20,000 men

more. This 237,000 sabres and bayonets represents the old army of

1809[215]; the troops sent down by the Emperor after the termination

of the Austrian War had not, for the most part, been absorbed into

the old units, though they had crossed the Pyrenees in December and

January.

[213] Note that the 4th Corps had left behind in Madrid 6,000

men of its 1st division (the 28th Léger, 32nd and 75th Line) and

taken on instead 8,000 men of the division Dessolles, properly

forming part of the ‘Army of the Centre.’

[214] Loison’s division of the 6th Corps received these stray

battalions, which were united to those of the same regiments

which had crossed the Pyrenees with him. They consisted of

a battalion each of the \_Légion du Midi\_, of the \_Légion

Hanovrienne\_, the 26th, 66th, 82nd of the line, and the 32nd

Léger.

[215] All these figures are \_inclusive\_ of men sick and detached,

the former about 16,000, the latter 44,000.

It is now time to see what troops constituted these succours, the

100,000 men with whom the Emperor had originally intended to march

in person to the conquest of the Peninsula. On looking through

their muster roll the first thing that strikes the eye is that very

little--almost nothing indeed--had been taken from the Army of

Germany. The Emperor, though Austria was tamed and Prussia was under

his feet, did not think it safe to cut down to any great extent the

garrisons of Central Europe and Eastern France:

(1) Of all the corps that had taken part in the Wagram campaign only

one had been directed on Spain, and this was a force of the second

line, a unit originally called the ‘Corps de Réserve de l’Armée

d’Allemagne’ and afterwards the 8th Corps. It had played only a small

part in the late war, and was mostly composed of the newly raised 4th

battalions of regiments serving elsewhere. Recruited up to a strength

of 30,000 men by the addition of some stray battalions from Northern

Germany, it was the first of all the new reinforcements to reach

Spain[216]. Indeed, the head of its column reached Burgos by the 1st of

January, 1810. It was assigned to the Army of Portugal. By the drafting

away of some of its 4th battalions to join the regiments to which they

appertained it ultimately came down to about 20,000 men.

[216] Junot’s original corps was reinforced by the 22nd of the

line (4 batts.) drawn from the Prussian fortresses, and by some

units which had hitherto been doing garrison duty in Navarrese

and Biscayan fortresses, where they were now replaced by the

Young Guard. Among these were the Irish Brigade (2 batts.) and

the Prussian regiment which had formed the original garrison of

Pampeluna.

(2) Next in point of importance were the two divisions of the Young

Guard under Generals Roguet and Dumoustier, nineteen battalions,

with three provisional regiments of the Guard Cavalry, nearly 15,000

men in all. These units had been formed in 1809, just in time for

some of them to take their share in the bloody days of Essling and

Wagram. The Emperor did not make them over to the Army of Portugal,

but retained them in Biscay and Navarre, close under the Pyrenees.

Apparently he disliked sending any of his Guards so far afield as

to render it difficult to draw them back to France, in the event

(unlikely as it was at this moment) of further troubles breaking out

in Central Europe. The Guard divisions stayed in Spain two years, but

were never allowed to go far forward into the interior.

(3) Deeply impressed with the danger and difficulty of keeping up the

lines of communication between Bayonne and Madrid, since Mina and

his coadjutors had set the guerrilla war on foot in Navarre and Old

Castile, Napoleon had formed a corps whose special duty was to be

the keeping open of the roads, and the policing of the country-side

between the frontier and the Spanish capital. This was composed of

twenty squadrons of \_Gendarmes\_, all veterans and picked men, each

with a total strength of seven officers and 200 troopers. The decree

ordering their selection from among the \_gendarmerie\_ of Southern

and Central France was published on November 24, 1809: but the first

squadrons only began to pass the Pyrenees in February 1810, and many

did not appear till April and May. Yet 4,000 men were in line by the

summer[217].

[217] For details of this corps and its services see the

monograph, \_La Gendarmerie en Espagne et Portugal\_, by E. Martin,

Paris, 1898.

(4) A few new regiments which had not hitherto been represented in

the Peninsula were moved down thither. Among these were the Neuchâtel

troops from Berthier’s principality, a German division from the minor

states of the Confederation of the Rhine under General Rouyer[218],

which went to Catalonia, the 7th, 13th, and 25th \_Chasseurs à

Cheval\_, with two battalions of Marines. The total did not amount to

more than some 10,000 men.

[218] Nine battalions as follows: Two of Nassau, the others from

Gotha, Weimar, Altenburg, Waldeck, Reuss, Schwarzburg, Anhalt,

and Lippe; strength about 6,000 men.

(5) By far the largest item in the reinforcements was composed of

the 4th battalions of wellnigh every regiment which was already

serving in Spain. The army which had marched across the Pyrenees

in 1808 had been organized on the basis of three field-battalions

to the regiment, the 4th battalion being the dépôt battalion. But

Napoleon had now raised the standard to four (or in a few cases more)

field-battalions, over and above the dépôt. All the fourth battalions

were now existing and available; a few had served in the Austrian

War, many of the others had been lying in the camps which the

Emperor had formed at Boulogne, Pontivy, and elsewhere, to protect

his coasts against possible English descents. Those belonging to 40

regiments already in Spain, with the full complement of 840 men each,

were first ordered to cross the Pyrenees: they numbered 33,600 men:

these were all at the front by May 1810. The Emperor somewhat later

dispatched the fourth battalions of twenty-six regiments more to the

Peninsula, giving to the temporary organization the name of the 9th

Corps. This should have given another 21,840 men, and nearly did so;

their gross total, when all had reached Vittoria in September 1810,

was 20,231. But the 9th Corps should not be reckoned in the first

100,000 men which the Emperor set aside for the spring campaign of

1810, it was a supplementary addition[219].

[219] The 4th battalions ultimately retained in Junot’s corps did

not for the most part belong to regiments of the Spanish army,

but to regiments in Germany or the colonies. They are over and

above the 66 fourth battalions accounted for in the list above.

For details of the whole set of reinforcements see Tables in

Appendix.

(6) The Emperor dealt in a similar way with the cavalry; the

regiments already in Spain had been reduced to a strength of two or

three squadrons by the wear and tear of eighteen months of war. The

dépôts had now got ready two squadrons fit for field service. Those

belonging to sixteen regiments of dragoons, organized into eight

provisional regiments, were sent early to the front, and were all in

Spain by January 1810.

(7) In addition to units like 4th battalions and 3rd and 4th

squadrons added to the strength of each dragoon or infantry regiment,

the Emperor did not neglect to send drafts to fill up the depleted

1st, 2nd, and 3rd battalions and 1st and 2nd squadrons. In the early

months of 1810, 27,000 men, in small drafts not amounting to the

strength of a battalion or squadron were forwarded to recruit the old

units. They went forward in ‘régiments de marche,’ which were broken

up on reaching the head quarters of the corps to which each party

belonged.

Adding together all the units, with an extra allowance of 3,500

artillery for the new batteries that came in with Junot’s Corps,

the Guard divisions, and the 9th Corps, we get as a total of the

reinforcements poured into Spain between December 1809, and September

1810, the following figures:--

Junot’s corps, at its final strength in June,

infantry only 20,000

Young Guard divisions 15,000

Gendarmerie 4,000

New regiments 10,000

4th battalions, the first arrivals 33,600

4th battalions forming the 9th Corps 20,000

Cavalry in organized squadrons 5,000

Artillery in complete batteries 3,500

Drafts, not in permanent units, for Infantry,

Cavalry, and Artillery 27,000

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138,100

This total far exceeds the original 100,000 of which Napoleon had

spoken in the autumn of 1809, but is certainly rather below the

actual number of men received into the Peninsula; the figure for

drafts, in especial, is hard to verify. But as the total strength

of the Army of Spain in the autumn of 1809 was 237,000 men, and in

September 1810, 353,000 men, while at least 25,000 had been lost in

the interval[220], the figures cannot be far out.

[220] Over and above the ordinary death-rate for French troops

quartered in Spain, which was very high, we have to allow for the

losses at Tamames, Ocaña, the conquest of Andalusia, the sieges

of Astorga, Gerona, Ciudad Rodrigo, and Almeida, and all smaller

engagements.

Of this total, as we have already said, the 2nd, 6th, and 8th Corps

and the troops under Kellermann and Bonnet occupying the provinces

of Toro, Palencia, Valladolid, and Santander formed the ‘Army of

Portugal’ assigned to Masséna; he was also given an extra unattached

division under Serras[221], and promised the use of the 9th Corps

when it should have crossed the Pyrenees. The gross total of this

force was in May, when the new Commander-in-Chief had taken up his

post, about 130,000 men, of whom some 86,000 were effective and

available for active operations at the moment. Serras, Kellermann,

and Bonnet were tied down to their local duties--the first had to

look after the Spanish army of Galicia, the second to keep the plains

of Valladolid quiet, the third to hold Santander and (when it was

fully subdued) to enter and overrun the Asturias. The 20,000 men of

the 9th Corps were not yet arrived in Spain[222]. The troops in the

provinces of Burgos, Biscay, and Navarre, though not placed under the

Marshal’s actual command, were yet in existence to cover his rear and

his communications with France. If they are added to the total of the

force which, directly or indirectly, was employed for the conquest

of Portugal, some 30,000 more must be taken into consideration. But,

though they were useful, indeed indispensable, for the conquest of

Portugal, it is fairer to leave them out of consideration.

[221] This division had charge of the Provinces of Leon, Zamora,

and Salamanca, which were not a ‘military government.’

[222] Roughly, on May 15, 2nd Corps 20,000 men, 6th ditto 35,000,

8th ditto 26,000, Cavalry reserve 5,000, effectives present under

arms, besides the sick, who made up about 12,000 more, and some

6,000 men detached. See Tables in Appendix.

But the exact total of an army is, after all, less important than

the character and capacity of its generals. The individuality of

Masséna was the most important factor in the problem of the invasion

of Portugal. He was fifty-two years of age--very nearly the eldest

of all the Marshals--and he was the only one of those on active

service, save Jourdan, who had achieved greatness in the days

before Napoleon arrived at supreme power. He had led an army of

60,000 men when, of the three corps-commanders now under him, Ney

was but a lieutenant-colonel, Junot a young captain, and Reynier a

brigadier-general. Like nearly all the men of the Revolution he had

risen from below; he sprang from a poor family in Genoa: according to

his enemies they were Jews, and his name was but Manasseh disguised.

His personal character was detestable; many of the marshals had an

evil reputation for financial probity, but Masséna’s was the worst

of all. ‘He plundered like a \_condottiere\_ of the Middle Ages,’

wrote one of his lieutenants. He had been in trouble, both with

the Republican government and with the Emperor, for his shameless

malversations in Italy, and had piled up a large private fortune by

surreptitious methods[223]. Avarice is not usually associated with

licentiousness, but he shocked even the easy-going public opinion

of the French army by the way in which he paraded his mistress at

unsuitable moments and in unsuitable company. He took this person,

the sister of one of his aides-de-camp, with him all through the

dangers of the Portuguese campaign, where her presence often caused

friction and delays, and occasionally exposed him to insults[224].

Masséna was hard, suspicious, and revengeful; an intriguer to the

finger-tips, he was always prone to suppose that others were

intriguing against himself[225]. Though an old Republican, who had

risen from the ranks early in the revolutionary war, he had done

his best to make himself agreeable to Napoleon by the arts of the

courtier. Altogether, he was a detestable character--but he was a

great general. Of all the marshals of the Empire he was undoubtedly

the most capable; Davoust and Soult, with all their abilities, were

not up to his level. As a proof of his boldness and rapid skill in

seizing an opportunity the battle of Zurich is sufficient to quote;

for his splendid obstinacy the defence of Genoa at the commencement

of his career has its parallel in the long endurance before the lines

of Torres Vedras at its end. His best testimonial is that Wellington,

when asked, long years after, which of his old opponents was the best

soldier, replied without hesitation that Masséna was the man, and

that he had never permitted himself to take in his presence the risks

that he habitually accepted when confronted with any of the other

marshals[226].

[223] The Emperor once confiscated 3,000,000 francs which Masséna

had collected by selling licences to trade with the English at

Leghorn and other Italian ports. See the Memoirs of General

Lamarque, who carried out the seizure.

[224] See Thiébault, iv. 375; Marbot, ii. 380-1; Duchesse

d’Abrantes, viii. 50. All these may be called scandal-mongers,

but the lady’s presence, and the troubles to which it gave rise,

are chronicled by more serious authorities.

[225] See Foy’s complaints on p. 114 of his \_Vie Militaire\_ (ed.

Girod de L’Ain) as to the way in which the Marshal suspected him

of undermining his favour with the Emperor.

[226] See Lord Stanhope’s \_Conversations with the Duke of

Wellington\_, p. 20.

[Illustration:

ANDRÉ MASSÉNA, DUC DE RIVOLI PRINCE D’ESSLING,

Né à Nice, en 1755,

Mort à sa Terre près Paris, en Avril 1817.]

The fatigues of the late Austrian war, in which he had borne such

an honourable part, had tried Masséna’s health; it was not without

difficulty that the Emperor had persuaded him to undertake the

Portuguese campaign. When he first assembled round him at Salamanca

the staff which was to serve him in the invasion, he astonished

and somewhat disheartened his officers by beginning his greetings

to them with the remark, ‘Gentlemen, I am here contrary to my own

wish; I begin to feel myself too old and too weary to go on active

service. The Emperor says that I must, and replied to the reasons for

declining this post which I gave him, by saying that my reputation

would suffice to end the war. It was very flattering no doubt, but

no man has two lives to live on this earth--the soldier least of

all[227].’ Those who had served under the Marshal a few years back,

and now saw him after an interval, felt that there was truth in what

he said. Foy wrote in his diary, ‘He is no longer the Masséna of the

flashing eyes, the mobile face, and the alert figure whom I knew

in 1799, and whose head then recalled to me the bust of Marius. He

is only fifty-two, but looks more than sixty; he has got thin, he

is beginning to stoop; his look, since the accident when he lost

his eye by the Emperor’s hand[228], has lost its vivacity. The tone

of his voice alone remains unchanged.’ But if the Marshal’s bodily

vigour was somewhat abated, his will was as strong as ever. He needed

it at this juncture, for he had to command subordinates who were

anything but easy to deal with. Ney, though an honest man and an

admirable soldier, had the fault of insubordination in the highest

degree. He never obeyed any one save the Emperor in the true military

fashion. He quarrelled with every colleague that he met--notably

with Soult--and had an old and very justifiable personal dislike for

Masséna. Even before the latter appeared at the front, he had been

heard to use threatening language concerning him. Junot was almost as

bad; having held the chief command in the last Portuguese expedition

he had a strong, if a mistaken, belief that it was becoming that he

should be placed in charge of the second. His record rendered the

idea absurd, but this he was the last to understand, being of an

overweening and self-confident disposition. He was stupid enough to

regard Masséna as his supplanter, and to show sullen resentment. Of

the three chiefs of the army corps about to invade Portugal, Reynier

was the only one on decent terms with his Commander-in-Chief, but

even he was not reckoned his friend[229].

[227] This comes from an eye-witness with no grudge against

Masséna, Hulot, commanding the artillery of the 8th Corps. See

his \_Mémoires\_, p. 303.

[228] Foy, p. 101. The Emperor, a notoriously bad shot, lodged

some pellets in the Marshal’s left eye while letting fly at

a pheasant. Napoleon turned round and accused his faithful

Berthier of having fired the shot: the Prince of Neuchâtel was

courtier enough to take the blame without a word, and in official

histories appears as the culprit (see e. g. Amic’s \_Masséna\_,

p. 272); for other notes see Guingret, p. 250. What is most

astonishing is that Masséna was complaisant enough to affect to

blame Berthier for the disaster.

[229] See the admirable summary of all this in Foy’s diary (Girod

de L’Ain), p. 101. Marbot gives the same views at bottom, but

with his usual exaggeration, and with ‘illustrative anecdotes,’

occasionally of doubtful accuracy.

Masséna’s chief of the staff was Fririon, a scientific soldier and

a man well liked by his colleagues; but it is said that he was not

so much in the Marshal’s confidence as Lieut.-Colonel Pelet, the

senior aide de camp of his staff. Complaints are found, in some

of the letters and memoirs of the time, that Masséna would talk

matters over with Pelet, and issue orders without letting even his

chief of the staff know of his change of plan or new inspiration.

Pelet’s own indiscreet statements on this point seem to justify the

complaints made by others against him[230]. There was friction,

therefore, even within the staff itself, and all that the Marshal

did, or said, was criticized by some of those who should have been

his loyal subordinates, under the notion that it had been inspired by

others, who were accorded a more perfect confidence by their common

chief. Exact knowledge of the disputes in the \_État Major\_ is hard

to obtain, because, when the campaign was over, every man tried to

make out that its failure had been due to the advice given to Masséna

by those of whom he was jealous. At the bottom, however, all this

controversy is not very important--there is no doubt that the Marshal

himself was responsible for all that had happened--he was not the man

to be led by the nose or over-persuaded by ambitious or intriguing

underlings.

[230] Note Pelet’s \_Aperçu sur la Campagne de Portugal\_, nearly

forty pages in the Appendix to \_Victoires et Conquêtes\_, vol.

xxi: for his disputes with Baron Fririon see the \_Spectateur

Militaire\_ for 1841. Pelet says, ignoring the chief of the staff

entirely, ‘qu’il était investi de la confiance \_absolue\_ du

maréchal: qu’il faisait \_seul\_ auprès de lui tout le travail

militaire et politique, qu’il dirigeait la haute correspondance

avec le major-général (Berthier) et les chefs de corps, etc.,

etc.’ For Fririon’s comparative impotence see a story on p. 387

of Marbot’s vol. ii, which may or may not be true--probably the

former.

Pelet’s writings give a poor impression of his brain-power and

his love of exact truth. He says, for example, in his \_Aperçu\_

that Masséna had only 40,000 men in his army of invasion, when it

is certain that he had 64,000. See Baron Fririon’s remarks on him

in \_Spectateur Militaire\_, June 1841, pp. 1-5.

Failure or success is not the sole criterion of merit. Masséna’s

campaign was a disastrous business; yet on investigating the

disabilities under which he laboured, we shall be inclined in the

end to marvel that he did so much, not that he did no more. The

fundamental error was the Emperor’s, who gave him too few men for

the enterprise with which he was entrusted. Napoleon refused to

take the Portuguese troops into consideration, when he weighed the

needs of the expedition. He repeatedly wrote that ‘it was absurd

that his armies should be held in check by 25,000 or 30,000 British

troops,’ as if nothing else required to be taken into consideration.

He did not realize that Wellington had turned the Portuguese regular

army into a decent fighting machine, capable of holding back French

divisions in line of battle--as was shown at Bussaco. He had not

foreseen that the despised militia required to be ‘contained’ by

adequate numbers of troops on the line of communications. Still less

had he dreamed of the great scheme for the devastation of Portugal,

which was to be not the least effective of the weapons of its

defender. But of this more will be said in the proper place.

SECTION XIX: CHAPTER IV

THE MONTHS OF WAITING: SIEGE OF ASTORGA (MARCH-MAY 1810)

Masséna, as we have seen, was only appointed Commander-in-Chief

of the Army of Portugal on April 17, 1810, and did not appear at

Valladolid, to take up his charge, till May. The campaign, however,

had begun long before under the Emperor’s own directions. There

were preliminary operations to be carried out, which could be

finished before either the new General-in-Chief or the main body

of the reinforcements from beyond the Pyrenees had arrived. These

were the repression of the insurgent bands of Navarre, Biscay, and

Old Castile, the firm establishment of the line of communications

between Salamanca and Bayonne, and the capture of the outlying

Spanish fortresses, Astorga and Ciudad Rodrigo, which served as

external defences for the Portuguese frontier. ‘Les besoins en

Espagne sont successifs,’ wrote the Emperor early in the winter of

1809-10[231], ‘il faut d’abord un corps qui soumette les derrières.

Étant en Novembre il serait impossible de réunir tous les moyens

avant du commencement de janvier. Et dans cette presqu’île coupée de

montagnes les froids et les neiges de janvier ne permettront de rien

faire.’ All that he could do before spring would be to send forward

Junot’s corps, and the other earlier reinforcements, to positions

from which they should be ready to strike, the moment that the fine

weather began. With the coming of the new year, when these corps had

reached their destined positions, the imperial orders begin to abound

in elaborate directions for the extermination of the guerrillas of

the Upper Ebro and the Upper Douro[232], orders which led to much

marching and counter-marching of the newly arrived troops, but to

little practical effect in the way of repression, for skilled leaders

like Mina, the Empecinado, and Julian Sanchez, nearly always slipped

between the fingers of their pursuers, and on the few occasions when

they were pressed into a corner, simply bade their men disperse and

unite again at some distant rendezvous. These operations, however,

were wholly subsidiary: the actual advance against Portugal only

commences with the orders given to Junot in February to concentrate

his corps at Valladolid, to hand over the charge of Salamanca and Old

Castile to Kellermann’s dragoons and the divisions of the 6th Corps,

and then to subdue the whole of the plain-land of Leon, as far as the

foot of the Asturian and Galician mountains, including the towns of

Benavente, Leon, and Astorga. Bonnet and his division, now as always

based on Santander, were already advancing to invade the Asturias,

and to threaten Galicia from the east. Ney with the 6th Corps was

ordered to draw near to the frontier of Portugal on the side of

Ciudad Rodrigo, ‘to inundate all the approaches to that kingdom with

his cavalry, disquiet the English, and prevent them from dreaming

of transferring themselves back to the south.’ The news of the near

approach of the Emperor himself with 80,000 men was to be spread in

every direction[233].

[231] Napoleon to Clarke, Oct. 30, 1809.

[232] See for example Jan. 20, 1810, to Berthier; Jan. 31, to

same; Feb. 12, to same.

[233] \_Correspondance\_, vol. xx, Napoleon to Berthier, Feb. 12,

1810.

Meanwhile the third great unit which was to form part of the

projected Army of Portugal, the 2nd Corps (under the temporary

command of General Heudelet[234]), was taking part in a separate and

remote series of operations, far to the South. This corps, it will be

remembered, had been left on the Tagus about Talavera and Oropesa,

to protect the rear of Soult and King Joseph, when they marched

in January with the 1st, 4th, and 5th Corps to conquer Andalusia.

That exploit having been accomplished, Mortier went, with half of

the 5th Corps, to attack Badajoz, and to subdue Estremadura, which

Soult imagined to be defenceless, since Albuquerque had marched

with the old Estremaduran army to save Cadiz. Mortier advanced

unopposed to the walls of Badajoz, which he reached on February 12,

but found himself unable to undertake its siege with his small force

of 9,000 men, because a new Spanish host had just appeared upon

the scene. La Romana, with three of the divisions of the army that

had been beaten at Alba de Tormes in November, had marched down the

Spanish-Portuguese frontier by the Pass of Perales; and on the same

day that Mortier appeared in front of Badajoz, his vanguard arrived

at Albuquerque, only twenty miles away. These divisions were 13,000

strong: La Romana could add to this force a few thousands more left

behind by Albuquerque. Mortier rightly felt that he dare not commence

the regular siege of Badajoz when he had such superior numbers in

his front. He therefore asked for reinforcements, both from Soult

and from King Joseph. The former could spare nothing from Andalusia

at this moment, but the 2nd Corps was ordered to leave the Tagus

and place itself in communication with Mortier. Heudelet had other

projects on hand at the moment: he had just seized Plasencia on

February 10, and was engaged in bickering with Carlos d’España and

Martin Carrera, whom La Romana had left in the Sierra de Gata. But,

in obedience to his orders, he called in his detachments, and marched

by Deleytosa and Truxillo into the valley of the Guadiana. This

movement, from the French point of view, was a hazardous one; by the

transference southward of the 2nd Corps, a long gap was left between

Ney at Salamanca and Heudelet and Mortier in Estremadura. No troops

whatever covered Madrid from the side of the south-west and the

valley of the Tagus, and an irruption of the English on this line was

one of the dangers which Napoleon most dreaded[235]. He was unaware

of Wellington’s deeply-rooted determination to commit himself to no

more Spanish campaigns.

[234] Soult had given up the 2nd Corps when he became King

Joseph’s Major-General: Reynier, appointed to command it, had not

yet appeared.

[235] ‘Il faut prévoir que les Anglais peuvent marcher sur

Talavera pour faire diversion,’ wrote Napoleon on Jan. 31 to

Berthier. But Heudelet had been moved before his caution could

reach Madrid.

Long before Heudelet approached the Guadiana, Mortier had been

compelled, partly by want of supplies, partly by the threatening

attitude of La Romana, who began cautiously to turn his flanks, to

retire from in front of the walls of Badajoz. He gave back as far

as Zafra on the road to the south, and six days after marched for

Seville, leaving only a rearguard at Santa Ollala, on the extreme

border of Estremadura. Soult required his presence, for, on account

of a rising in Granada, and a threatening movement by the Spanish

army of Murcia, the French reserves in Andalusia had been moved

eastward, and its capital was almost stripped of troops. Hence when

the 2nd Corps reached Caçeres on March 8, and appeared in front of

Albuquerque on March 14, it found that the 5th Corps had departed,

and that it was nearly 100 miles from the nearest friendly post.

Heudelet, therefore, having all La Romana’s army in his front, and

no orders to execute (since the junction with Mortier had failed),

retired to Merida, where Reynier arrived from the north, superseded

him, and took command. Here the 2nd Corps remained practically

passive for the rest of the spring, keeping open, but with difficulty

and at long intervals, the communications between Madrid and Seville,

by means of detachments at Truxillo and Almaraz. To a certain

extent Reynier kept La Romana’s army in check, but he did not fully

discharge even that moderate task, for the Spanish general detached

southward two of his divisions, those of Contreras and Ballasteros,

to threaten the frontiers of Andalusia and stir up an insurrection

in the Condado de Niebla and the other regions west of Seville.

Ballasteros surprised the cavalry brigade of Mortier’s corps at

Valverde, at midnight on February 19, and scattered it, killing

Beauregard, the brigadier. He then advanced to Ronquillo, only twenty

miles from Seville, where, on March 25-6, he had an indecisive

engagement with one of Gazan’s brigades, after which he retired into

the Condado. Mortier, thereupon, came out against him from Seville at

the head of a whole division. Unwisely offering battle at Zalamea,

on the Rio Tinto, on April 15, Ballasteros was beaten, and retired

into the mountains. Thither, after some time, he was pursued by

Mortier’s columns, and again defeated at Araçena on May 26. But he

rallied his broken force in the Sierra de Araçena, where he remained

for long after, a thorn in the side of the Army of Andalusia, always

descending for a raid in the plains of Seville when he was left

unwatched. Soult was forced to keep a considerable part of the 5th

Corps in observation of him--a detachment that he was loth to spare.

La Romana’s central divisions, meanwhile, those of Charles O’Donnell

(brother of the Henry O’Donnell who had distinguished himself at

Gerona in the previous autumn), Mendizabal, and Contreras, bickered

with the 2nd Corps in the direction of Caçeres and Torresnovas,

without any notable advantage on either side. But as long as Reynier

lay at Merida, and Mortier might at any moment come up from Seville

to his aid, Wellington felt uneasy as to the possibility of a French

advance between Tagus and Guadiana, and, regarding La Romana’s army

as an insufficient security on this side, moved Hill with a force

of 12,000 men to Portalegre, close to the rear of Badajoz. Hill had

with his own British division, now consisting of three brigades[236],

another division composed of Portuguese, under General Hamilton[237],

the English heavy cavalry brigade of Slade, a weak Portuguese cavalry

brigade under Madden[238], and three batteries. He was ordered not

to countenance any offensive movements on the part of La Romana, but

to support him, and to endeavour to cover Badajoz, if the French

should unite the 2nd and 5th Corps, and make a serious move westward.

There was no need, as matters turned out, for any such support,

for Reynier, though he executed some rather useless feints and

counter-marches in April and May, undertook nothing serious. One of

his demonstrations drew Hill to Arronches, close to Elvas, on May 14,

but it turned out to be meaningless, and the British troops returned

to their usual head quarters at Portalegre a few days later. There

seems to have been some uncertainty of purpose in all this manœuvring

of the French in Estremadura. Reynier was not strong enough to offer

to fight La Romana and Hill combined; he might have done so with good

prospect of success if Mortier could have been spared from Andalusia;

but half the 5th Corps was usually detached far to the south,

hunting the insurgents of the Sierra de Ronda, and the other half

had to garrison Seville and watch Ballasteros. Hence Reynier, left

to himself, did no more for the common cause of the French in Spain

than detain Hill’s two divisions in the Alemtejo. That Wellington

was thus obliged to divide his army was no doubt a permanent gain

to the enemy: yet they obtained it by the very doubtful expedient of

leaving nothing on the Tagus; a push in the direction of Plasencia

and Almaraz by even a small Spanish force would have been a very

tiresome and troublesome matter for King Joseph, who would have been

forced either to bring down Ney from Salamanca, or to call Reynier

back from the Guadiana, for Madrid was entirely uncovered on the

West. But nothing of the sort happened; La Romana kept his main

body concentrated in front of Badajoz, and had the full approval of

Wellington for doing so.

[236] Hill’s division, two brigades strong at Talavera in August,

had received a third brigade in September under Catlin Craufurd,

consisting of the 2/28th, 2/34th, and 2/39th.

[237] Composed of the 2nd, 4th, 10th, and 14th regiments, each

two battalions strong, with 4,500 bayonets.

[238] 1st and 4th Portuguese cavalry.

At the extreme opposite flank of the French front, on the shores

of the Bay of Biscay, there was going on at this same time a

side-campaign conducted with a much greater degree of vigour, but

equally indecisive in the end. The Asturias had been almost stripped

of troops by Del Parque, in order to reinforce the army that fought

at Tamames and Alba de Tormes. When the Duke moved his main force

southward after the last-named fight, he carried off with him the

division of Ballasteros, which had been the core of the old Asturian

Army. General Antonio Arce was left in the principality with some

4,000 men, whom he kept at Colombres, behind the Deba, under General

Llano-Ponte, watching the French force in the province of Santander.

New levies, little more than 2,000 strong, were being collected

at Oviedo. In the end of January General Bonnet, whose division

at Santander had received its drafts, and had been strengthened

up to 7,000 men[239], thought himself strong enough to drive in

Arce’s weak line and to make a dash at the Asturian capital. On

the 25th he attacked the lines of Colombres, and carried them with

no difficulty. On the 31st he captured Oviedo, which was evacuated

by the Captain-General Arce and the local Junta without serious

fighting. But that active partisan Juan Porlier at once cut off his

communication with Santander, by seizing Infiesto and Gijon. Bonnet

at once evacuated Oviedo, and turned back to clear his rear. Porlier

escaped along the coast to Pravia, and meanwhile the main body of

the Asturians, under General Barcena, reoccupied the capital. Having

driven off Porlier, the French general marched westward once more,

beat Barcena at the bridge of Colleto on February 14, and again made

himself master of Oviedo. The Asturians rallied behind the Narcea,

where they were joined by a brigade of 2,000 men sent to their aid by

Mahy, the Captain-General of Galicia.

[239] He had 7,094 men with the colours, besides sick and

detached, by the imperial muster rolls of Jan. 15, 1810.

That province, like the Asturias, had been left almost ungarrisoned

by Del Parque, when he took the old ‘Army of Galicia’ across the

Sierra de Gata, and transferred it to Estremadura. Mahy had been left

behind with the skeleton of one division, which he was to recruit, as

best he could, by new levies. His main preoccupation at this moment

was the defence of the newly fortified stronghold of Astorga, which

was already threatened by the French troops in the plains of Leon.

But seeing his flank menaced by Bonnet’s advance, he lent what men he

could spare to aid in the defence of the Asturias.

The Asturian junta, having deposed General Arce for incapacity

and corruption, and appointed Cienfuegos to take over his troops,

ordered the resumption of offensive operations against Bonnet in

March. Porlier, their great partisan-hero, made a circuit along the

coast, and threatened the French communications with Santander.

At the same time their main force advanced against Oviedo by the

valley of the Nalon. Bonnet’s advanced brigade was driven in, after

a sharp skirmish at Grado on March 19, and disquieted by Porlier’s

simultaneous attack on his rear, he evacuated the Asturian capital

for the \_third\_ time, and gave back as far as Cangas de Onis, in the

valley of the Ona. He then called up all the reinforcements that

he could obtain from Santander, and marched--for the fourth time

in three months!--on Oviedo with his whole division; the Spaniards

retired without offering serious opposition, and took up a line

behind the Narcea [March 29]. This time Bonnet left them no time to

rally, but forced the passage of that river, whereupon the Asturians

ascended to Tineo in the mountains, while the Galician succours

gave back to Navia, almost on the edge of their own principality

[April 25-26]. After this, Bonnet’s offensive force was spent;

having to occupy Oviedo and its ports of Gijon and Aviles, as well

as all the central and eastern Asturias, and, moreover, to defend

his communication with Santander from new attacks of Porlier, his

strength sufficed for no more. His 7,000 men were immobilized for

the rest of the year: he had conquered two-thirds of the Asturias,

and barely succeeded in keeping it down. But he was quite unable to

spare a man to aid in French operations in the plains of Leon, or

even to make a serious attempt to threaten Galicia. Once or twice he

succeeded in communicating with the forces which Junot (and after him

Kellermann and Serras) commanded in the plains beyond the Cantabrian

range, by expeditions pushed down through the pass of Pajares on

to Leon; but the road was always closed again by the guerrillas,

and no co-operation could take place. In short, the Spaniards lost

the greater part of the Asturias, and the French lost the further

services of Bonnet’s division[240]. It had no power to threaten

Galicia, because it was forced to keep garrisons in Gijon, Aviles,

Lastres, Santona, and all the sea-ports, with a full brigade at

Oviedo in the centre, to support them. Any concentration of troops,

leading to the evacuation of the smaller garrisons, at once let loose

the guerrillas from their mountains. Bonnet had but 7,000 men in

all: of these, not more than half could be used for an expedition,

and such a force was too small to have any practical effect on the

general course of events in north-western Spain.

[240] I cannot understand Napier’s narrative of this little

campaign, on pages 352-4 of his vol. ii. It runs as follows,

and seems to have no relation to the facts detailed by Belmas,

Toreno, Arteche, or any other historian. No mention is made of

the four captures of Oviedo!

‘Mahy was organizing a second army at Lugo and in the Asturias.

D’Arco [Arce] commanded 7,000 men, 3,000 of whom were posted at

Cornellana under General Ponte.... Bonnet, from the Asturias,

threatened Galicia by the Concija d’Ibas: having destroyed

Ponte’s force at Potes de la Sierra [30 miles from Colombres,

where the actual fight took place], he menaced Galicia by the

pass of Nava de Suarna [a place which his vanguard did not

approach by a matter of 40 miles].... But he did not pass Nava

de Suarna, and General D’Arco rallied the Asturian fugitives at

Louarca. It seems probable that while Bonnet drew the attention

of the Galician army towards Lugo [he was never within 100 miles

of that place], Junot thought to penetrate by Puebla Senabria.

But finally Junot, drawing a reinforcement from Bonnet, invested

Astorga with 10,000 infantry,’ &c. [No troops from Bonnet’s force

ever appeared before Astorga.]

This last blunder is apparently borrowed from \_Victoires et

Conquêtes\_, xx. 12, which states that General Bonnet detached

Jeannin’s brigade, the 46th and 65th, to Astorga. But these regiments

did not belong to Bonnet, but were, from the first to the last,

parts of Junot’s own corps, and never entered the Asturias. Compare

Napoleon, \_Correspondance\_, xx. 21, the muster rolls of Jan. 1, Feb.

15, and Belmas, iii. p. 46.

Bonnet’s operations were, of course, wholly subsidiary; the really

important movements that were on foot in the early spring of 1810

were those of Junot and Ney in the plains of Leon. In pursuance

of the Emperor’s orders to the effect that the whole plain-land

of Leon was to be occupied, as a preliminary to the invasion of

Portugal, Loison, who had re-entered Spain at the head of a number

of battalions which were ultimately to join the corps of Ney, was

ordered to move on from Valladolid and occupy the country about

Benavente and Astorga. He was left free to select either of those

towns as his head quarters, and was directed to communicate with

Bonnet, when the latter should have entered the Asturias, so that

their operations should threaten Galicia simultaneously[241].

Loison’s expedition, however, proved a complete failure; he marched

towards Astorga early in February with nearly 10,000 men. On the

11th he appeared before that town, and learnt that since Carrié’s

reconnaissance in October 1809[242], it had been much strengthened.

La Romana had repaired the breaches of its mediaeval walls. He had

thrown up entrenchments round the suburb of La Reteibia, which

occupies that part of the hill of Astorga, which is not covered

by the town itself. He had also established outlying posts in the

suburbs of San Andrés and Puerta del Rey, which lie at the foot of

the hill, on its northern and eastern sides. Fourteen guns, only two

of them 12-pounders, the rest light, had been mounted on the walls.

The place, therefore, was a make-shift fortification of the most

antiquated style. General Garcia Velasco, who had been left behind in

Galicia with one division of the old Northern army when Del Parque

marched for Estremadura, was in charge of this portion of the Spanish

front, under the superintendence of Mahy, the Captain-General. He had

placed half his troops--five battalions, or 2,700 men, in Astorga,

while he himself with the remainder lay beyond the mountains, at

Villafranca, in the Vierzo, with about the same force. The total of

organized troops in Galicia at this moment did not exceed 8,000 men,

including the small brigade which Mahy sent to the Asturias, and a

detachment under Echevarria at Puebla de Senabria. Astorga had not

been expecting a siege at such an early date as February 11; it was

only provisioned for twenty days, and the guns had not ammunition

to last for even that short space of time. The governor, José

Santocildes, was a man of courage and resource, who knew how to put

on a bold face to an impossible situation, or instant disaster might

have followed.

[241] Napoleon to Berthier, Jan. 11, 1810.

[242] See p. 76.

Loison was disconcerted to find that Astorga, his destined head

quarters, was held and garrisoned against him. His engineers

reconnoitred its walls, and informed him that it could not be taken

without a regular battering-train. He had only field-pieces with him,

the weather was abominable, and his troops--all conscript battalions

from France--were suffering terribly from the continued rain and

cold. Wherefore he contented himself with inviting Santocildes to

surrender, promising him promotion at King Joseph’s hands, if he

‘would implore the clemency of a sovereign who treats all Spaniards

like a father[243].’ When the governor sent a curt reply, intimating

that he and his people intended to do their duty, Loison retired to

La Baneza, and reported to his chiefs that he was helpless for want

of siege-guns. He announced at the same time that he had attempted

to communicate with Bonnet at Oviedo, by sending two battalions to

the foot of the pass of Pajares, but that the mountain roads were all

blocked with snow, and that this detachment had been forced to fall

back into the plains, without obtaining any news of what was afoot in

the Asturias[244].

A few days later, the head of Junot’s corps entered the province

of Leon, and Loison was directed to move southward and join Ney

at Salamanca. His place on the Esla and the Orbigo was taken by

Clausel’s division of the 8th Corps. The newly arrived general

executed another reconnaissance to the neighbourhood of Astorga, and

on February 26 sent Santocildes a second summons, in the name of

Junot. It received the same answer that had been given to Loison.

It was clear that Astorga must be besieged, and that a battering

train must be placed at the disposition of the force charged with

the operation. But in the present state of the roads it would take

some time to bring heavy guns to the front. Further operations had

to be postponed. The 6th Corps, it may be remarked, had executed

at the same time that Loison appeared in front of Astorga, a

demonstration against Ciudad Rodrigo. King Joseph had written from

Andalusia to beg Ney to threaten the place, while the news of the

French victories in the south were still fresh, assuring him that

the Spaniards were so cowed that a prompt surrender was probable.

The Marshal, though doubting the wisdom of these optimistic views,

concentrated his corps, advanced to San Felices, and on February

13 summoned Rodrigo. He got from General Herrasti, the governor,

an answer as bold and confident as that which Loison received from

Santocildes, and returned to Salamanca to disperse his troops in

cantonments and ask for a battering-train[245]. His short and

ineffective excursion to the banks of the Agueda had taken him in

sight of the British outposts on the Spanish frontier, and had

induced Wellington for a moment to think that the invasion of

Portugal was at hand. It was impossible that he should have guessed

that Ney’s advance had no better cause than King Joseph’s foolish

confidence. Hence the withdrawal of the 6th Corps, after the vain

summons of Ciudad Rodrigo, was as inexplicable as its advance. ‘I do

not understand Ney’s movement,’ he wrote to his trusted subordinate,

Robert Craufurd, ‘coupled as it is with the movement upon Badajoz

from the south of Spain. The French are not strong enough for the two

sieges at the same time, and I much doubt whether they are in a state

to undertake one of them[246].’ The prompt retirement of Ney from

before Ciudad Rodrigo, and of Mortier from before Badajoz, completely

justified his conclusions within a day or two of the writing of his

letter.

[243] For the letters of Loison to Santocildes and the reply of

the Spanish brigadier, see the correspondence in Belmas, iii. pp.

53-6.

[244] Loison to Berthier, Feb. 16, from La Baneza.

[245] For notes as to the cause and execution of this abortive

movement, see the diary of Ney’s aide de camp, Sprünglin, pages

402-3.

[246] Wellington to Craufurd, Feb. 16. Compare similar remarks in

Wellington to Beresford, from Vizeu, Feb. 21, 1810.

There was nothing for the French in the kingdom of Leon to do, save

to await the arrival of the great battering-train which Napoleon

had bestowed upon his Army of Portugal. It was far to the rear: on

February 20 its head was only beginning to approach Burgos, and

its tail had not quitted Bayonne. The reason of this tardiness was

the want of draught animals at the southern dépôts of France. The

equipment of the train and the artillery of the 8th Corps, and the

other great reinforcements which had just passed the Pyrenees,

had exhausted the available supplies of horses[247], and when the

authorities at Bayonne had to place the ‘grand park’ on a war footing

there was intolerable delay. Even when detachments of the park had

started, they made slow progress in Spain, for the French horses died

off rapidly in the bitter weather of the plateau of Old Castile, and

it was almost impossible to replace them by requisition from the

country-side. Junot, bold to the verge of rashness, and feverishly

anxious to remake the reputation that he had lost at Vimiero, could

not endure the delay. He sent to requisition Spanish guns from the

governors of Burgos and Segovia, dispatched his own teams to draw

them, and when he heard that a small train was procurable, ordered

the 8th Corps towards Astorga on March 15, leaving the cannon to

follow. The month’s delay in the investment had enabled Santocildes

to fill up the supply of food and ammunition which had been so low

in February; he had now got his fortress in as good state as was

possible, considering the intrinsic weakness of its mediaeval walls,

and had induced 3,000 of the 4,000 inhabitants to retire to Galicia.

[247] Even the 8th Corps had to leave guns behind at Bayonne for

want of horses, Belmas, ii. 13.

On March 21 Clausel’s division invested Astorga, while Solignac’s

came up to Leon and Benavente in support, and St. Croix’s division of

dragoons took post in advance of La Baneza, to observe the Spanish

forces in southern Galicia and the Portuguese of the Tras-os-Montes.

Till the guns should arrive, there was nothing to be done save to

choose the point of attack, prepare fascines and gabions, and open

the first parallel, out of harm’s way from the small artillery of the

garrison--none of it heavier than a 12-pounder. Valazé, Junot’s chief

engineer, opined that the low-lying suburbs at the foot of the hill

of Astorga might be neglected, and the newly entrenched Reteibia

on the high ground masked by a false attack, while the projecting

and unflanked north-west corner of the old walls of the city itself

might be battered from the slopes below: here, as in all its circuit,

the place had neither ditch nor glacis: there was simply the stout

mediaeval wall, broken every 30 yards by a small square tower, which

followed the sky-line of the plateau.

The first three weeks of the siege had an unusual character, since

the French could build what works they pleased, but could not

seriously batter Astorga with the sixteen field-guns of small calibre

belonging to the division lying before the walls. The officer in

temporary command of the artillery, Colonel Noël, contented himself

with opening fire from various false attacks, from which the guns

were repeatedly moved, in order to distract the attention of the

enemy from the chosen front on the north-west, where the approaches

were completed, and a great battery constructed, ready for the

siege-guns when they should arrive. Meanwhile there was a good deal

of infantry skirmishing in and about the lower suburbs, in whose

outskirts the French ultimately established themselves, though they

had no intention of pushing up to the walls either from Puerta del

Rey or from San Andrés[248]. The garrison defended itself well,

executed several vigorous sorties, and lost no post of importance,

though the line of resistance in the suburbs was gradually thrust

back. Santocildes received several encouraging messages from his

chief Mahy, who announced that he was bringing up to the pass of

Foncebadon, on the edge of the plain of Astorga, every man that

Galicia could furnish. But even when the Captain-General had brought

his reserves from Lugo to join Garcia’s division, they had only

5,000 bayonets. To hold them off, Junot sent Clausel’s division to

the outposts, and replaced it in the trenches by Solignac’s and

one brigade of Lagrange’s. Mahy, in face of such an accumulation

of men, was absolutely helpless. Echevarria, with his weak brigade

from Puebla de Senabria, had pushed a little forward, to give moral

support to Mahy. He was surprised and routed near Alcanizas on April

10, by St. Croix’s dragoons.

[248] There are good narratives in the autobiographies of Noël

and Hulot of the artillery, beside the excellent account in

Belmas, vol. iii.

[Illustration: SIEGE OF ASTORGA]

On the 15th the siege-train arrived from Valladolid; it was

small[249], but sufficient against an enemy so miserably provided

with guns as Santocildes. Junot himself came up on the 17th to watch

the effect of the attack. It was instant and overpowering. When

once the artillery had been placed in the works prepared for it,

and had begun its fire, the old walls of Astorga began to crumble.

The light Spanish pieces on the enceinte were overpowered, despite

of the gallant way in which the gunners stuck to their work[250].

By noon on the 21st of April the north-western angle of the walls

of Astorga had been beaten down, and the fallen stones, there being

no ditch, had accumulated at the foot of the broad breach, so as

to give an easy entrance. Fortunately for the defence, there was

a large church just inside the angle: its roof and tower had been

shot down, but the garrison had made themselves strong in the lower

parts of the building, and threw up traverses from it to the wall on

each side of the breach. This gave them a second line of defence,

though but a weak one, and when Junot sent in a summons in the

afternoon Santocildes refused his offer. At seven the French general

bade 700 men storm the breach; the forlorn hope was composed of

the voltigeur and grenadier companies of the Irish Legion and the

47th of the Line. The column penetrated to the foot of the breach

without much difficulty, though exposed to heavy musketry from the

walls, and a flanking fire from the suburb of the Reteibia. The

breach was carried, and, in addition, a house built with its back

to the ramparts just inside the enceinte. But the assailants could

get no further, owing to the murderous fire which the Spaniards kept

up from behind the ruined church and the traverses. After an hour

of desperate attempts to break in, they took shelter, some in the

house that they had captured, but the majority behind the lip of the

breach, where they covered themselves as best they could, by piles of

débris built in with their haversacks, and even with the corpses of

the fallen. Under this poor shelter they lay till dark, suffering

heavily. During the night the troops in the trenches ran out a line

of gabions from the front works to the foot of the walls, and by dawn

had opened a good communication with the men at the breach, though

they had to work under a furious but blind fire from above.

[249] Only consisting of four 24-pounders, one 16-pounder, four

12-pounders, eight 6-inch howitzers, and one 6-inch mortar. See

Belmas, iii. 28.

[250] ‘Les Espagnols rispostèrent avec vivacité; on s’étonnait

d’autant plus que, le parapet étant en pierres sèches, chaque

boulet qui le frappait en faisait jaillir de nombreux éclats.’

Belmas, iii. 34.

At dawn on April 22, Santocildes surrendered. He might have held out

some hours longer behind his inner defences, if he had not exhausted

nearly all his musket ammunition in resisting the storm. There

were less than thirty cartridges a head left for the infantry of

the garrison, and only 500 pounds of powder for the artillery. The

defence had been admirable, and, it may be added, very scientific,

a fact proved by the low figures of the dead and wounded, which did

not amount to 200 men[251]. The French, in the assault alone, lost

five officers and 107 men killed, and eight officers and 286 men

wounded[252]. Junot was thought to have been precipitate in ordering

the storm: his excuse was that there were less than two hours of

daylight left, and that, if he had deferred the attack till next

morning, the Spaniards would have retrenched the breach under cover

of the dark, and made it impracticable. The siege cost the 8th Corps

in all 160 killed and some 400 wounded, a heavy butcher’s bill for

the capture of a mediaeval fortress armed with only fourteen light

guns. Two thousand five hundred prisoners were taken, as shown by

Santocildes’ lists, but Junot claimed to have ‘captured 3,500 fine

troops, all with good English muskets, and well clothed in English

great coats,’ as well as 500 sick and wounded--impossible figures.

[251] Two officers and forty-nine men killed, ten officers and

ninety-nine men wounded, according to his official report to the

Junta, in which all details are duly given.

[252] See the figures in Junot’s dispatch, given on pages 66-7 of

Belmas, vol. iii.

On the morning of the surrender Mahy made a feeble demonstration

against the covering troops, on both the passes of Manzanal and

Foncebadon, while Echevarria beat up the force at Penilla which lay

facing him. All three attacks were checked with ease, the Galician

army not being able to put more than 6,000 men in the field on the

three fronts taken together. Its loss was heavy, especially at

Penilla.

After detaching the 22nd Regiment, which was ordered to endeavour

to communicate with Bonnet in the Asturias, and garrisoning Astorga

with two battalions, Junot drew back the greater part of his corps

to Valladolid and Toro. He had been ordered to place himself near

Ney, in order to aid and cover the 6th Corps in the oncoming siege of

Ciudad Rodrigo. At the same time he received the unwelcome news that

Masséna had been named Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Portugal,

and that the 8th Corps was placed under his orders.

Masséna, as has been already mentioned, did not arrive at Salamanca

till May 28th: he could not well have reached the front earlier,

since the Emperor had only placed him in command in April. The long

delay in the opening of the main campaign must, therefore, be laid

to Napoleon’s account rather than to that of his generals. If he had

suspected that every day of waiting meant that Wellington had added

an extra redoubt to the ever-growing lines of Torres Vedras, it is

permissible to believe that he would have hurried forward matters at

a less leisurely pace. But his determination to conduct the invasion

of Portugal in what he called ‘a methodical fashion’ is sufficiently

shown by the orders sent to Salamanca on May 29. ‘Tell the Prince

of Essling that, according to our English intelligence, the army of

General Wellington is composed of no more than 24,000 British and

Germans, and that his Portuguese are only 25,000 strong. I do not

wish to enter Lisbon at this moment, because I could not feed the

city, whose immense population is accustomed to live on sea-borne

food. He can spend the summer months in taking Ciudad Rodrigo, and

then Almeida. He need not hurry, but can go methodically to work. The

English general, having less than 3,000 cavalry, may offer battle on

ground where cavalry cannot act, but will never come out to fight in

the plains[253].’

[253] Napoleon to Berthier, May 29, 1810.

The Emperor then proceeds to add that with the 50,000 men of the 6th

and 8th Corps, the cavalry reserve, &c., Masséna is strong enough to

take both Rodrigo and Almeida at his ease: Reynier and the 2nd Corps

can be called up to the bridge of Alcantara, from whence they can

menace Central Portugal and cover Madrid. No order is given to bring

up this corps to join the main army: it seems that the Emperor at

this moment had in his head the plan, with which Wellington always

credited him, of threatening a secondary attack in the Tagus valley.

The 2nd Corps is treated as covering Masséna’s left, while on his

right he will be flanked by Kellermann, who is to add to the small

force already under his command in Old Castile a whole new division,

that of Serras, composed of troops just arrived from France[254].

This, added to Kellermann’s dragoons, would make a corps of 12,000

men. In addition, as the Emperor remarks, by the time that the

Army of Portugal is ready to march on Lisbon, it will have in its

rear the 9th Corps under Drouet, nearly 20,000 men, who will be

concentrated at Valladolid before the autumn has begun. There will

be over 30,000 men in Leon and Old Castile when Masséna’s army moves

on from Almeida, and in the rear of these again Burgos, Navarre,

and Biscay will be held by the Young Guard, and by twenty-six 4th

battalions from France, which were due to start after the 9th Corps,

and would have made their appearance south of the Pyrenees by August

or September.

[254] Serras’ division consisted of the 113th Line, a Tuscan

regiment originally employed in Catalonia, which had been so cut

up in 1809 that it had been sent back to refill its cadres; also

of the 4th of the Vistula (two battalions), a Polish regiment

raised in 1810, with four provisional battalions, and three stray

battalions belonging to regiments in the South, which had not

been allowed to go on to join Soult [4th battalions of the 32nd

and 58th Line and of 12th Léger]: his total strength was 8,000

men.

This document is a very curious product of the imperial pen.

It would be hard to find in the rest of the \_Correspondance\_ a

dispatch which so completely abandons the ‘Napoleonic methods’ of

quick concentration and sharp strokes, and orders a delay of three

months or more in the completion of a campaign whose preliminary

operations had begun so far back as February. We may reject at

once the explanation offered by some of Napoleon’s enemies, to the

effect that he was jealous of Masséna, and did not wish him to

achieve too rapid or too brilliant a success. But it is clear that a

humanitarian regard for the possible sufferings of the inhabitants

of Lisbon--the only reason alleged for the delay--is an inadequate

motive. Such things did not normally affect the Emperor, and he must

have remembered that when Junot occupied Portugal at the mid-winter

of 1807-8 famine had not played its part in the difficulties

encountered by the French. Nor does it seem that an exaggerated

estimate of the enemy’s strength induced him to postpone the

attack till all the reinforcements had arrived. He under-estimates

Wellington’s British troops by some 5,000, his Portuguese troops by

at least 15,000 men. He is utterly ignorant of the works of Torres

Vedras, though six months’ labour has already been lavished on them,

and by this time they were already defensible. Three months seem

an altogether exaggerated time to devote to the sieges of the two

little old-fashioned second-rate fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo and

Almeida. From whence, then, comes this unprecedented resolve to adopt

a ‘methodical’ system in dealing with the invasion of Portugal? It

has been suggested that the Emperor was very desirous to make sure

of the absolute suppression of the guerrilleros of the Pyrenees and

the Ebro, before pushing forward his field army to Lisbon. Possibly

he was influenced by his knowledge of the infinite difficulty that

Masséna would find in equipping himself with a train, and more

especially in creating magazines during the months before the harvest

had been gathered in. Some have thought that, looking far forward,

he considered it would be more disastrous to the English army to be

‘driven into the sea’ somewhere in the rough months of October and

November rather than in the fine weather of June--and undoubtedly

no one who reads his dispatches can doubt that the desire to deal

an absolutely crushing blow to that army was his dominating idea

throughout. But probably the main determining factor in Napoleon’s

mind was the resolve that there should be no failure this time, for

want of preparation or want of sufficient strength; that no risks

should be taken, and that what he regarded as an overwhelming force

should be launched upon Portugal. After Junot’s disaster of 1808

and Soult’s fiasco in 1809, the Imperial prestige could not stand

a third failure. The old pledge that ‘the leopard should be driven

into the sea’ must be redeemed at all costs on this occasion. Solid

success rather than a brilliant campaign must be the end kept in

view: hence came the elaborate preparations for the sustaining of

Masséna’s advance by the support of Drouet, Kellermann, and Serras.

Even Suchet’s operations in Eastern Spain were to be conducted

with some regard to the affairs of Portugal[255]. It was a broad

and a formidable plan--but it failed in one all-important factor.

Wellington’s strength was underrated; it was no mere driving of

25,000 British troops into the sea that was now in question, but

the reduction of a kingdom where every man had been placed under

arms, and every preparation made for passive as well as for active

resistance. When Napoleon was once more foiled, it was because he

had treated the Portuguese army--a ‘\_tas de coquins\_’ as he called

them--as a negligible quantity, and because he had foreseen neither

that systematic devastation of the land, nor the creation of those

vast lines in front of Lisbon, which were such essential features of

Wellington’s scheme of defence. The French attack was delivered by

65,000 men, not by the 100,000 whose advent the British general had

feared: and precisely because the numbers of the Army of Portugal

were no greater, the attack was made on the Beira frontier only.

Masséna had no men to spare for the secondary invasion south of the

Tagus which Wellington had expected and dreaded. The Emperor’s plans

went to wreck because he had under-estimated his enemy, and assigned

too small a force to his lieutenant. But it was no ordinary general

who had so prepared his defence that Napoleon’s calculations went all

astray. The genius of Wellington was the true cause of the disastrous

end of the long-prepared invasion.

[255] See the curious dispatch no. 16651, of July 14, directing

Suchet to be ready to send half his corps to Valladolid after he

should have taken Tortosa.

SECTION XIX: CHAPTER V

THE MONTHS OF WAITING: THE SIEGE OF CIUDAD RODRIGO (MAY-JULY 1810)

The long months of delay that followed the first operations of the

French in 1810 were a time of anxious waiting for Wellington. He had

moved his head quarters to Vizeu on the 12th of January, and had

been lying in that bleak and lofty town all through the rest of the

winter. With him there had come to the North all the old British

divisions save the 2nd, which had been left with Hill, first at

Abrantes and then at Portalegre, to watch the French between the

Tagus and the Guadiana. The 1st Division was placed at Vizeu, the 3rd

at Trancoso and the neighbouring villages, the 4th at Guarda, while

the cavalry wintered in the coast plain between Coimbra and Aveiro.

Only the Light Brigade of Robert Craufurd, which takes the new

style of the Light \_Division\_ on March 1, was pushed forward to the

Spanish frontier, and lay in the villages about Almeida[256], with

its outposts pushed forward to the line of the Agueda. The Portuguese

regular brigades, which were afterwards incorporated in the British

divisions, were still lying in winter quarters around Coimbra and

Thomar, drilling hard and incorporating their recruits. The militia

were also under arms at their regimental head quarters, save the

few battalions which had already been thrown into Elvas, Almeida,

Peniche, and Abrantes.

[256] The head quarters of the 43rd during January and February

were at Valverde, above the Coa, those of the 52nd at Pinhel,

those of the 95th at Villa Torpim.

Wellington’s front, facing the French, was formed by Hill’s corps

in the Alemtejo, Lecor’s Portuguese brigade in the Castello Branco

district, and Craufurd’s force on the Agueda. Neither Hill nor

Lecor was in actual contact with the enemy, and La Romana’s army,

spread out from the Pass of Perales to Zafra and Araçena in a thin

line, lay between them and Reynier’s and Mortier’s outposts. It was

otherwise with Craufurd, who was placed north of La Romana’s left

division, that of Martin Carrera; he was in close touch with Ney’s

corps all along the line of the Agueda, as far as the Douro. Since

the outposts of the 6th Corps had been pushed forward on March 9th,

the Commander of the Light Division was in a most responsible, not

to say a dangerous, position. The main army was forty miles to his

rear in its cantonments at Vizeu, Guarda, and Trancoso. He had with

him of British infantry only the first battalions of the 43rd,

52nd, and 95th, with one battery, and one regiment of cavalry, the

1st Hussars of the King’s German Legion. His orders were to keep

open the communication with Ciudad Rodrigo till the last possible

moment, to cover Almeida as long as was prudent, and to keep the

Commander-in-Chief advised of every movement of the enemy. It was

clear that he might be thrust back at any moment: the 6th Corps,

since Loison had joined it, was 30,000 strong: the Light Division had

only 2,500 infantry with the 500 German light horse. On March 28th

Wellington sent up to reinforce Craufurd two battalions of Caçadores,

the 1st and 2nd. The latter of these units was afterwards changed for

the 3rd[257], which, trained by Elder, the best of all the colonels

lent to the Portuguese army, was reckoned the most efficient corps

that could be selected from Beresford’s command. But the two Caçador

battalions only added 1,000 bayonets to the Light Division, and even

after their arrival Craufurd’s force was less than 4,000 strong.

[257] On Craufurd’s complaint that the 2nd Caçadores were badly

commanded and too full of boys. He repeatedly asked for, and

ultimately obtained, the 3rd battalion in place of the 2nd,

because of his confidence in Elder.

Robert Craufurd, though only a brigadier, and junior of his rank,

had been chosen by Wellington to take charge of his outpost line

because he was one of the very few officers then in the Peninsula in

whose ability his Commander-in-Chief had perfect confidence. Nothing

is more striking than to compare the tone and character of the

letters which Wellington wrote to him with those which he dispatched

to most of his other general officers. Only with Craufurd, Hill,

and Beresford, did he ever condescend to enter into explanations

and state reasons. The rest receive orders without comment, which

they are directed to carry out, and are given no opportunity to

discuss[258]. The difference was noted and resented by the others:

when on March 8th Craufurd was formally given charge of the whole

outpost line of the army, and his seniors Picton and Cole were

told to conform their movements to his, without waiting for orders

from head quarters, some friction was engendered[259]. Picton and

Craufurd, in especial, were for the rest of the campaign in a state

of latent hostility, which more than once led to high words when they

met--a fact which was not without its dangers to the welfare of the

army[260].

[258] Note especially Wellington’s explanatory dispatch to

Craufurd of March 8, where he even goes so far as to give his

subordinate a free hand as to the choice of his line: ‘You must

be a better judge of the details of this question than I can be,

and I wish you to consider them, in order to be able to carry

the plan into execution when I shall send it to you.’ In another

letter Wellington writes: ‘Nothing can be of greater advantage to

me than to have the benefit of your opinion on \_any\_ subject.’

[259] ‘I intend that the divisions of Generals Cole and Picton

should support you on the Coa, without waiting for orders from

me, if it should be necessary, and they shall be directed

accordingly.’ 8th March, from Vizeu.

[260] It should not be forgotten that Picton, no less than

Craufurd, was at this time living down an old disaster. But

Picton’s misfortune had not been military. It was the celebrated

case of \_Rex\_ v. \_Picton\_. He had been tried for permitting

the use of torture to extract evidence against criminals

while governor of the newly conquered island of Trinidad, and

convicted, though Spanish law (which was still in force in

Trinidad) apparently permitted of the practice. After this Picton

was a marked man. The story of Luisa Calderon, the quadroon

girl who had been tortured by ‘picketing,’ had been appearing

intermittently in the columns of every Whig paper for more than

three years.

The celebrated commander of the Light Division was at this time well

known for his ability, but reckoned rather an unlucky soldier. He had

entered the army so far back as 1779, and had seen service in every

quarter of the globe, yet in 1809 was only a colonel. This was the

more astounding since he was one of the few scientific soldiers in

the British army when the Revolutionary War broke out. He had spent

some time at Berlin in 1782, studying the tactics of the army of

Frederick the Great, and had translated into English the official

Prussian treatise on the Art of War. His knowledge of German, a rare

accomplishment in the British army at the end of the eighteenth

century, caused him to be given the post of military attaché at

Coburg’s head quarters in 1794, and he followed the Austrian army

through all the disasters of that and the two following years. Again

in 1799 he went out to take the same post at the head quarters of

the army of Switzerland, but quitted it to serve on the staff of the

Duke of York, during the miserable Dutch expedition of that same

year. He seemed destined to witness nothing but disasters, and though

he was known to have done his duty with admirable zeal and energy

in every post that he occupied, promotion lingered. Probably his

caustic tongue and fiery temper were his hindrances, but it seems

astonishing that he took twenty-six years to attain the rank of

colonel, though he was not destitute of political influence, having

friends and relatives in Parliament, and even in the Ministry[261].

In 1801 he was a disappointed man, thought of retiring from the

army, and, having accepted a nomination borough, sat in the Commons

for five years. In 1805 he was at last made a colonel, and in the

following year went on active service with the expedition which,

sent originally to the Cape, was distracted in 1807 to the unhappy

Buenos Ayres campaign. This was the zenith of his misfortunes; it

was he who, placed in charge of a light brigade by the incapable

Whitelocke, was thrust forward into the midst of the tangled streets

of Buenos Ayres, surrounded in the convent of San Domingo, and forced

to capitulate for lack of support. At the ensuing court-martial he

was acquitted of all blame, but the fact that he had surrendered a

British brigade rankled in his mind for the rest of his life. The

unshaken confidence in his abilities felt by the Home authorities was

marked by the fact that he was sent out in October 1808 with Baird’s

corps, which landed at Corunna, and again in June 1809 to Lisbon,

each time in command of a brigade. But his bad luck seemed still

to attend him: he missed the victory of Corunna because Moore had

detached his brigade on the inexplicable march to Vigo. He failed to

be present at Talavera, despite of the famous forced march which he

made towards the sound of the cannon.

[261] His elder brother, Sir Charles Craufurd, was

Deputy-Adjutant-General, and M.P. for Retford. Windham, the

Secretary for War, was his devoted friend.

In 1810 Craufurd was burning to vindicate his reputation, and to

show that the confidence which Wellington placed in him was not

undeserved. He still regarded himself as a man who had been unjustly

dealt with, and had never been given his chance. He could not forget

that he was four years older than Beresford, five years older than

Wellington, eight years older than Hill, yet was but a junior

brigadier-general in charge of a division[262]. He was full of a

consuming energy, on the look-out for slights and quarrels, a very

strict disciplinarian, restless himself and leaving his troops no

rest. He was not liked by all his officers: in the Light Division

he had many admirers[263] and many bitter critics. Nor was he at

first popular with the rank and file, though they soon began to

recognize the keen intelligence that guided his actions, and to see

that he was a just if a hard master[264]. In the matter of feeding

his troops, the most difficult task imposed on a general of the

Peninsular army, he had an unparalleled reputation for accomplishing

the impossible--even if the most drastic methods had to be employed.

The famous old story about Wellington and the commissary had Craufurd

(and not, as it is sometimes told, Picton) as its hero. As a sample

of his high-handed ways, it may be mentioned that he once seized

and impounded some church-plate till the villages to which it

belonged found him some corn for his starving division. Craufurd, on

one of his happy days, and they were many, was the most brilliant

subordinate that Wellington ever owned. His mistakes--and he

committed more than one--were the faults of an ardent and ambitious

spirit taking an immoderate risk in the hour of excitement.

[262] Though senior in the date of his first commission to nearly

all the officers of the Peninsular army, Craufurd was six years

junior to Picton, and one year junior to Hope. Graham, much his

senior in age, had only entered the army in 1793.

[263] Such as Shaw-Kennedy, William Campbell, Kincaid, and Lord

Seaton.

[264] For Craufurd’s life and personality see his biography by

his grandson the Rev. Alex. Craufurd, London, 1890. The most

vivid picture of him is in Rifleman Harris’s chronicle of the

Corunna retreat, a wonderful piece of narrative by a writer from

the ranks, who admired his general despite of all his severity,

and acknowledges that his methods were necessary. Though Napier

as a historian is on the whole fairly just to his old commander,

whose achievements were bound up indissolubly with the glories of

the Light Division, as a man he disliked Craufurd: in one of his

hooks which I possess (Delagrave’s \_Campagne de Portugal\_) he has

written in the margin several bitter personal remarks about him,

very unlike the language employed in his history. The unpublished

Journal of Colonel McLeod of the 43rd is (as Mr. Alex. Craufurd

informs me) written in the same spirit. So is Charles Napier’s

\_Diary\_.

From March to July 1810 Craufurd, in charge of the whole outpost

system of Wellington’s army, accomplished the extraordinary feat of

guarding a front of forty miles against an active enemy of sixfold

force, without suffering his line to be pierced, or allowing the

French to gain any information whatever of the dispositions of

the host in his rear. He was in constant and daily touch with

Ney’s corps, yet was never surprised, and never thrust back save

by absolutely overwhelming strength; he never lost a detachment,

never failed to detect every move of the enemy, and never sent

his commander false intelligence. This was the result of system

and science, not merely of vigilance and activity. The journal of

his aide de camp Shaw-Kennedy, giving the daily work of the Light

Division during the critical months of 1810, might serve as an

illustrative manual of outpost duty, and was indeed printed for that

purpose in 1851[265].

[265] As an Appendix to Lord F. Fitz-Clarence’s \_Manual of

Outpost Duties\_.

Craufurd’s one cavalry regiment, the German Hussars, had to cover

a front of nearly forty miles, and performed the duty admirably;

it had been chosen for the service because it was considered by

Wellington superior in scouting power to any of his British light

cavalry corps. ‘General Craufurd worked out the most difficult

part of the outpost duty with them. He had the great advantage of

speaking German fluently, and he arranged for the outpost duties of

the different parts of the long line that he had to guard by his

personal communications with the captains of that admirable corps,

men who were themselves masters of the subject. They each knew his

plan for the space that they covered, though not his general plan,

and each worked out his part most admirably. The General communicated

with them direct. He had the great advantage of possessing, with

his great abilities and energy, uncommon bodily strength, so that

he could remain on horseback almost any length of time.... When

his operations began, the point to be observed was the line of the

Agueda, extending for some forty miles. The country, although very

irregular in its surface, was quite open and unenclosed, and fit

almost everywhere for the action of all three arms. When he took up

the line he kept his infantry back entirely, with the exception of

four companies of the Rifles above the bridge of Barba del Puerco,

upon the \_calculation\_ of the time that would be required to retire

the infantry behind the Coa, after he received information from the

cavalry of the enemy’s advance. If we are properly to understand

Craufurd’s operations, the \_calculation\_ must never be lost sight

of, for it was on calculations that he acted all along. The

hazarding of the four companies at Barba del Puerco forms a separate

consideration: it rested on the belief that the pass there was so

difficult, that four companies could defend it against any numbers,

and that, if they were turned higher up the river, the Hussars would

give the Rifles warning in ample time for a safe retreat.... Special

reports were made of the state of the fords of the Agueda \_every\_

morning, and the rapidity of its rises was particularly marked.

An officer had special charge of all deserters from the enemy, to

examine them and bring together their information[266]. Beacons were

prepared on conspicuous heights, so as to communicate information

as to the enemy’s offensive movements. To ensure against mistakes

in the night, pointers were kept at the stations of communication,

directed to the beacons.... As Napier has remarked in his History,

\_seven minutes\_ sufficed for the division to get under arms in the

middle of the night, and a quarter of an hour, night or day, to bring

it in order of battle to its alarm-posts, with the baggage loaded and

assembled at a convenient distance to the rear. And this not upon a

concerted signal, nor as a trial, but at all times and certain[267].’

[266] One of the most curious points in Shaw-Kennedy’s \_Diary\_

[p. 218] is that from the reports of deserters Craufurd succeeded

in reconstructing the exact composition of Ney’s corps, in

brigades and battalions, with a final error of only one battalion

and 2,000 men too few.

[267] Shaw-Kennedy, \_Diary\_, pp. 142 and 147.

To complete the picture it remains to be added that there were some

fifteen fords between Ciudad Rodrigo and the mouth of the Agueda,

which were practicable in dry weather for all arms, and that several

of them could be used even after a day or two of rain. The French

were along the whole river; they had 3,000 horse available in March

and April, 5,000 in May and June. Their infantry at some points were

only three or four miles back from the river: yet Craufurd’s line was

never broken, nor was even a picket of ten men cut off or surrounded.

The least movement of the enemy was reported along the whole front in

an incredibly short time, the whole web of communication quivered at

the slightest touch, and the division was immediately ready to fight

or to draw back, according as the strength of the French dictated

boldness or caution.

During February Wellington had rightly concluded that Craufurd had

nothing to fear; Ney’s early demonstration against Ciudad Rodrigo

had no more serious significance than Mortier’s similar appearance

in front of Badajoz. But when March arrived, and the 8th Corps

appeared in the plains of Leon and commenced the siege of Astorga,

while Ney began to move up his cavalry to the line of the Yeltes,

and Loison’s division, coming from Astorga, established itself on

the lower Agueda, it seemed likely that serious work would soon

begin. The first test of the efficiency of Craufurd’s outpost system

was made on the night of March 19-20, when Ferey, commanding the

brigade of Loison’s division which lay at San Felices, assembled his

six voltigeur companies before dawn, and made a dash at the pass of

Barba del Puerco. He had the good luck to bayonet the sentries at

the bridge before they could fire, and was half way up the rough

ascent from the bridge to the village, when Beckwith’s detachment

of the 95th Rifles, roused and armed in ten minutes, were upon him.

They drove him down the defile, and chased him back across the river

with the loss of two officers and forty-five men killed and wounded.

Beckwith’s riflemen lost one officer and three men killed, and ten

men wounded in the three companies engaged. After this alarm Craufurd

was in anxious expectation of a general advance of the 6th Corps, and

made every preparation to receive them. But Ferey’s reconnaissance

had no sequel, and a whole month passed by without any serious move

on the part of the enemy. The Agueda was in flood for the greater

part of April, owing to incessant rains, which made the outpost work

simple, as the number of points to be observed went down from fifteen

to three or four. It was not till the twenty-sixth that Maucune’s

and Ferey’s brigades moved up close to Ciudad Rodrigo, drove in the

Spanish outposts, and formed the blockade of the place on the east

side of the Agueda. Even then its bridge remained unmolested, and

Craufurd could communicate quite freely with the garrison, and did

so till June 2nd. Masséna at a later date blamed Ney for having

established this partial and useless blockade before he was ready

to commence the siege in earnest. The two French brigades consumed,

during the month of May, the whole of the local resources of the

district around Rodrigo, so that, when the rest of the army came

up, all supplies had to be brought up from a great distance. It may

also be remarked that to advance a corps of no more than 7,000 men

within striking distance of the British army would have been very

hazardous, if Wellington had been entertaining any designs of taking

the offensive--and Ney at this time could not have been sure that

such a contingency was unlikely. The only advantage which the Marshal

got from keeping his detachment so close to the fortress was that,

in their month of waiting, the brigades were able to prepare a great

store of gabions and fascines, and the engineers to make a thorough

survey of the environs.

Ciudad Rodrigo stands on a single circular knoll of no great height,

whose summit it exactly covers. It is a small place of some 8,000

souls, packed tight in narrow streets within a stout mediaeval wall

thickly set with towers. A fourteenth-century castle, on which the

houses press in too close for strength, fills its south-eastern

corner: there is no other inner place of refuge. The Agueda, divided

into several channels, runs under the southern side of the place; it

is crossed by a bridge completely commanded by the fire of the walls.

On the water-front the knoll is at its highest, on the opposite face

it is much less steep, and only very slightly exceeds the level of

the surrounding ground. Round the circuit of the mediaeval wall a

low modern enceinte had been constructed, and served as an outer

protection (\_fausse-braye\_); it was only twelve feet high, so did not

shield more than a third of the inner wall, which could be battered

over its summit. Its outline was zigzagged in the form of redans, and

it was furnished with a dry ditch. Its glacis, owing to the rising of

the knoll, gave it little protection, so that both the older and the

modern wall could be searched, for the greater part of their height,

by the artillery of a besieger. Outside the eastern gate of Rodrigo

lies the straggling suburb of San Francisco, on very low ground. It

was so large and so close to the walls that the governor Herrasti

considered it absolutely necessary to take it inside the circuit

of his defences. It had accordingly been surrounded by a strong

earthwork, and the three great monasteries which it contains--San

Francisco, San Domingo, and Santa Clara--had been strengthened and

loopholed. The small suburb of La Marina, just across the bridge, was

retrenched and manned, as was also the convent of Santa Cruz, which

stands isolated 200 yards outside the north-west angle of the town.

Other outlying buildings had been levelled to the ground, lest they

should afford cover to the enemy.

[Illustration: SIEGE OF CIUDAD RODRIGO]

These preparations were very wise and helpful, but they did not do

away with the main weakness of Ciudad Rodrigo considered as a modern

fortress. Like many other mediaeval strongholds it is commanded

by outlying heights, which could be disregarded as an element of

danger in the fourteenth or the sixteenth century, because of their

distance, but became all-important with the improvement of artillery.

In this case two knolls, considerably higher than that on which the

place stands, lie outside its northern walls. The smaller, named the

Little Teson, lies only 200 yards from the northern angle of the

town; it is some fifty feet higher than the base of the ramparts.

Immediately behind it rises the Great Teson, which dominates the

whole country-side, its broad flat top, three-quarters of a mile in

diameter, being a hundred feet above the level of the plain. It was

hopeless to think of holding the little Teson as an outwork, since

the greater one looks down into it and searches it from end to end.

The Great Teson, on the other hand, is so large--its circuit is about

the same as the city itself--that it would be impossible to think

of defending it, as when entrenched it would require a garrison of

at least 3,000 men, and Herrasti had but 5,500 troops under his

command. Its slopes, moreover, are gentle, and do not lend themselves

to fortification. The southern edge of the plateau of the Great Teson

being only 500 yards from the town wall, it was obvious that here

was the place from which Rodrigo could best be assailed. Batteries

on its sky-line could breach both the inner and outer walls, and

could command every square foot both of the town and of the fortified

suburbs. Accordingly the brigades which lay before the place in

May had encamped on and behind the Teson, and stored the gabions,

fascines, and sandbags which they were making in a park, near the

convent of La Caridad and the village of Pedro de Toro, on its

further side.

Herrasti, as we have said, had a garrison of 5,500 men, composed of

one line battalion, two militia battalions, three battalions of new

levies from the town and its vicinity, called ‘Voluntarios de Ciudad

Rodrigo,’ and one battalion of ‘Urban Guards[268].’ None of these

troops, save the line battalion of Majorca (which had formed part of

the old Army of Estremadura) had ever been under fire--a fact which

makes their fine defence all the more creditable. There were only

11 officers and 37 men of the artillery of the line in the place:

these had to train 350 men assigned to them from the infantry; but

fortunately the long delay in the opening of the siege had allowed

the instruction to be thoroughly carried out. Of engineers there were

only 4 officers and 60 sappers--of cavalry none--but the partisan

chief Julian Sanchez with some 200 of his Lancers chanced to be in

the place on the day when it was completely invested, and was forced

to cut his way out when the bombardment began. Perhaps the main

strength of Ciudad Rodrigo, as of Gerona, lay in the personality of

its governor. General Andrés Herrasti, a veteran of nearly seventy

years, was determined to do his duty, and showed as much ingenuity

and readiness as obstinacy in his defence.

[268] Herrasti’s report gives 1st of Majorca 706 officers and

men, Avila and Segovia militia 857 and 317 respectively, three

battalions of volunteers of Ciudad Rodrigo 2,242, Urban guard

750, artillery 375, sappers 60; total, with some details added,

5,510, not including Sanchez’s Partida. See Belmas, iii. 314.

Though the French had appeared before the walls of Ciudad Rodrigo

on April 26th, it was not till May 30th that Ney came up in person,

with four brigades of infantry and Montbrun’s division of reserve

cavalry, to complete the investment. The main cause of the delay was,

as usual, the lack of supplies. Ney had to levy and forward from

Salamanca two months’ rations for an army of 30,000 men, and could

only do so after long and harassing preparation. He nearly came to

actual blows with King Joseph over the matter, for he sent a cavalry

brigade to raise requisitions in the province of Avila, which was

outside his command, and General Hugo, the King’s governor, put his

troops under arms and refused to allow the dragoons to enter his

district. An imperial rescript, however, soon arrived, which placed

Avila at the disposition of the 6th Corps, and the royal authorities

had to yield[269].

[269] See Sprünglin’s \_Journal\_, p. 417.

All Ney’s troops were now concentrated for the siege, his outlying

detachments in every direction having been relieved by Junot, who,

at Masséna’s orders, brought down the 8th Corps from the Douro,

placed a brigade to watch the Pass of Baños, left garrisons in

Zamora and Toro, and advanced with the remainder of his troops to

the line of the Agueda. Clausel’s division and St. Croix’s division

of dragoons took post at San Felices, in immediate touch with

Craufurd’s division. Solignac’s division lay a march and a half to

the rear at Ledesma. San Felices is only 20, Ledesma is 40 miles

from Ciudad Rodrigo, so that the 8th Corps, deducting the outlying

brigades, could have joined Ney in two days. These distances were

the governing factor in Wellington’s policy during the next month.

Ney had 26,000 men of the 6th Corps and Montbrun’s 4,000 dragoons in

front of Rodrigo; Junot could join him with 8,000 infantry and 1,800

cavalry in a day; a second day would bring up Solignac with 7,000

men more. Unless the 6th Corps could be surprised in its camps, and

forced to fight before it received its reinforcements, there would

be 47,000 French to face. Of their numbers Wellington was roughly

aware; the figures sent in to him by Craufurd were accurate to within

a few thousands[270], and estimated the enemy at 40,000 men. The

Commander-in-Chief’s own calculation was even nearer the truth; early

in May he reckoned Ney, with Loison’s division included, at 30,000

men, Junot and Kellermann at 30,000[271]. Early in June he made out

that the two corps in his front, without Kellermann, amounted to

50,000 men[272], which was only 3,000 over the true total. He himself

had at this moment only 18,000 British troops under his hand, and

within striking distance. He had on April 27th, brought up his head

quarters and the 1st Division to Celorico, and moved forward Picton

and the 3rd Division to Pinhel, while Cole with the 4th remained at

Guarda, and the Light Division was, as usual, facing the Agueda. The

cavalry had also come up from the Mondego valley, and lay behind

Almeida. Moreover, the five Portuguese brigades of Harvey, Collins,

Pack, Coleman, and Alex. Campbell were ordered up to the front[273],

and joined the army in the first days of May. Wellington thereupon

incorporated Harvey’s brigade with the 3rd Division and Collins’s

with the 4th, a system which he afterwards carried out with nearly

all the Portuguese units. The whole of this mass of troops came to

some 15,000 men[274]. These, with the British, making a total of

32,000 men, were all that Wellington could count upon, for he could

not dare to move Hill’s 12,000 men from the south, where they were

observing Reynier, nor to displace the small reserve, which lay at

Abrantes and Thomar to guard against a possible French move along the

Tagus by Castello Branco. Lisbon could not be left unprotected on

this side, so long as Reynier lay between the Tagus and the Guadiana.

[270] May 2, to Craufurd.

[271] On June 1 Craufurd calculated the troops in front of Ciudad

Rodrigo, by counting regiments and battalions, at over 25,000

men. There were really 30,000, and the under-estimate came

from allowing only 550 men to a battalion, while they really

averaged 650. About the same time Craufurd estimated the parts

of Junot’s corps in the neighbourhood to be 13,000 men: they

were really nearly 17,000. The cause of error was the same. See

Shaw-Kennedy’s \_Diary\_, pages 190-5. The estimates are corrected,

on fuller information, early in July, see ibid., p. 220.

[272] To Charles Stuart, June 8, and to Hill, June 9.

[273] This movement, unchronicled elsewhere, appears in D’Urban’s

diary, April 26. ‘The Portuguese ordered to the front, consisting

of two brigades of artillery, 4th and 6th Caçadores, 1st and 16th

(Pack), 7th and 19th (Coleman), 6th and 18th (Alex. Campbell),

11th and 23rd (Collins), 9th and 21st (Harvey) of the Line. They

all go into march on the 28th, and will arrive by successive

brigades at Celorico in four days.’

[274] At this moment the total force of the allied army was:--

1st Division (all British) 6,000 bayonets.

3rd ” British 2,500 with Harvey’s Portuguese 1,800

4th ” ” 4,000 with Collins’s ” 2,500

Light ” ” 2,500 with 2 Caçador Batts. 1,000

Pack’s, Campbell’s, and Coleman’s Portuguese brigades 8,000

Cavalry (British) 2,100 Portuguese 700

Artillery ” 1,000 Portuguese 600

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18,100 14,600

By bringing up every man Wellington could have attacked Ney’s

30,000 in front of Rodrigo with 33,000, of whom nearly half would

have consisted of the newly organised Portuguese brigades, of which

hardly a battalion had been under fire. He would have had under 3,000

cavalry to face 5,000, and a marked inferiority in artillery also. No

practical assistance could have been got by inviting the co-operation

of Martin Carrera’s depleted Spanish division of 3,000 men, which

lay on the hills about the sources of the Agueda, watching Ney’s

flank. If the first stroke should fail, and Ney were not surprised,

Wellington would have Junot’s 17,000 men to count with within

forty-eight hours. Ciudad Rodrigo lies on a plain, a full day’s march

from the hills, and by advancing to relieve it the British army must

commit itself to an action in the open. It is no wonder then that

Wellington refused to attempt the movement; weak in cavalry and with

15,000 troops of uncertain value in his ranks, he would have been mad

to embark upon such an operation. It was most improbable that Ney

could have been surprised, and forced to fight without Junot’s aid,

when he had 5,000 horsemen at hand, to discover and report the first

movement of the Anglo-Portuguese. Napoleon had been right when he

told Masséna that it was practically impossible that Wellington would

offer battle in the plains. Herrasti had been sent assurances that

the British army would do anything that was feasible for his relief,

but he was warned in a supplementary letter of June 6th that it might

be impossible to aid him. ‘You will believe,’ wrote Wellington, ‘that

if I should not be able to attempt your relief, it will be owing

to the superior strength of the enemy, and to the necessity for my

attending to other important objects[275].’ Notwithstanding this

caution it would appear that the Spanish governor still hoped for

prompt assistance. It seemed to him, as it did to all Spanish and

some English officers at the time[276], that Wellington would not

be able to endure the spectacle of Ciudad Rodrigo being taken while

his outposts were lying only six miles in front of it. Those who

held such views little knew the inflexible character of the man with

whom they had to deal, or his contempt for considerations of pride

or sentiment. To take a great risk, when victory would mean only the

raising of the siege of Rodrigo till Junot and Kellermann should have

joined Ney, while defeat might mean the loss of Portugal, was not in

consonance with Wellington’s character. The possible gain and loss

were too unequal, and he very rightly, and not without much regret,

remained in observation at Celorico[277]. He sums up the matter

thus:--‘I must leave the mountains and cross the plains, as well as

two rivers, to raise the siege. To do this I have about 33,000 men

(including Carrera’s Spaniards), of which 3,000 are cavalry[278].

Included are 15,000 Spaniards and Portuguese, which troops (to say

the best of them) are of doubtful quality. Is it right, under these

circumstances, to risk a general action to raise the siege of Ciudad

Rodrigo? I should think not[279].’ And again, ‘My object is to be

able to relieve the place, if it should be advisable to attempt it,

in consequence of any alteration in the enemy’s force. This does

not appear to be a very probable event at present, and ought not to

be provided for according to the common rules of prudence, at any

considerable risk[280].’ Expressions of regret are added, ‘I do not

give the matter up; if they hold out like men they are worth saving,

and under certain circumstances it might be possible to “incur the

risk.”’ But the ‘certain circumstances’ never came about; they seem

to have been the possibility either that (1) Ney or Junot might make

detachments, or move their corps into a less concentrated position

than they at present occupied, or (2) that they might form a covering

army, and advance to drive him off from his present quarters, which

were too close to Ciudad Rodrigo for their comfort. This last

contingency almost happened, as we shall see; probably if the enemy

had come out to attack him Wellington would have accepted battle, in

one of the defensive positions that he knew so well how to select.

[275] \_Dispatches\_, vi. p. 172.

[276] D’Urban, for example, wrote in his journal on June 18 that

he took the daring step of suggesting a surprise attack on Ney to

the General. No notice was taken of his suggestion.

[277] Picton summed up the situation in a letter to a friend [see

Robinson’s \_Life of Picton\_, i. 273] very clearly: ‘If we attempt

to relieve the place the French will drive us out of Portugal:

while if they get possession of it, they will lose time, which is

more important to them than Ciudad Rodrigo. But they have got to

find this out.’

[278] A slight under-estimate, as it would seem, for with La

Carrera’s force the whole would have been 36,000 sabres and

bayonets. Of the 3,000 cavalry 700 were Portuguese and 300

Spaniards.

[279] Wellington to Henry Wellesley, June 20.

[280] Wellington to Craufurd, June 24.

Ney, as has been already mentioned, arrived before the fortress with

some 20,000 men on May 30th. On June 1st he threw a bridge across the

Agueda, a mile and a half above Rodrigo, but sent no troops across

it. Two days later Masséna came up from the rear, approved of the

plan that had been formed for breaching the city from the side of the

two Tesons, and, having reviewed the 6th Corps, took his way back

to Salamanca. At this moment he gave orders to Reynier and the 2nd

Corps to leave Truxillo and the valley of the Guadiana, and to cross

the Tagus to Coria and Plasencia, from whence they could threaten

Castello Branco and Abrantes. This was in accordance with the orders

of the Emperor, who had bidden him call up Reynier from the Guadiana,

to cover his flank. Such a movement had been foreseen by Wellington,

who as early as June 9th had directed Hill to leave Portalegre with

his 12,000 men, and to cross the Tagus at Villa Velha the moment

that Reynier should have passed it at Almaraz[281]. Some days later

the Galician general Mahy sent to the British head quarters four

duplicates of Napoleon’s dispatches to Masséna and King Joseph, which

had been intercepted by guerrillas on the way to Salamanca[282]. They

corroborated all Wellington’s suspicions, and enabled him to provide

against the danger on this side even before it had begun to arise.

Hill’s route by Villa Velha being appreciably shorter than that of

Reynier, he was in position beyond the Tagus before the 2nd Corps had

reached Coria. Their cavalry met and skirmished at Ladoeiro on the

Zarza-Castello Branco road on July 22nd. Thus the relative position

of the two hostile forces in the south was exactly preserved:

Wellington knew that he could call in Hill to join his main army as

quickly as Masséna could draw Reynier to himself through the Pass of

Perales--the only route possible for him. He felt all the more secure

because he had now some British troops at Abrantes ready to support

Hill. Three newly arrived battalions[283], which landed at Lisbon

early in April, had been passed up the Tagus to Thomar and the line

of the Zezere, where, uniting with two Portuguese brigades, they

formed Leith’s ‘5th Division,’ a fresh factor in the situation. This

detachment, with two batteries added, could assist Hill with 7,000

men, if Reynier should push forward in the direction of Castello

Branco.

[281] Wellington to Hill, July 9.

[282] These were Napoleon’s dispatches nos. 16,505, 16,519-20,

and 16,504, as is shown by the excellent analysis of them given

by D’Urban in his diary. He read them over with Beresford on July

1. No. 16,519 was very valuable, as giving the exact strength

of the 2nd, 6th, and 8th Corps--the first absolutely certain

analysis of them that Wellington obtained.

[283] These were the 3/1st, 1/9th, 2/38th, which arrived at

Lisbon April 1-8. Leith’s division was formally constituted only

on July 15, but really existed since June.

Whether at this moment Masséna was proposing to order a serious

attack on this side, or whether he was from the first intending

to bring up the 2nd Corps to join the main army, is not certain.

Napoleon in some of his dispatches seems to recommend the rather

hazardous ‘attack on double external lines’--a result of his general

under-estimate of Wellington’s resisting power. On May 29th he

told his lieutenant that with 50,000 men of the 6th and 8th Corps

he could capture both Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida, and then march

‘methodically’ into Portugal, while Reynier at Alcantara could cover

the communication with Madrid and menace Upper Beira; ‘le prince le

maintiendra dans cette position sans le laisser entamer.’ Masséna,

however, did not think his main army strong enough, and, being left

a free hand by his master, ultimately called in Reynier to join him,

and so freed Wellington from the harassing doubt as to whether he

might not have to defend himself on the Zezere and on the Mondego at

the same moment.

Long before the orders reached the 2nd Corps to move up from Truxillo

to Coria and Zarza, the siege of Rodrigo had begun in earnest. On

June 1st, as we have already seen, Ney had cast a bridge across the

Agueda above the town; four days later a second was constructed at

the ford of Lora, below the place. The moment that it was completed,

Marchand’s division, half Mermet’s, and the light cavalry brigade

of Lamotte crossed the river and established camps on its western

bank. The horsemen pushed back Craufurd’s pickets to Marialva and

Manzanilla, and completely cut his communication with Rodrigo, which

had hitherto been intermittently open. The troops which had passed

the river threw up redoubts to cover the bridge heads, and slightly

entrenched their camps. On June 8th Ney received the first convoy of

his siege train, which continued to come in by detachments during the

next week, till he had fifty heavy guns in hand, with 700 rounds for

each, and 2,000 gunners and sappers of the ‘Grand Park[284].’

[284] See the Emperor’s dispatches to Berthier of May 27 and May

29.

On the 15th the French opened their first parallel on the Great

Teson, on a front of 1,500 yards; it was only 500 yards from the

glacis of the town. Herrasti kept up a furious fire upon it, and

vexed the workmen by two sorties, which were not pressed home and

did no harm. On the 19th six batteries on the Teson were commenced;

the work was easy owing to the great store of gabions and sandbags

already in store, which the brigades of Maucune and Ferey had

prepared in May. While the emplacements for the guns were being got

ready, the sappers pushed forward zig-zags from the right end of the

first parallel down the slopes on the flank of the Little Teson. One

approach was directed toward the isolated convent of Santa Cruz, the

other toward the extreme northern angle of the town. The Spaniards,

though firing furiously day and night, could not prevent either the

construction of the batteries or the advance of the approaches;

wherefore Julian Sanchez, seeing that his cavalry could not live

under the oncoming bombardment, got leave from the governor to quit

the town. On the night of the 21st-22nd he crossed the bridge, broke

through the lines of Marchand’s division, and escaped by the Fuente

Guinaldo road with his 200 Lancers. He came into Craufurd’s camp, and

gave a full report of the state of the garrison and the progress of

the enemy’s works.

It was impossible for the French to open their second parallel so

long as the convent of Santa Cruz was held, for the fire of this

outwork would have enfiladed its whole length. On the night of

the 23rd-24th, therefore, Ney tried to storm the convent with a

picked body of Grenadiers; they blew in its door with a petard,

and set fire to its lower story, but were finally driven off. The

convent was partially destroyed, but the garrison gallantly clung

to its ruins, and covered themselves in the débris. The French

lost fifteen killed and fifty wounded that night. On June 25th the

batteries opened, without waiting for the reduction of Santa Cruz,

with forty-six guns placed in six batteries along the crest of the

Teson. The counter-fire of the besieged was very effective; two

expense magazines containing 9,000 lb. of powder were blown up in the

trenches, many guns dismounted, and one battery silenced. The loss of

the besiegers was heavy[285]. The Spaniards suffered less, but fires

broke out in several quarters of the town from the shells thrown by

the French mortars, and many houses were destroyed. The ruins of

the convent of Santa Cruz, moreover, were so thoroughly battered to

pieces that the garrison retired, when an assault was made upon it

by 300 Grenadiers after nightfall. This enabled the French to push

forward their works much nearer to the town.

[285] Masséna came up from Salamanca this day to inspect the

bombardment, and made (as was his wont) a rather mendacious

report thereon to the Emperor, declaring that the French loss

had been 12 killed and 41 wounded, whereas it had exceeded 100

[see Belmas, iii. p. 233], and that the defence of the place was

seriously impaired--which it was not as yet.

Four days of furious artillery engagement followed, in which the

besiegers, though suffering heavily, succeeded not only in setting

more than half the town on fire, but, what was more serious, in

making a breach in the fausse-braye, at the projecting angle of the

north side of the city, on which four of the batteries had been

trained, and in injuring the inner mediaeval wall at the back of it.

Believing, wrongly as it seems, that the breach was practicable, Ney

sent an officer to summon the town. Herrasti replied that he was

still in a position to defend himself, and ‘that after forty-nine

years of service he knew the laws of war and his military duty.’ He

made, however, the unusual request that he might be allowed to send a

letter to Wellington, and that a suspension of arms should be granted

till the return of his messenger. The Marshal, as was natural, sent a

refusal, and ordered the bombardment to recommence (June 28th).

Up to this moment the French engineers had been under the impression

that Ciudad Rodrigo would probably surrender when it had been

breached, without standing an assault. Now that they recognized

that the governor intended to fight to the last, and noted that he

had spent the night following the summons in clearing the ditch and

repairing the damaged fausse-braye with sandbags, they resolved that

the breaching batteries must be brought closer in, and the approaches

pushed up to the foot of the walls. Accordingly a second parallel was

opened along the front of the Little Teson, two hundred and fifty

yards in advance of the first, on the night of July 1st. On the same

night a column of 600 men stormed the convent of San Francisco in

the suburb, a post which would have enfiladed the southern end of

the new parallel in the most dangerous fashion. Having obtained this

lodgement in the suburb the French set to work to conquer the whole

of it, and after some stiff street-fighting stormed Santa Clara, its

central stronghold. Herrasti thereupon evacuated the rest of the

scattered houses, and withdrew all his troops inside the town (July

3rd).

The new battery on the Little Teson was costly to build and

maintain--on one night the French lost sixty-one men killed and

wounded in it[286]. But it was very effective; the original breach

was much enlarged, and the old wall behind it was reduced to ruins.

Meanwhile a mortar battery, placed in the conquered suburb, played

upon the parts of the town which had hitherto escaped bombardment,

and reduced many streets to ashes. The position of the garrison

was unsatisfactory, and Herrasti sent out several emissaries to

beg Wellington to help him, ere it was too late. Most of these

adventurers were captured by the French, but at least two reached

the British commander[287], who had recently come up to the front

to observe for himself the state of the enemy’s forces. He found

them too strong to be meddled with, and sent back a letter stating

that he was ready to move if he saw any chance of success, but that

at present none such was visible. He then retired, after leaving

Craufurd two squadrons of the 16th Light Dragoons to strengthen his

thin outpost line. Herrasti, though much dispirited by Wellington’s

reply, continued to make a vigorous defence, but the town was now

mostly in ruins, and the breach gaped wide.

[286] Belmas, iii. 245, July 2.

[287] See Shaw-Kennedy’s \_Diary\_, pp. 208-9 and 211.

On July 4th Masséna, who had again come up to visit the siege,

obtained intelligence that Wellington had been with the Light

Division at Gallegos, and determined to push back the British

outposts, in order to discover whether the front line of his enemy

had been strengthened by any troops from Portugal. It seemed to

him likely enough that the British general might have massed his

army for a bold stroke at the besiegers, now that the strength of

Ciudad Rodrigo was running low. Accordingly St. Croix’s division

of dragoons, supported by a brigade of Junot’s infantry, crossed

the Azava brook and drove in Craufurd’s cavalry pickets. They

retired, skirmishing vigorously all the way, to Gallegos, where the

five infantry battalions of the Light Division had concentrated.

Craufurd, having strict orders from his chief that he was not to

fight, fell back on Fort Concepcion, the work on the Spanish frontier

half way to Almeida. Thereupon the French retired, having obtained

the information that they wanted, viz. that Craufurd had not been

reinforced by any considerable body of troops from the rear. The

Light Division had manœuvred with its customary intelligence and

alertness all day; its flanks were being continually turned by

horsemen in overpowering numbers, but it beat them off with ease,

and lost only five men wounded while falling back across ten miles

of absolutely open country. The French lost five officers and over

twenty men[288], mostly in combats with the German Hussars, who

surpassed themselves on this day, and repeatedly charged the heads

of the hostile columns on favourable occasions. For the future

Craufurd kept behind the Dos Casas, while the French took up his old

line on the Azava. This move made any attempt to help Ciudad Rodrigo

a harder business than before, since the British outposts were now

fifteen instead of only six miles from the town. An attempt to storm

by surprise the French camps on the near side of the place was for

the future impossible.

[288] Belmas, iii. 250. For the conduct of the Hussars see

Beamish’s \_German Legion\_, i. pp. 274-6. Martinien’s lists show

that the 1st French dragoons lost one, the 2nd three, and the 4th

one officer on this day.

Warned by this activity on the part of the enemy, Wellington again

reinforced Craufurd’s cavalry, giving him three squadrons of the 14th

Light Dragoons, so that the Light Division had now some 1,200 horse

to watch its long and much exposed front. But the French advance now

halted again for a full fortnight, the demonstration of July 4th

having had no other purpose than that of ascertaining the strength of

the British observing force behind the Azava.

On the four days that followed Craufurd’s retreat the French

batteries were thundering against the northern angle of Ciudad

Rodrigo, and had reduced it to one vast breach more than 120 feet

broad. But Ney, more sparing of life than was his wont, refused to

order an assault till the whole of the Spanish artillery on the

neighbouring front should have been silenced, and till the engineers

should have worked up to and blown in the counterscarp. This last

preliminary was accomplished on the night of the eighth, when a mine

containing 800 lb. of powder was exploded with success just outside

the counterscarp, and cast down a vast amount of earth into the

ditch, so that there was now an almost level road from the advanced

trenches to the foot of the inner wall. The garrison repeatedly built

up the lip of the breach with palisades and sandbags, under a heavy

fire and at great expense of life. But their flimsy repairs were

swept away again and again by the batteries on the Little Teson, and

all their guns on this front of the walls were gradually disabled or

destroyed. Early on the afternoon of July 9th the engineers informed

the Marshal that Ciudad Rodrigo was untenable, and that a storm could

not fail of success. Three battalions, composed of picked voltigeur

and grenadier companies, were brought up to the advanced trenches,

under the Marshal’s personal superintendence. Before letting them

loose on the broad acclivity of rubble before them, Ney asked for

three volunteers who would take the desperate risk of climbing up

to the crest of the breach to see if it were retrenched behind. A

corporal and two privates made this daring venture, ran lightly up

to the summit, fired their muskets into the town, and descended

unhurt, under a scattering fire from the few Spaniards who were still

holding on to the ruins. On receiving their assurance that nothing

was to be feared, Ney ordered the storming battalions to move out

of the trenches, but ere they had started an officer with a white

flag appeared on the breach, and descended to inform the Marshal

that the Governor was prepared to capitulate. Finding that Ney was

immediately below, Herrasti came out in person with his staff a few

minutes later, and settled the whole matter in a short conversation.

Ney congratulated the white-haired veteran on his handsome defence,

returned him his sword, and told him that he should have all the

honours of war.

Accordingly the garrison marched out next morning about 4,000 strong,

laid down its arms below the glacis, and was marched off to Bayonne.

The Spaniards had lost 461 killed and 994 wounded, just a quarter of

their force, in their highly honourable resistance. They had only a

few days’ provisions left, and, though their munitions were by no

means exhausted, they would have been forced to yield for want of

food, even if the storm had failed, which was absolutely impossible.

The French captured 118 guns, most of them in bad order or disabled,

and 7,000 muskets. Not a house or church in the place was intact,

and a large majority were roofless or levelled to the ground. There

was no use whatever in protracting the resistance, and it is clear

that Herrasti had done all that a good officer could. In his dispatch

to the Junta he spoke somewhat bitterly of the fact that Wellington

had made no effort to relieve the place, showing feeling natural

enough under the circumstances. Martin La Carrera, who had been

commanding the Spanish division that lay in the mountains south of

the town, expressed his wrath still more bitterly, and marched off

to Estremadura in high dudgeon, the moment that the news of the

surrender reached him.

The French had been forced to much greater exertions in the siege

of Rodrigo than they had expected when they first sat down before

its walls. Their artillery had thrown 11,000 shells and 18,000

round shot into the place, which almost exhausted their store of

munitions--only 700 rounds for each of their fifty guns having been

provided. They had lost 180 killed and over 1,000 wounded, mainly in

the costly work of pushing forward the approaches towards the wall,

before the Spanish artillery fire had been silenced. Professional

critics attributed the delays and losses of the siege entirely to

the fact that the engineers believed, when they first planned their

works, that the enemy would surrender the moment that a breach had

been made, an idea which had never entered into Herrasti’s head[289].

Masséna showed his ill-temper, when all was over, by sending the

civilian members of the Junta as prisoners to France, and imposing a

fine of 500,000 francs on the miserable ruined town. It is surprising

to learn that he actually succeeded in extracting half that sum from

the homeless and starving population.

[289] See the criticisms in Belmas, iii. 259. Compare the views

of the artilleryman Hulot, pages 306-9 of his autobiography.

On the day that the garrison of Rodrigo marched out (July 10)

Craufurd had suffered a misadventure. Seeing that the French foragers

were busy in the villages between the Azava and the Dos Casas, he

had resolved to make an attempt to surprise some of their bands, and

went out from Fort Concepcion with six squadrons of cavalry[290],

six companies of the Rifles and the 43rd, a battalion of Caçadores

and two guns. Coming suddenly upon the French covering party near

the village of Barquilla, he ordered his cavalry to pursue them.

The enemy, consisting of two troops of dragoons and 200 men of the

22nd regiment from Junot’s corps, began a hasty retreat towards

their lines. Thereupon Craufurd bade his leading squadrons, one of

the German Hussars and one of the 16th, to charge[291]. They did

so, falling upon the infantry, who halted and formed square in a

corn-field to receive them. The charge, made by men who had been

galloping for a mile, and had been much disordered by passing some

enclosures, failed. The troopers, opening out to right and left under

the fire of the square, swept on and chased the French cavalry, who

were making off to the flank. They followed them for some distance,

finally overtaking them and making two officers and twenty-nine men

prisoners. Meanwhile Craufurd called up the next squadron from the

road, the leading one of the 14th Light Dragoons, and sent it in

against the little square. Headed by their colonel Talbot the men

of the 14th charged home, but were unable to break the French, who

stood firm and waited till the horses’ heads were within ten paces of

their bayonets before firing. Talbot and seven of his men fell dead,

and some dozen more were disabled. Before another squadron could

come up, the French slipped off into the enclosures of the village

of Cismeiro and got away. It was said that no effort was made to

stop them because two outlying squadrons of British cavalry[292],

which had ridden in towards the sound of the firing, were mistaken

for a large body of French horse coming up to the rescue of the

infantry. Both Craufurd and the British cavalry were much criticized

over this affair[293]; but it was, in truth, nothing more than an

example of the general rule that horsemen could not break steady

infantry, properly formed in square, during the Peninsular War. The

instances to the contrary are few. It was said at the time that

Craufurd might have used his leading squadrons to detain and harass

the French till his guns or his infantry, which were a mile to the

rear, could be brought up. This may have been so, but criticism after

the event is easy, and if the guns or the riflemen had come up ten

minutes late, and the French infantry had been allowed to go off

uncharged, the General would have been blamed still more. He lost in

all an officer and eight men killed, and twenty-three wounded, while

he took thirty-one prisoners, but the defeat rankled, and caused

so much unpleasant feeling that Wellington went out of his way to

send for and rebuke officers who had been circulating malevolent

criticism[294]. The French captain Gouache, who had commanded the

square, was very properly promoted and decorated by Masséna: nothing

could have been more firm and adroit than his conduct[295].

[290] Viz. three squadrons of the 14th, one (Krauchenberg’s)

of the 1st Hussars K.G.L., and two of the 16th. The other two

squadrons of the hussars, and the 4th squadron of the 14th, were

holding the outpost line to right and left.

[291] It is certain that both charged, and both were beaten off.

But the regimental diarists of the two regiments each mention

only the repulse of the squadron from the other corps. See

Tompkinson (of the 16th), \_Diary\_, p. 31, and Von Linsingen’s

letter (from the 1st Hussars), printed in Beamish, i. 279-80.

[292] Von Grüben’s squadron of the K.G.L. Hussars, and the fourth

squadron of the 14th Light Dragoons, neither of which formed part

of Craufurd’s little expedition. The former had been watching

Villa de Ciervo, the latter was on outpost duty.

[293] Charles Napier in his diary [\_Life\_, i. p. 132] and

Tomkinson [p. 31] accuse Craufurd of reckless haste. Harry Smith,

in his autobiography [i. p. 22], holds that the Rifles could have

got up in time to force the square to surrender. Leach [p. 142]

makes much the same comment. All these were eye-witnesses. Yet it

would have taken some time to bring up the guns or the infantry,

and the French were near broken ground, over which they might

have escaped, if not immediately assailed. See also Craufurd’s

Life by his grandson, pp. 114-16.

[294] Among these officers was General Stewart, the

adjutant-general, see Wellington to Craufurd, from Alverca, July

23, a very interesting letter, commented on in the \_Life of

Craufurd\_, pp. 117-20.

[295] Hulot (p. 36) says that he met the square retiring, and

noticed that numbers of the bayonets and gun-barrels had been cut

and bent by the blows of the English dragoons, as they tried to

force their way in. See Masséna’s dispatch to Berthier of Aug.

10, in Belmas’s \_Pièces Justificatives\_.

SECTION XIX: CHAPTER VI

COMBAT OF THE COA: SIEGE OF ALMEIDA (JULY-AUGUST 1810)

On July 10th the French had entered Ciudad Rodrigo, but ten days

more elapsed before they made any further advance. Masséna, who had

returned to the front, was resolved to follow his master’s orders

and to act ‘methodically.’ It was clearly incumbent on him to begin

the siege of Almeida as soon as possible, and, as that place is only

twenty-one miles from Ciudad Rodrigo, one long march would have

placed him before its walls. But since he had only a few thousand

rounds of ammunition left for his heavy guns, he refused to move on

till all the available reserves were on their way from Salamanca to

the front, and requisition for a further supply had been sent to

Bayonne. He had also to do his best to scrape together more food,

since the magazines that Ney had collected were nearly exhausted when

Rodrigo fell. Moreover, 1,500 draught animals had died during the

late siege, and it was necessary to replace them before the Great

Park could move forward.

On July 21st, however, some convoys having come up from Salamanca,

Masséna directed Ney to advance with the 6th Corps and to drive

Craufurd back on to Almeida. The main point that he was directed

to ascertain on this day was whether the English intended to make

a stand at Fort Concepcion, the isolated Spanish work which faces

Almeida on the frontier, beyond the Turones. This was a solid

eighteenth-century fort, covering the bridge where the high-road

passes the river. It had lately been repaired, and could have

resisted a bombardment for some days. But it would have required

a garrison of 1,000 men, and, since it lies in the midst of the

plain, there would be little chance of relieving it, if once it were

surrounded. Wellington, therefore, gave orders that it should be

blown up whenever the French should advance in force toward Almeida,

and that Craufurd should make no attempt to defend the line of the

Turones, and should send back his infantry to Junca, a village about

a mile outside the gates of Almeida[296], keeping his cavalry only

to the front. On the 21st Ney advanced with the whole of Loison’s

division, and Treillard’s cavalry brigade. Thereupon Craufurd, with

some reluctance, retired and blew up Fort Concepcion as he went. The

French advanced, skirmishing with the 14th Light Dragoons and the

German Hussars, but finally halted at Val de Mula, four miles from

Almeida. Craufurd established himself at Junca, only three miles

from the enemy’s line of pickets. On the next evening he received a

strong suggestion, if not quite an order, from his Chief to send his

infantry across the Coa. ‘I am not desirous of engaging an affair

beyond the Coa,’ wrote Wellington. ‘Under these circumstances, if

you are not covered from the sun where you are, would it not be

better that you should come to this side of it, with your infantry at

least[297]?’ The tentative form of the note well marks the confidence

that the Commander-in-Chief was wont to place in his subordinate’s

judgement. This time that confidence was somewhat misplaced, for

Craufurd tarried two days longer by the glacis of Almeida, and

thereby risked a disaster.

[296] Wellington to Craufurd from Alverca, July 16.

[297] Wellington to Craufurd from Alverca, July 22, 8 p.m.

It must be remembered that Almeida is not on the Coa, but two miles

from it, and that its guns, therefore, did not cover the one bridge

over which Craufurd could make his retreat. Indeed, that bridge and

the river also are invisible from Almeida. The fortress is slightly

raised above the level of the rolling plain, which extends as far

as Ciudad Rodrigo: the river flows in a deep bed, so much below the

plateau as to be lost to sight. Its ravine is a sort of cañon which

marks the end of the plains of Leon. It has often been remarked that

Almeida’s value would have been doubled, if only it had been on the

near side of the Coa, and commanded its bridge. But Portuguese kings

had built and rebuilt the old fortress on its original site, with no

regard for strategy. Craufurd, then, should have remembered that, if

he were suddenly attacked in his camp outside the gates, he risked

being thrown back into the town (the last thing he would wish), or

being hustled down to the bridge and forced to pass his division

across it in dangerous haste. But he had so often challenged, held

back, and evaded Ney’s and Junot’s advanced guards, that he evidently

considered that he was taking no very serious risk in staying where

he was. He was, moreover, discharging a valuable function by keeping

Almeida from being invested, as stores and munitions were still being

poured into the place. The only peril was that he might be attacked

both without warning and by overwhelming superiority of numbers,

with the defile at his back. Neither of these misadventures had yet

happened to him during the four and a half months while he had been

defying the 6th and the 8th Corps along the banks of the Agueda. The

French had never assailed him with much more than a division, nor had

they ever pressed on him with headlong speed, so as to prevent an

orderly retreat properly covered by a moderate rearguard.

Now, however, Ney, untrammelled by any other operation, had his

whole corps concentrated behind Val de Mula, and having learnt of

the defile that lay in Craufurd’s rear, thought that he might be

hurled into it and crushed or caught. Before dawn he arrayed his

whole 24,000 men in one broad and deep column. Two cavalry brigades,

Lamotte’s 3rd Hussars and 15th Chasseurs, and Gardanne’s 15th and

25th Dragoons, were in front. Then came the thirteen battalions of

Loison’s division, in a line of columns; behind them was Mermet with

eleven battalions more, while three regiments of Marchand’s division

(the fourth was garrisoning Ciudad Rodrigo) formed the reserve.

In a grey morning, following a night of bitter rain, the French

horsemen rode at the British cavalry pickets, and sent them flying

helter-skelter across the three miles of rolling ground that lay in

front of the Light Division. On hearing the fire of the carbines

Craufurd’s men turned out with their accustomed celerity, and in a

very short space were aligned to the right of Almeida, with their

flank only 800 yards from the glacis, and their front covered by a

series of high stone walls bounding suburban fields. There would have

been just enough time to get cavalry, guns, and impedimenta across

the bridge of the Coa if the General had started off at once. But,

not realizing the fearful strength that lay behind the French cavalry

advance, he resolved to treat himself to a rearguard action, and not

to go till he was pushed. On a survey of the ground it is easy to

understand the temptation, for it would be hard to find a prettier

battlefield for a detaining force, if only the enemy were in no more

than moderate strength. A long double-headed spur runs down from the

high plateau on which Almeida stands to the Coa. Successive points

of it can be held one after the other, and it is crossed by many

stone walls giving good cover for skirmishers. With his left covered

by the fire of the fortress, and his right ‘refused’ and trending

back towards the river, Craufurd waited to be attacked, intending

to give the leading French brigade a lesson. There was a delay of

more than an hour before the French infantry was up, but when the

assault came it was overwhelming. Craufurd’s line of three British

and two Portuguese battalions[298] was suddenly assaulted by Loison’s

thirteen, who came on at the \_pas de charge\_ ‘yelling, with drums

beating, and the officers, like mountebanks, running ahead with their

hats on their swords, capering like madmen and crying as they turned

to wave on their men, “Allons, enfants de la Patrie, le premier qui

s’avançera, Napoléon le recompensera[299].”’ The rolling fire of

the British stopped the first rush, when suddenly a French cavalry

regiment, the 3rd Hussars, charged across the interval between

Craufurd’s left and the walls of Almeida, braving the fire of the

ramparts in the most gallant style. Some fell, but the gunners were

flurried at this unexpected development, and fired wildly, so that

the hussars swept down unchecked on the extreme flank of the Light

Division, where a company of the 95th Rifles was annihilated[300],

and began riding along the rear of the line and rolling it up. They

were luckily checked for a moment by a stone wall, but Craufurd saw

that he must retreat at once, since he was turned on the side where

he had thought that he was safest. The cavalry and guns were ordered

to gallop for the bridge, the Caçadores to follow them, and the rest

of the infantry to fall back in échelon from the left, defending

each enclosure and fold of the hillside as long as possible. But it

is hard to make an orderly retreat when a foe with twofold strength

in his fighting line is pressing hard. Moreover, the road to the

bridge has an unfortunate peculiarity; instead of making straight for

its goal it overshoots it, in order to descend the slope at an easy

point, and then comes back along the river bank for a quarter of a

mile. The cavalry and guns, forced to keep to the road because the

hillside was too steep for them, had to cover two sides of a triangle

with a sharp turn at the apex, which delayed them terribly. To add

to the trouble an artillery caisson was upset at a sharp turn, and

took much trouble to right and send forward. Thus it chanced that

the covering infantry were driven down close to the bridge before

the Caçadores and the last of the guns had crossed the river. The

retreat of the three British battalions had been most perilous; at

one moment a wing of the 43rd found themselves checked by a vineyard

wall ten feet high, while the French were pressing hard on their

rear. They only escaped by shoving a long part of it over by sheer

strength--fortunately, like all other walls in this part of Portugal,

it was made of dry flat stones without mortar. Finally the 43rd, the

Rifles, and part of the 52nd were massed on a long knoll covered

with pine-trees, which lies above the bridge and completely masks it

against an attack from above. While they held firm, Craufurd ranged

the guns and the Caçadores on the slopes upon the other side, so as

to command the passage when the rest of the troops should have to

cross. He then began to withdraw the 43rd, and part of that battalion

had already crossed the water, when five companies of the 52nd,

which had occupied the extreme right wing of the division, were seen

hastening along the river bank some way above the bridge. They had

held out a little too long on the slopes above, and seemed likely to

be cut off, for the French, noting their position, made a vigorous

effort, and carried the knoll which protected their line of retreat

to the point of passage. This was a desperate crisis, but such was

the splendid courage and initiative of the regimental officers of the

Light Division that the disaster was averted. At one point Beckwith,

colonel of the Rifles, at another Major McLeod of the 43rd, called on

the disordered mass of men, who had been driven back to the bridge

head, to charge again and save the 52nd. The soldiers grasped the

situation, cheered and followed; they recaptured the knoll that they

had just lost, and held it for ten minutes more, gaining time for the

companies of the 52nd to pass behind and cross the bridge. ‘No one

present,’ wrote an eye-witness, ‘can fail to remember the gallantry

of Major McLeod. How either he or his horse escaped being blown to

atoms, while in this daring manner he charged on horseback at the

head of some 200 skirmishers of the 43rd and 95th mixed together,

and headed them in making a dash at the line of French infantry,

whom we dislodged, I am at a loss to imagine. It was one of those

extraordinary escapes which tend to implant in the mind some faith in

the doctrine of fatality[301].’

[298] The 43rd on the left, the two Caçador battalions in the

centre, the 52nd on the right, while the Rifles were partly

dispersed along the front, partly with the 43rd.

[299] Simmons’s \_Journal of a British Rifleman\_, p. 77.

[300] Of this, O’Hare’s Company of the 1/95th, sixty-seven

strong, an officer and eleven men were killed or wounded and

forty-five were taken prisoners.

[301] Leach’s \_Reminiscences\_, pp. 149-50.

The moment that the 52nd were safe, the troops on the knoll evacuated

it, and crossed the bridge behind them at full speed, while the

French reoccupied the wooded eminence. If Ney had been wise he would

have stopped at this moment, and have contented himself with having

driven in the Light Division with a loss of 300 men, while his own

troops had suffered comparatively little. But, carried away by the

excitement of victory, he resolved to storm the bridge, thinking

that the British troops were too much shaken and disordered to make

another stand, even in a strong position. There were plenty of

examples in recent French military history, from Lodi to Ebersberg,

where passages had been forced under difficulties as great.

Accordingly he ordered the 66th, the leading regiment of Loison’s

division, to push on and cross the river. This was a dire mistake:

Craufurd already had the Caçadores in position behind stone walls a

little above the bridge, and Ross’s guns placed across the road so as

to sweep it from end to end. The British battalions were no sooner

across the river than they began to string themselves out behind the

rocks and walls, which lie in a sort of small amphitheatre on the

slope commanding the passage. The bridge, a two-arched structure

seventy yards long, crosses the Coa diagonally, at a point where

it is narrowed down between rocks, and flows very fiercely: it was

flooded at this moment from the rain of the previous night, and

was swelling still, for a tropical storm had just begun and raged

at intervals throughout the afternoon. The cavalry, useless at

the bridge, was sent up-stream to watch some difficult fords near

Alveirenos.

The French 66th, ordered by the Marshal to carry the bridge, formed

its grenadiers on the knoll, to lead the column, and then charged

at the passage. But the leading company was mown down, before it

had got half way across, by a concentrated musketry salvo from the

hillside in front, and the enfilading fire of the guns from the

right. The column broke, and the men recoiled and dispersed among the

rocks and trees by the bank, from whence they opened a fierce but

ineffective fire upon the well-sheltered British battalions. Ney, who

had now lost his temper, ordered up a \_bataillon d’élite\_ of light

infantry[302] which had distinguished itself at the siege of Ciudad

Rodrigo, and told his aide de camp Sprünglin to take the command and

cross at all costs[303]. There ensued a most gallant effort and a

hideous butchery. The Chasseurs flung themselves at the bridge, and

pushed on till it was absolutely blocked by the bodies of the killed

and the wounded, and till they themselves had been almost literally

exterminated, for out of a battalion of little more than 300 men 90

were killed and 147 wounded in less than ten minutes. A few survivors

actually crossed the bridge, and threw themselves down among the

rocks at its western end, where they took shelter from the British

fire in a little corner of dead ground, but could of course make no

further attempt to advance.

[302] The \_Chasseurs de la Siège\_ formed of picked marksmen from

all the regiments of the 6th Corps.

[303] That Ney himself was the person responsible for this mad

adventure seems proved by the journal of Sprünglin, who writes ‘À

midi je reçus de M. le Maréchal lui-même l’ordre d’emporter \_à

tout prix\_ le pont de la Coa, d’où deux compagnies de Grenadiers

venaient d’être repoussés. J’avais 300 hommes; je formai mon

bataillon en colonne et abordai les Anglais à la baïonnette, et

au cri de \_Vive l’Empereur\_. Le pont fut emporté, mais j’eus

4 officiers et 86 soldats tués, et 3 officiers et 144 soldats

blessés. Le 25 le bataillon, étant détruit, fut dissous.’ That

the bridge was ‘emporté’ in any other sense than that a score or

so of survivors got to the other side, and then returned, is of

course untrue. Sprünglin, p. 439.

Ney, irritated beyond measure, now bade a mounted officer sound

for a ford at a spot above the bridge, where the river spreads

out into a broad reach. But horse and man were killed by a volley

from the British side, and floated down the swollen stream[304].

Finding the river impracticable, the Marshal again ordered the 66th

to go forward: this third attack, delivered without the dash and

determination of the first two, was beaten back with little trouble.

The firing then died down, and during one of the fierce rainstorms

of the late afternoon the few chasseurs who had crossed the bridge

ran back and escaped to their own bank. Craufurd held the position

that he had occupied till midnight, and then retired on Pinhel. He

had lost 333 men only[305], and was fortunate therein, for half his

division might have been destroyed if the officers had shown less

intelligence and the men less pluck. The French had 527 casualties,

four-fifths of them in the mad attempt to force the bridge, in which

the colonel of the 66th and fifteen of his officers had fallen, and

the battalion of Chasseurs had been practically exterminated[306].

Ney forwarded an honest chronicle of the day’s doings to his chief,

which Masséna wrote up, and sent to the Emperor turned into a work of

fancy, in which he declared that he had destroyed 1,200 of Craufurd’s

men (whom he estimated at 2,000 horse and 8,000 infantry, double

their real strength), taken 300 prisoners, a colour, and two guns.

Making no mention of the complete check that Loison’s division had

suffered at the bridge, he stated that ‘the Imperial troops have

shown once again this day that there is no position which can resist

their intrepidity.’ He added foolish gossip, ‘Their Estafete-Mor

(chief Portuguese courier) has been captured with all his dispatches,

in which are several of the 25th and 26th instant, which declare

that the English army is in complete rout, that its deplorable state

cannot be exaggerated, that the English have never been in such a

hot corner, that they have lost sixty officers, of whom they buried

twenty-four on the battlefield, about 400 dead and 700 wounded[307].’

Apparently these ‘dispatches’ are an invention of Masséna’s own. It

is incredible that any British officer can have written such stuff

after a combat of which every man present was particularly proud, and

in which the losses had been incredibly small, considering the risks

that had been run. Four officers, not twenty-four, had been killed,

and one made prisoner. Instead of being in ‘complete rout’ the Light

Division had retired at leisure and unmolested, without leaving even

a wounded man or a single cart behind.

[304] For an interesting description of this incident, see George

Napier’s autobiography, p. 131.

[305] Thirty-six killed, 189 wounded, 83 missing. See Tables in

Appendix.

[306] Martinien’s invaluable lists show 7 officers killed and 17

wounded, which at the normal rate of 22 men per officer, exactly

corresponds to the actual loss of 117 killed and 410 wounded

(Koch, vii. 118).

[307] It is a curious fact that in the draft of Masséna’s

dispatch in the \_Archives du Ministère de la Guerre\_, we actually

catch him in the act of falsifying returns. There is first

written ‘Nous leur avons pris 100 hommes et deux pièces de canon.

Notre perte a été de près de 500 hommes tant tués que blessés.’

Then the figures 100 are scratched out and above is inserted

‘un drapeau et 400 hommes,’ while for the French loss 500 is

scratched out and 300 inserted. Ney, whose dispatch was lying

before Masséna, had honestly written that Craufurd ‘a été chassé

de sa position avec une perte considérable de tués et de blessés,

nous lui avons fait en outre une centaine de prisonniers.’ Ney

reported also a loss of about 500 men, which Masséna deliberately

cut down to 300. Belmas (iii. 379) has replaced the genuine

figures in his reprint of Masséna’s dispatch, though both the

draft in the \_Archives\_ and the original publication in the

\_Moniteur\_ give the falsifications. Masséna says nought of the

check at the bridge, though Ney honestly wrote ‘au delà du Coa,

une réserve qu’il avait lui permis de se reconnaître, et il

continue sa retraite sur Pinhel la nuit du 24.’ As to the guns

captured, it was perfectly true that some cannon were taken that

day, but not in fighting, nor from Craufurd. The governor of

Almeida was mounting two small guns (4-pounders) on a windmill

some way outside the glacis. They had not been got up to their

position, but were lying below--removed from their carriages,

in order to be slung up more easily on to the roof. The mill

was abandoned when Ney came up, and the dismounted cannon fell

into his hands. He said not a word of them, any more than he

did of the imaginary flag alleged by Masséna to have been

captured. But the Prince of Essling brought in both, to please

the imperial palate, which yearned for British flags and guns.

His dispatch, published some weeks later in the \_Moniteur\_, came

into Craufurd’s hands in November, and provoked him to write a

vindication of his conduct, and a contradiction of ‘the false

assertions contained in Marshal Masséna’s report of an action

which was not only highly honourable to the Light Division,

but positively terminated in its favour, notwithstanding the

extraordinary disparity of numbers. For a corps of 4,000 men

performed, in the face of an army of 24,000, one of the most

difficult operations of war,--a retreat from a broken and

extensive position over one narrow defile, and defended during

the whole day the first defensible position that was to be found

in the neighbourhood of the place where the action commenced.’

For the whole letter see Alex. Craufurd’s \_Life of Craufurd\_, pp.

140-1.

Wellington was justly displeased with Craufurd for accepting this

wholly unnecessary combat: if the Light Division had been withdrawn

behind the Coa on the 22nd, as he had advised, no danger would have

been incurred, and the bridge might have been defended without

the preliminary retreat to the water’s edge. Yet so great was the

confidence in which Craufurd was held by Wellington, that their

correspondence shows no break of cordiality or tension of relations

during the ensuing days[308], though unofficially the divisional

general was aware that the Commander-in-Chief had disapproved

his action, and felt the blame that was unspoken in the keenest

fashion[309]. There was another British general involved in a serious

degree of culpability on the 24th: this was Picton, who hearing

at his post of Pinhel the firing in the morning, rode up to the

bridge of the Coa; there he met Craufurd, who was just preparing

to resist Ney’s attempt to cross the river. Picton was asked to

bring up the 3rd Division in support, which could have been done

in less than three hours, but roughly refused, saying apparently

that Craufurd might get out of his own scrape. The generals parted

after an exchange of some hard words, and Picton rode back to order

his division to get ready to retreat, having committed one of the

greatest military sins, that of refusing to support a comrade in the

moment of danger, because he did not choose to compromise his own

troops[310].

[308] See the letter to Craufurd in the \_Dispatches\_, dated

July 26 and 27. His letter to Lord Liverpool of July 25 offers,

indeed, excuses for Craufurd. But in that to Henry Wellesley of

July 27, and still more in that to his relative Pole of July 31,

he expresses vexation. ‘I had positively forbidden the foolish

affairs in which Craufurd involved his outposts, ... and repeated

my injunction that he should not engage in an affair on the right

of the river.... You will say in this case, “Why not accuse

Craufurd?” I answer, “Because if I am to be hanged for it, I

cannot accuse a man who I believe has meant well, and whose error

was one of judgement, not of intention.”’

[309] See \_Craufurd’s Life\_, pp. 149-50.

[310] This interview was denied by Robinson in his \_Life of

Picton\_ (i. 294) on the mere allegation of some of Picton’s

staff that they had not heard of it, or been present at it. But

the evidence of William Campbell, Craufurd’s brigade-major,

brought forward by Napier at Robinson’s challenge, is conclusive.

See Napier, vi. pp. 418-19, for the ‘fiery looks and violent

rejoinders’ witnessed by Campbell. Picton had been specially

ordered to support Craufurd if necessary. See \_Wellington

Dispatches\_, v. pp. 535 and 547.

Having cleared the country-side beyond the Coa by pressing back the

Light Division, and having ascertained by a reconnaissance that

Picton had evacuated Pinhel on the night of the 25th, Masséna was

able to sit down to besiege Almeida at his leisure. The investment

was assigned to Ney and the 6th Corps, while Junot and the 8th

Corps were brought up from the Agueda, and placed in the villages

behind and to the right of the besieged place, so as to be able to

support Ney at a few hours’ notice. The extreme steepness of the

banks of the Coa during its whole course rendered it most unlikely

that Wellington would attempt the relief of Almeida by a direct

advance. He would have had to force a passage, and the Coa, unlike

the Agueda, has very few fords. Its only two bridges, that opposite

Almeida, and that higher up at Castello Bom, were held in force by

the 6th Corps. The siege however might not improbably prove long.

Almeida was in far better repair than Ciudad Rodrigo, and had less

defects. The little town is situated on the culminating knoll of an

undulating plateau, a very slight eminence, but one which was not

commanded by any higher ground as Rodrigo was by the two Tesons.

The outline of the place is almost circular, and exactly fits the

round knoll on which it stands. It has six bastions, with demi-lunes

and a covered way. There is a dry ditch cut in the solid rock, for

Almeida lies on a bare granite plateau, with only two or three feet

of earth covering the hard stratum below. It was well armed with over

100 guns, forty of which were 18-pounders or still heavier. It had

casemates completely proof against bomb fire, and large enough to

cover the whole garrison. This, as has been already said, consisted

of one regular regiment, the 24th of the Line over 1,200 strong, and

the three militia regiments of Arganil, Trancoso, and Vizeu--in all

some 4,000 infantry, with a squadron of the 11th cavalry regiment

and 400 gunners. The governor was William Cox--an English colonel

and a Portuguese brigadier; he had with him five other English

officers, all the rest of the garrison being Portuguese. There was

an ample store both of food and of ammunition, which Wellington

had been pouring in ever since the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo began.

Only two serious defects existed in the place: the first was that

its glacis was too low, and left exposed an unduly large portion of

the walls[311]. The second, a far worse fault, was that the grand

magazine was established in a rather flimsy mediaeval castle in the

centre of the town, and was not nearly so well protected as could

have been desired. Nevertheless Wellington calculated that Almeida

should hold out at least as long as Ciudad Rodrigo, and had some

hope that its siege would detain Masséna so much that the autumn

rains would set in before he had taken the place, in which case the

invasion of Portugal would assume a character of difficulty which it

was far from presenting in August or September.

[311] This came from the extreme hardness of the soil, which

induced the builders of the 18th-century enceinte to put less

earth into the glacis than was needed, since it had to be scraped

up and carried from a great distance, owing to the fact that the

coating of soil all around is so thin above the rock.

For some days after the investment of Almeida had been completed the

6th Corps remained quiescent, and made no attempt to break ground in

front of the place. Ney was waiting for the Grand Park and the train,

which had now started in detachments from Ciudad Rodrigo, but were

advancing very slowly on account of the lack of draught animals. For

a moment Wellington thought it possible that the enemy was about to

mask Almeida, and to advance into Portugal with his main army without

delay[312]. This hypothesis received some support from the facts that

Junot had moved up from the Agueda, and that Reynier had shown the

head of a column beyond the Pass of Perales. This last appeared a

most significant movement; for if the 2nd Corps was about to march

up from the Tagus to join Masséna, the deduction was that it was

required to join in a general invasion, since it was clear that it

was not needed for the mere siege of Almeida. Wellington accordingly

wrote to urge Hill to keep a most vigilant eye on Reynier, and to

be ready to move up to the Mondego the moment that it was certain

that his opponent had passed the Sierra de Gata and linked himself

to the main French army. As a matter of fact there was, as yet, no

danger from Reynier. The advance of one of his flanking detachments

to Navas Frias beyond the Pass of Perales, and a raid made upon

Penamacor on July 31 and upon Monsanto on August 1, by another, were

pure matters of foraging and reconnaissance. Reynier had no orders to

move up his whole force to join Masséna, and was only amusing himself

by demonstrations. His actions became most puzzling to Wellington

when, a few days later, he called back all the troops that had moved

northward, and concentrated his force at Zarza la Mayor, on the road

to Castello Branco, so as to threaten once more to invade Central

Portugal by the line of the Tagus. This was no device of his own, but

the result of a dispatch from Masséna dated July 27, ordering him to

keep more to the south for the present, to threaten Abrantes, and to

afford Hill no chance of joining Wellington.

[312] Wellington to Hill, Alverca, July 27, ‘There is not the

smallest appearance of the enemy’s intending to attack Almeida,

and I conclude that as soon as they have got together their

force, they will make a dash at us, and endeavour to make our

retreat as difficult as possible.’

Reynier’s feints meanwhile had given Hill some trouble; the

appearance of a northward move on the part of his adversary had

caused the British general to make ready for a parallel march on

Fundão and Guarda, so as to connect himself with his chief. He

transferred his head quarters first from Castello Branco to Sarzedas,

and then from Sarzedas to Atalaya, at the foot of the pass that leads

to the Mondego valley, intending to cross the mountains the moment

that Reynier had passed over the Perales defiles with his main body.

But seeing the 2nd Corps unexpectedly turning back and concentrating

at Zarza, Hill also retraced his steps, and lay at Sarzedas again

from August 3rd till September 21st, with his advanced guard at

Castello Branco and his cavalry well out to the front along the

Spanish frontier, watching every movement of the 2nd Corps. During

this time of waiting the Portuguese cavalry of his division had two

small but successful engagements with Reynier’s horse, of whom they

cut up a squadron on the 3rd of August near Penamacor and another

on the 22nd at Ladoeiro, when two officers and sixty men of the

Hanoverian \_Chasseurs à Cheval\_ were killed or taken[313].

[313] For details of this combat see Foy’s observations on p. 97

of his \_Vie Militaire\_, ed. Girod de L’Ain.

Wellington’s doubts as to Masséna’s intentions in the first days of

August were provoked not merely by the movements of the 2nd Corps,

but by a demonstration made on an entirely new front by General

Serras, the officer who had been left with an unattached division to

hold the plains of Leon, when Junot and the 8th Corps went off to

join the main army on the Agueda. In obedience to Masséna’s orders,

on July 27 Serras collected at Benavente as much of his division as

could be spared from garrison duty, and moved forward to threaten

the frontier of the Tras-os-Montes, far to the north of Portugal.

He advanced with some 5,000 men as far as Puebla de Senabria, from

which on July 29 he drove out a small Spanish force under General

Taboada--the weak brigade which Echevarria had formerly commanded.

Silveira immediately collected all the Portuguese militia of his

district at Braganza, and prepared to defend the frontier. But

Serras unexpectedly turned back, left a battalion of the 2nd Swiss

Regiment and a squadron of horse in Puebla de Senabria, and returned

to Zamora. The moment that he was gone Silveira and Taboada united

their forces, attacked this small detached force, routed it, and

shut it up in the town on August 4. It was forced to surrender some

six days later, about 20 officers and 350 men, all that remained of

600, being made prisoners. Serras, who had hurried back when he heard

of Silveira’s offensive movement, was too late by twelve hours to

save his men, and found Puebla de Senabria empty, for the allies had

gone off with their prisoners and taken to the mountains. He then

retired to Benavente, and Taboada reoccupied Puebla de Senabria,

where he was not again disturbed. Serras soon after was drawn away

to the north-east by the demands of Bonnet, whose communications

with Santander had once more been cut by Porlier’s roving Asturian

bands. He called on his colleague to attack this partisan force in

the rear, and while Serras was hunting it at Potes and Alba, in the

Cantabrian Hills, Northern Portugal and Galicia were left undisturbed

in September[314].

[314] For a narrative of these obscure campaigns see Schaller’s

\_Souvenirs d’un officier Fribourgeois\_, pp. 29-37.

While glancing at the subsidiary operations in this remote corner

of Spain, it may be worth while to note, as a proof of the slight

hold which Bonnet and Serras possessed on their allotted districts,

that on June 7 Mahy threatened Astorga, while the Asturian bands

of Colonel Barcena, eluding Bonnet, came down into the plains by

the Pass of Pajares and surprised Leon[315]. They got into the town

by escalade at night, held it for two days, and only evacuated it

when Serras came up in strength on June 9. Provoked at this bold

adventure, Bonnet made his last attempt to conquer Western Asturias,

and so to destroy the indefatigable and evasive partisans in his

front. He forced his way across the Narcea and the Navia, and his

vanguard had reached Castropol, on the Galician border, upon July 5,

when he heard to his disgust that the enemy had slipped behind him.

Barcena was threatening his base at Oviedo, while Porlier’s band,

carried round by English ships, had landed near Llanes and cut the

communication with Santander. These clever moves brought Bonnet back

in haste: he evacuated Western Asturias, called up Serras to his aid,

and was engaged in August and September in the hunt after Porlier

which we have already mentioned[316].

[315] See ibid., pp. 32-3.

[316] For a narrative of these interesting but obscure movements,

see Schepeler, iii. 596-9. It is impossible to give a full

account of them here, but necessary to mention them, to show the

Sisyphean character of Bonnet’s task.

But to return to the main focus of the war in the North. On August

15th Ney’s troops, having at last received the siege-train and a good

supply of munitions from Ciudad Rodrigo and Salamanca, broke ground

in front of Almeida. Wellington was much relieved at the news, as

it was now clear that Masséna was about to besiege the place, and

not to mask it and march forward into Portugal. The front which the

engineers of the 6th Corps had chosen for attack was that facing the

bastion of San Pedro on the south-east front of the town. The first

parallel was drawn at a distance of only 500 yards from the walls;

it was found very difficult to complete, owing to the shallowness

of the earth, and had to be built with gabions and sandbags rather

than to be excavated in the rocky subsoil. In many places outcrops of

stone came to the surface, and had actually to be blasted away by the

sappers, in order to allow of a trench of the shallowest sort being

formed. It was clear that the construction of approaches towards the

town would present the greatest difficulties, since there was little

earth in which to burrow. Between the 17th and the 24th no less than

eleven batteries were constructed along the first parallel. They

were armed with more than fifty heavy guns, for there was artillery

in abundance; in addition to the old siege-train many of the Spanish

guns taken in Ciudad Rodrigo had been brought forward. The Portuguese

kept up a vigorous but not very destructive fire all the time; but on

the 24th they succeeded in preventing the commencement of a second

parallel, driving out the workmen before they could cover themselves

in the stony ground. At six o’clock on the morning of the 26th August

the batteries were all completed and opened fire. Several quarters

of the town were in flames before the afternoon, and the guns on the

three bastions attacked were unable to hold their own against the

converging fire directed on them. But no serious damage had been

done to the defences, and the governor was undismayed. At seven

o’clock in the evening, however, a fearful disaster occurred--one in

its own way unparalleled in magnitude during the whole Peninsular

War. The door of the great magazine in the castle had been opened,

in order to allow of the sending out of a convoy of powder to the

southern ramparts, where the artillery had been hard at work all

day. A leaky barrel was handed out, which left a trail of powder

behind it along the ground; it was being fixed to the saddle of a

pack-ass when a French bomb fell in the courtyard of the castle. In

bursting, the bomb chanced to ignite the train; the spark ran along

it and exploded another barrel at the door of the magazine, which

was still open[317]. This mischance fired the whole store, and

in two seconds the castle, the cathedral at its side, and the whole

central portion of the town had been blasted out of existence. ‘The

earth trembled,’ wrote a French eye-witness, ‘and we saw an immense

whirlwind of fire and smoke rise from the middle of the place. It was

like the bursting of a volcano--one of the things that I can never

forget after twenty-six years. Enormous blocks of stone were hurled

into the trenches, where they killed and wounded some of our men.

Guns of heavy calibre were lifted from the ramparts and hurled down

far outside them. When the smoke cleared off, a great part of Almeida

had disappeared, and the rest was a heap of débris[318].’ Five

hundred of the garrison perished, including nearly every man of the

two hundred artillerymen who were serving the guns on the front of

attack. Some inhabitants were killed, but not many, for the majority

had taken refuge in the casemates when the bombardment began that

morning. It was the unfortunate soldiers who were manning the walls

that suffered.

[317] This version of the cause of the disaster is given

by Soriano da Luz (iii. 73) from the mouth of an artillery

officer (one José Moreira) who had it from the only man in the

castle-yard who escaped. This soldier, seeing the train fired,

jumped into an oven-hole which lay behind him, and chanced not to

be killed.

[318] Sprünglin’s \_Journal\_, pp. 444-5.

[Illustration: COMBAT OF THE COA. JULY 24TH, 1810.]

Fearing that the French might seize the moment for an escalade,

General Cox ran to the ramparts and, assisted by a Portuguese

artillery officer, loaded and fired into the trenches some of the few

guns on the south front which were not disabled. He turned out the

whole garrison, and kept them under arms that night, lying behind

the walls in expectation of an assault which never came. The morning

light enabled him to realize the full extent of the disaster; the

bastions and curtains had suffered little, the shell, so to speak,

of the town was still intact, and the casemates had stood firm, but

everything within the enceinte was wrecked. Only five houses in

the place had kept their roofs: the castle was a deep hole, like

the crater of a volcano: the streets were absolutely blocked with

ruins, so that there was no going from place to place save along the

ramparts.

There were still 4,000 men under arms; but the officer commanding

the artillery reported that thirty-nine barrels of powder, and a few

hundred rounds in the small expense-magazines on the ramparts, were

all that had escaped the explosion. That is to say, there was not

powder in the place to keep up a reply for one day to the batteries

of the besieger. The infantry had 600,000 cartridges in their

regimental stores (150 rounds per man) but that was of no use for

the heavy guns. Moreover, more than half the gunners had perished in

the disaster of the previous night--only 200 were left to man nearly

100 guns that were still serviceable. It was clear that Almeida was

doomed, since it could not defend itself without powder: but there

was a chance that Wellington, whose outposts must have heard and

seen the explosion, might think it worth while to dash forward and

endeavour to save the garrison during the next twenty-four hours.

Therefore Cox resolved to protract his resistance as long as was

possible, to give his chief the option of fighting if he should so

please. But the defence could not be prolonged for more than a day or

two at the most.

At nine on the morning of the 27th Masséna sent in his aide de

camp Pelet to demand the surrender of the fortress. Cox had him

blindfolded, and taken into a casemate for their interview, so that

he might not be able to judge of the awful effects of the explosion.

The usual haggling followed--the French officer threatened that

the place should be escaladed at once, and the garrison put to the

sword. The governor replied that his walls were intact, that he

could still defend himself, and that the ‘deplorable accident’ had

not appreciably diminished his resisting power[319]. But he finally

consented to send out an officer to the French camp to negotiate for

terms. All this was merely done to gain time, and the semaphore on

the western ramparts was signalling desperate messages to Wellington

all the morning.

[319] There is a good account of this interview in Sprünglin’s

\_Journal\_, p. 445, the diarist having accompanied Pelet into the

town.

Cox’s attempt to gain time was fruitless, for a reason that he had

not foreseen. The garrison was hopelessly demoralized, knew that

it must surrender, and did not see why it should expose itself to

another day’s bombardment for a lost cause. During the conference

in the casemate General d’Alorna and other Portuguese officers on

Masséna’s staff came out of the trenches, and boldly presented

themselves at the foot of the walls, calling to their compatriots

above and beseeching them to accept the good terms offered, and

not to risk their lives for Wellington, who would abandon them

just as he had abandoned Herrasti at Ciudad Rodrigo. The officers

on the ramparts ought to have driven the renegades away, by shots

if necessary; but, far from doing so, they entered into long

conversation with them and approved their arguments. D’Alorna

recognized some old acquaintances among the regulars, and pledged his

word to them that an assault was imminent, and that they were doomed

if they made any resistance. What was still more unlucky for Cox was

that the officer whom he sent out to the French camp to treat, Major

Barreiros of the artillery, was one of those who were most convinced

that further defence was fruitless; he divulged the hopeless state of

the place to the Marshal, and bade him press his attack without fear,

for the garrison would not fight. He himself remained at the French

head quarters, and did not return to Almeida. Masséna, therefore,

sent back a blank refusal of all Cox’s demands and conditions, and

ordered the bombardment to recommence at seven in the evening, while

approaches were thrown out from the second parallel towards the

ramparts. A feeble musketry fire alone replied.

The renewal of the bombardment speedily brought matters inside the

place to a head. A deputation of Portuguese officers, headed by

Bernardo Da Costa, the second in command, visited Cox and informed

him that further resistance was madness, and that if he did not at

once hoist the white flag they would open the gates to the enemy. The

Governor was forced to yield, and capitulated at eleven o’clock on

the night of the 27th. Masséna granted him the terms that the regular

troops should be sent as prisoners to France, while the three militia

regiments should be allowed to disperse to their homes, on giving

their parole not to serve again during the war.

On the morning of the 28th the garrison marched out, still 4,000

strong, its total loss during the siege having been some 600--nearly

all destroyed in the explosion. The French had lost fifty-eight

killed and 320 wounded during the operations. The capitulation was

no sooner ratified than it was violated: instead of dismissing

the militia and marching off the regulars towards France, Masséna

kept them together, and set the renegades d’Alorna and Pamplona to

tempt them to enter the French service. The officers were promised

confirmation of their rank, the men were invited to compare the

relative advantages of prison and of joining the victorious side

and keeping their liberty. The arguments of the traitors seemed to

prevail; almost the whole of the regulars and 600 of the militia

signified their consent to enlist with the enemy. The rest of the

militia were turned loose, but d’Alorna was able to organize a

brigade of three battalions to serve the Emperor as the ‘Second

Portuguese Legion[320].’ But the intentions of these docile recruits

were quite other than Masséna had supposed. They had changed their

allegiance merely in order to escape being sent to France, and while

left unguarded during the next three days, absconded in bands of 200

or 300 at a time, officers and all, and kept presenting themselves

at Silveira’s and Wellington’s outposts, for a week. The French,

undeceived too late, disarmed the few men remaining in the camp, who

were packed off to France, to rejoin Cox and the half-dozen officers

who had loyally refused to accept d’Alorna’s offers[321]. Wellington

had been somewhat alarmed when the first news of the adhesion of the

garrison to the French cause reached him, fearing that it implied

serious disaffection in the whole Portuguese army[322]. He was

soon undeceived on this point, as the troops gradually streamed in

to his camp[323]. But he was then seized with grave doubts as to

whether he could, consistently with military honour, accept the

service of these perjured but patriotic people. ‘It was well enough

for the private men, but highly disgraceful to the character of

the officers[324],’ he observed, and was pondering what should be

done, and proposing to cashier the officers, when he received a

proclamation from the Regency approving the conduct of the deserters

and restoring them to their place in the army. Finally he resolved

that, since Masséna had obviously broken the capitulation by his

action, it might be held that it was not binding on the prisoners,

and ordered the 24th Regiment to be re-formed at its head quarters

at Braganza. The militia he dismissed to their homes, on the scruple

that the French had let some, though not all of them, go free after

the capitulation[325]. There remained the problem of what was to be

done with the Portuguese officers who had played a treacherous part

on the 27th, especially Barreiros, the negotiator who had betrayed

the state of the town to Masséna, and Da Costa, who had headed the

mutinous deputation to Cox, which forced him to surrender. Finally,

their names were included with those of the officers who had served

on Masséna’s Portuguese staff during the campaign, in a great

indictment placed before a special commission on traitors (called a

\_Junta de Inconfidencia\_), which sat at Lisbon during the autumn. All

from d’Alorna downwards were declared guilty of high treason, and

condemned to death on December 22, 1810, but only two were caught and

executed--João de Mascarenhas, one of d’Alorna’s aides de camp, and

Da Costa, the lieutenant-governor of Almeida. The former was captured

by the Ordenança while carrying Masséna’s dispatches in 1810, and the

latter was apprehended in 1812; Mascarenhas died by the garotte, Da

Costa was shot. Of the others, some never returned to Portugal, the

others were pardoned at various dates between 1816 and 1820[326].

[320] The First Portuguese Legion, which served against Austria

in 1809, was composed of the troops drafted out of the Peninsula

by Junot in 1808 during his domination at Lisbon.

[321] D’Urban’s diary reports that 450 men and 18 officers of the

24th of the Line came in between the 2nd and 4th of September to

Silveira’s outposts; a still larger number reached Wellington’s.

[322] D’Urban has most gloomy remarks on the subject in his

diary, under the date Aug. 30.

[323] To Chas. Stuart, from Celorico, Aug. 31.

[324] To Chas. Stuart, from Celorico, Sept. 11.

[325] Wellington to Masséna, Sept. 24. ‘Votre excellence

s’est engagée que les officiers et les soldats de la milice

retourneraient chez eux: malgré cet engagement vous en avez

retenu 7 officiers et 200 soldats de chaque régiment, pour en

faire un corps de pionniers. La capitulation d’Almeida est donc

nulle, et je suis en droit d’en faire ce que je voudrais. Mais je

puis vous assurer qu’il n’y a pas un seul soldat de la milice qui

était en Almeida au service.’

[326] For details of all this, including the curious terms of

the Portuguese sentence for high treason, see Soriano da Luz,

iii. 80-109, and 719-22. The attempts to exculpate Barreiros seem

inadequate. Da Costa was shot, not for treason, but for cowardice

and mutiny.

During the siege of Almeida, the British army had been held in a

position somewhat less advanced and more concentrated than that

which it had occupied in July. Wellington had brought back his head

quarters from Alverca to Celorico, where he had the Light Division

under his hand. A few miles behind, on the high-road running down

the south bank of the Mondego, was the 1st Division, at Villa

Cortes. Picton and the 3rd Division had been drawn back from Pinhel

to Carapichina, but Cole and the 4th remained firm at Guarda. The

Portuguese brigades of Coleman and A. Campbell were at Pinhanços,

that of Pack at Jegua. The whole of the cavalry had come up from the

rear to join the brigade that had recently operated under Craufurd’s

orders. They now lay in a thick line of six regiments from in front

of Guarda, through Alverca and Freixadas to Lamegal. Thus the whole

army was concentrated on a short front of fifteen miles, covering the

watershed between the Coa and the Mondego, and the bifurcation of the

roads which start from Celorico, down the two banks of the last-named

river. The French held back, close to Almeida, with a strong advance

guard at Pinhel, and occasionally raided the low country towards the

Douro, in the direction of Villanova de Fosboa and Castel Rodrigo.

About August 19 Wellington moved forward a day’s march, the front of

his infantry columns being pushed up to Alverca and Freixadas, on a

false rumour that Masséna was leaving the 6th Corps unsupported at

Almeida, and had drawn back Junot into the plains of Leon. If this

had been the case, Wellington intended to make a push to relieve

the besieged fortress. But he soon discovered that the report was

baseless, and that the 8th Corps was still on the Azava and the

Agueda, wherefore he halted, and was still lying twelve miles in

front of Celorico when the noise of the explosion at Almeida, and the

cessation of fire on the next day, betrayed the fact that the place

had fallen, and that there was no longer any reason for maintaining

a forward position. On the night of the 28th, therefore, the whole

army was drawn back once more to the strong line between Guarda and

Celorico, and arrangements were made for a further retreat, in case

the French should follow up the capture of Almeida by an instant and

general advance. Masséna seemed at first likely to make this move:

on September 2 a brigade of infantry and 1,200 horse drove in the

British cavalry outposts to Maçal de Chão only five miles in front

of Celorico. Looking upon this as the commencement of the serious

invasion of Portugal, Wellington sent back his infantry to Villa

Cortes, Pinhanços, and Moita, far down the high-road on the south of

the Mondego, and bade Cole draw in the 4th Division from Guarda to

San Martinho, under the north side of the Serra da Estrella. Only

cavalry were left at, and in front of, Celorico and Guarda. This

retreat shows that Wellington was fully convinced that the French

would advance along the high-road to the south of the Mondego, where

he intended to stand at bay on the Alva, behind the entrenchments of

Ponte de Murcella.

The main point of interest at this moment was the movements of

the French 2nd Corps, which still lay in cantonments at Zarza and

Coria in front of Hill. Guarda being no longer held in force, it

was clear that Hill could not safely join the main army by the

road Atalaya-Fundão-Guarda, if Reynier moved up by the Pass of

Perales to Alfayates and Sabugal. Wellington began an anxious daily

correspondence with Hill, giving him a new line of march by Sobreira

Formosa, Villa d’el Rei and Espinhal, for his junction, but ordering

him to be sure that he did not move till Reynier had thoroughly

committed himself to the transference of his whole force to the north

of the Sierra de Gata. For it would be disastrous if feints should

induce the British detaining force to leave Villa Velha and Abrantes

uncovered, and Reynier should turn out to have selected them as his

objective, and to be meditating an invasion along the Castello Branco

line[327]. It was even possible, though not likely, that Masséna

might bring up the 6th and 8th Corps to join Reynier, instead of

bringing Reynier across the mountains to join them[328]. But every

contingency had to be provided against, the unlikely ones as well as

the likely. As a corollary to Hill’s march, that of Leith had also

to be arranged; he must wait at Thomar till it was certain that the

2nd Corps had moved, but the moment that certainty was obtained, must

march for Ponte de Murcella, and join the main army, if the French

had gone north, but support Hill on the Castello Branco road if they

had taken the other, and less probable, course.

[327] See Wellington to Hill of Aug. 31, Sept. 1, Sept. 4, Sept.

6. The Commander-in-Chief was much worried by a false rumour that

Reynier was already in force at Sabugal on Aug. 31, and then by

an equally false one that the whole 2nd Corps had marched south

towards the Tagus, and was about to cross it near Alcantara (see

the letter to La Romana of Sept. 6). As a matter of fact, Reynier

made no definite move from Zarza till Sept. 10, though he had

made feints, in both the directions indicated, with small forces.

[328] That this possibility was in Wellington’s mind is shown

by the letter to La Romana of Sept. 6, from Gouvea, in which he

writes, ‘Vous aurez appris les mouvements du corps de Regnier de

la part du Général Hill. Ou l’ennemi va faire le mouvement sur

notre droite (dont je vous ai écrit) ou il va faire le siège de

Badajoz. On dit que du canon a passé d’Almeida à Sabugal, et de

là vers Regnier, mais je ne sais pas si c’est vrai, ou si c’est

du canon de siège.... Vous savez ce qu’il faut faire si on se met

entre nous deux, en passant le Tage à Villa Velha, ou au-dessous

de la jonction.’

NOTE ON ALMEIDA AND THE BRIDGE OF THE COA

The small circular town of Almeida has never recovered from the

disaster of 1810. The population does not fill up the area within

the walls: open spaces are frequent, and some of the more important

buildings--especially the old palace of the governor--stand in ruins.

Others show solid seventeenth- or eighteenth-century masonry on

the ground floor, and flimsy modern repairs above, where the upper

stories were blown away by the explosion. The cathedral has never

been properly rebuilt, and is a mere fragment. The railway passes

twelve miles south of Almeida, so that the place has had no chance

of recovery, and remains in a state of decay. The walls stand just

as they were left after Wellington’s hasty repairs in 1811. The vast

bomb-proof shelters repeatedly mentioned in narratives of the siege

are still visible, damp but intact. The surrounding country-side is a

low, rolling, treeless upland--the edge of the vast plains of Leon.

It contrasts very strongly with the hilly and picturesque scenery

that is reached when once the Coa has been passed.

From Almeida the ground slopes down sharply to the place of

Craufurd’s celebrated skirmish. The town is not visible after the

first mile of the descent towards the deep-sunk gorge through which

the Coa cuts its way. The high-road is very bad for artillery, being

steep, filled with great stones, and in many places shut in by high

banks, which tower above it and make it narrow. The sharp turn at the

end, where it descends to the river with a sudden twist, must have

been specially tiresome to a force with cavalry and guns, compelled

to a hasty retreat. All the slopes about the road are cut up into

small fields by high walls of undressed stone, without mortar,

such as are seen on Cotswold. The bridge is not visible till the

traveller approaching from Almeida has got down to the level of the

river: it is completely masked by the high fir-clad knoll described

in the text, so long as he is descending the slope above. From the

point where the road swerves aside, to avoid this knoll, there is

a rough goat-track down to the still invisible bridge, but this is

not available for guns, horses, or \_formed\_ infantry, only for men

scrambling individually.

The two-arched bridge is seventy yards long; it crosses the Coa

diagonally, with a curious twist in the middle, where there is a

little monument recording the reparation of the structure by John

VI, in the days after the war was over. There is no mention of

Craufurd’s fight in the inscription--only a laudation of the King.

The bridge crosses the river at a sort of gorge--the place where the

rocks on the two sides come nearest. Hence the stream runs under

it very fiercely, being constricted to far less than its normal

breadth. Up-stream the channel broadens and the passage looks much

less formidable, but for some distance on each side of the bridge the

river is very rapid, darting between rocks and boulders. The little

corner where the few French who passed the bridge found a small angle

of dead-ground can be easily identified. It was just to their right

after crossing. All the rest of the ground on the west bank could

be thoroughly searched by the British guns, which were placed a few

hundred yards up the road on the left hand, as well as by the fire of

the infantry ensconced among rocks and boulders above the bridge.

Of the French attacking force during the early part of the skirmish,

those who were on their left, nearest the river and opposite the

52nd, had far easier ground to cover than those on the right,

opposite the 43rd. It is not so high or rough, and less cut up by

stone walls. Hence the stress on the 52nd ought to have been the

heavier--yet they lost only 22 men to the 129 of the 43rd. The damage

to the latter must have been caused partly when the cavalry got in

among them, just as the retreat began, partly when they stormed the

knoll to cover the retreat of the 52nd.

The scene of the fight is most picturesque on a small scale--one of

the prettiest corners in Portugal, all rock, fir-trees, and rushing

water.--[Notes made on the spot on April 14, 1906.]

SECTION XX

OPERATIONS IN THE EAST AND SOUTH OF SPAIN DURING THE SPRING AND

SUMMER OF 1810

CHAPTER I

SUCHET AND AUGEREAU IN ARAGON, VALENCIA, AND CATALONIA, MARCH-JULY

1810

Though Suchet had successfully pacified the plains of Aragon during

the autumn of 1809, and though Augereau in the last month of that

year had received the surrender of the much-enduring garrison of

Gerona, the position of the French in North-Eastern Spain was still

far from satisfactory. It was not yet possible for the 3rd and the

7th Corps to combine their operations. While the broad strip of

territory in Western Catalonia reaching from the foot of the Pyrenees

to the sea--whose places of strength were Lerida, Tarragona, and

Tortosa--still remained intact, Augereau and Suchet could still

communicate only by the circuitous route through France: a letter

from Saragossa to Barcelona took a fortnight or more to arrive at

its destination. It was high time that they should endeavour to get

into touch with each other, by cutting through the Spanish line

of defence. Both of the corps-commanders had now a comparatively

free hand, and could assemble a considerable force for offensive

operations. Suchet’s position was the happier: he had no Spanish army

opposed to him at the moment. His only opponents were--to the West

the bold guerrillero Mina the Younger on the borders of Navarre; to

the South Villacampa with the dilapidated remains of his band on

the side of the Sierra de Albaracin and Molina; and to the East the

governor of Lerida, who kept a flying force under Colonel Perena on

foot between the Cinca and the Segre, for the encouragement of the

insurgents of Eastern Aragon. None of these three opponents could

do any serious mischief to the 3rd Corps, which had risen by the New

Year of 1810 to a strength of 24,000 men[329], now that its drafts

from France were beginning to arrive. Mina was the most tiresome

of the three: he was a young man of untiring energy, and kept the

borders of Navarre in a perpetual ferment, till he was finally put

down by mere force of numbers. For while Suchet sent a number of

columns under General Harispe to hunt him, Lagrange’s division of

the newly arrived 8th Corps came down from the side of Pampeluna,

and swept the valleys of the Arga and the Aragon from the other

quarter. Pursued from one refuge to another by 12,000 men, Mina ended

by bidding his followers disperse. He did not appear again as a

combatant till the 8th Corps had passed on into Castile in the month

of February 1810.

[329] Suchet in his \_Mémoires\_ (i. 77) says that in Jan. 1810 his

corps was only 20,000 strong. But the imperial muster-rolls show

that it had 23,000 \_présents sous les armes\_, besides 1,819 men

in hospital and 973 detached, in that month.

Villacampa and Perena being very weak adversaries, Suchet could now

dispose of the greater part of his corps for offensive operations.

Two lines of attack were open to him: the more natural and obvious

one was to attack Lerida or Tortosa, while Augereau and the 7th

Corps moved against them from the other side. This was Suchet’s own

intention, and he had received dispatches from Paris which approved

of the plan. But another objective was pointed out to him from

another quarter. It will be remembered that while King Joseph and

Soult were planning the details of their Andalusian expedition, one

of the schemes which they discussed was the use of the 3rd Corps

as a flanking detachment to cover their attack on Seville[330]:

it was to march on Valencia while Mortier marched on Badajoz. The

plan was rejected in favour of the direct frontal march against the

passes of the Sierra Morena. Nevertheless, when the defiles had been

passed, and the King had entered Cordova in triumph, he recurred to

his original scheme, and on January 27 Soult sent orders to Suchet

directing him to make a dash at Valencia, and assuring him that the

demoralization of the Spaniards was so great that he would probably

enter the city without meeting with much resistance. Similar orders,

as we have already seen, were sent to Ney, who was directed at the

same moment to make himself master of Ciudad Rodrigo[331], which

Soult and the King imagined to be likely to surrender at the first

summons.

[330] See p. 123 of this volume.

[331] See p. 222.

Suchet, though doubting (as he says) the wisdom of the plan of

campaign imposed upon him, prepared to obey, and concentrated 8,000

men, consisting of Laval’s division and half that of Musnier, at

Teruel, on the borders of Valencia, while Habert, with six battalions

more, was to move in a separate parallel column from Alcañiz, and to

strike down on to the sea-coast of Valencia by way of Morella. On

their way to Teruel some of Laval’s columns made a side-stroke at

Villacampa, and drove off his band into the mountains of New Castile.

The march on Valencia had already begun, when Suchet received at

Teruel, on March 1, the dispatch from the Emperor which announced to

him that the kingdom of Aragon had been made an independent ‘military

government’ under his charge[332], and that he was for the future to

take no orders from Madrid, but to seek all his instructions from

Paris. By the same dispatch Suchet was informed that the Emperor

approved of the plan for directing the 3rd Corps against Lerida and

the rear of Catalonia which he had himself always advocated. But

since Habert’s column had already disappeared in the mountains, and

could not be recalled, and since his own advanced guard had actually

crossed the borders of Valencia, Suchet thought that it was now too

late to turn back, and that he must endeavour to carry out Soult’s

orders, even though they were now countermanded by the Emperor.

Accordingly he marched by Sarrion, on the road which leads from

Teruel to Segorbe, and from thence to Murviedro on the Valencian

coast, where Habert was to join him.

[332] See p. 200.

The force opposed to Suchet was that Valencian army which the

governor--or rather the dictator--José Caro had so persistently

refused to lend to Blake in the preceding autumn for the relief

of Gerona. It was about 12,000 strong at the moment, and as some

nine months had elapsed since the disaster of Belchite, where the

Valencian troops had fared so badly, the regiments had been recruited

up to their old strength, and had been thoroughly reorganized and

re-equipped. Nevertheless, Caro did not wish to risk them in the

open field, and, when Suchet’s approach was reported to him, ordered

the troops to prepare to retreat within the walls of the city of

Valencia, which had been so successfully defended against Moncey

two years before. He was probably right in his decision: having no

great superiority of numbers over the French invading columns, he

would have been risking over much if he had offered battle on the

frontier, even in an advantageous position. Behind the fortifications

of Valencia, which had been improved and enlarged during the last two

years, he could at least be certain of making a long and formidable

resistance. If the enemy appeared without a great battering-train,

and unprepared for a regular siege, the garrison would be absolutely

safe. Accordingly, Caro sent out only a single brigade to observe and

retard Suchet’s advance: this force, assisted by some armed peasants,

tried to hold the defile of Alventosa against the French (March 4),

but was beaten out of the position with ease, lost four guns, and

retired by Segorbe and Murviedro on to Valencia, without offering

further resistance. Suchet, following in the wake of the Spanish

detachment, reached Murviedro on March 5, and there met Habert,

whose march by Morella and Castellon-de-la-Plana had been absolutely

unopposed.

A day later the French appeared in front of the fortifications of

Valencia. Having surveyed the outworks, and summoned the place in

vain, Suchet found that there was no more to be done. His bolt was

shot: the city intended to defend itself: it was full of troops,

and the whole population had been armed. Caro had given notice that

the defence was to be conducted in the style of Saragossa, and as

a foretaste of his intentions court-martialled and hanged several

persons who were accused of being traitors[333]. After lying four

days in front of Valencia, Suchet marched off again on the night of

March 10-11, having convinced himself that he had been sent on a

fool’s errand by Soult and King Joseph. For the expedition had only

been undertaken on the hypothesis that the enemy was demoralized

and ready to surrender--which was clearly not the case. No siege

train had been brought, and without heavy artillery Valencia was

impregnable. The retreat of the French was hastened by the fact

that their communications with Aragon had already been cut off.

Villacampa, undismayed by his defeat in February, had returned to

the front the moment that the invading columns had passed on to

the Valencian coast. He had blockaded the garrison of Teruel, cut

off two small columns which were moving in its neighbourhood, and

captured four guns and some 300 prisoners. At the same moment, though

Suchet was unaware of the fact, Colonel Perena, with a detachment

from Lerida, had made a demonstration against Monzon, and when the

garrison of Eastern Aragon concentrated to defend it, had fallen on

Fraga and burnt the bridge there--the only crossing of the Cinca

which was in French hands. Mina, too, warned of the departure of the

main body of the 3rd Corps for the South, had reassembled some of his

levies, and begun to render the road from Saragossa to Pampeluna once

more unsafe.

[333] Whether the Conde de Pozoblanco and the other persons

executed were really traitors is very doubtful. Napier takes them

as such (ii. 303), Suchet denies it (p. 100); Schepeler says

(iii. 627) that proclamations of King Joseph and treasonable

letters were found in the Count’s house. Toreno (ii. 124) remains

doubtful, but points out that Caro and Pozoblanco were old

enemies, and thinks that, at any rate, there was personal spite

in the matter.

Suchet, therefore, on withdrawing from Valencia, found plenty of

occupation awaiting him in Aragon. Villacampa was once more chased

into the wilds of the Sierra de Albaracin: and several columns

were detached in pursuit of Mina. This time the young partisan was

unfortunate--he was caught between one of Suchet’s detachments and

a party sent out by the governor of Navarre, and taken prisoner on

March 31, with some scores of his followers. His place, however, was

taken ere long by his uncle Espoz y Mina, who rallied the remnant of

the guerrilleros of North-Western Aragon, and continued the struggle

with an energy as great, and a success far greater, than that of his

nephew.

Meanwhile, the months of February and March had been wasted, so

far as the 3rd Corps was concerned, and it was not till April that

Suchet was able to take in hand the enterprise which he himself had

approved, and to which the Emperor had now given his consent--the

siege of Lerida. A few weeks after his return to Saragossa he

received from Paris two imperial letters denouncing his late

campaign as presumptuous, objectless, and altogether deserving of

high condemnation[334].

[334] Dated from Compiègne on April 9 and April 20. See

\_Correspondance\_, xx. 284 and 299.

While the Valencian expedition had been in progress Marshal Augereau

had been trying his hand at the Catalan problems which Verdier and

St. Cyr had found so puzzling. His luck had been bad--and his faults

had been many--for of all the commanders-in-chief who successively

endeavoured to subjugate the untameable principality he was decidedly

the least capable. When Gerona fell, the main body of his army was

let loose for operations in the open field. But Verdier’s divisions,

on whom the burden of the siege work had fallen, were in much too

dilapidated a condition for active service[335]. Leaving them

to recover their strength and gather up their convalescents, in

cantonments between Figueras and Gerona, Augereau moved southwards

in January, at the head of the troops of Souham and Pino, whose two

divisions still counted 12,000 bayonets with the eagles, though

they left behind them 5,000 sick in the hospitals of Figueras and

Perpignan.

[335] In January, Verdier’s French and Westphalian divisions

could only show 6,000 men in line and 7,000 in hospital. Muster

roll of Jan. 15 in the \_Archives Nationaux\_.

The Marshal’s main duty at this moment was to clear the road from

Figueras to Barcelona, which the Spanish fortress of Gerona had so

effectually blocked during the whole year 1809. All further advances

were suspended till this operation should have been completed, by

the Emperor’s special orders. Duhesme, indeed, isolated in Barcelona

with some 6,000 men, communicating with France only by sea, and

surrounded by a discontented population, which was reduced to

semi-starvation by the blockade kept up by the British fleet, was in

a perilous condition. There had been many who thought that if Blake,

in October 1809, had marched against Barcelona instead of trying to

throw succours into Gerona, he would have forced Augereau to abandon

the siege of the latter place. For Duhesme would have been in such

danger, since he was neither strong enough to fight in the open nor

to man efficiently the immense circuit of the walls of Barcelona,

that Augereau might probably have judged that it was better to save

the capital of Catalonia than to continue the interminable blockade

of the smaller town that was holding out so obstinately against

him. Be this as it may, Augereau set Souham’s and Pino’s columns

on the march early in January 1810, after having first executed at

their head a sort of \_battue\_ of the \_somatenes\_ of the mountains

around Gerona, as far as Ripol and Campredon. His progress was a

reign of terror: he had issued on December 28th a proclamation

stating that all irregulars taken with arms in their hands were to

be treated as simple highway robbers, and hung without any form of

trial[336]. He was as good as his word, and all the prisoners taken

by the flying columns of Souham and Pino were suspended on a line

of gallows erected on the high-road between Gerona and Figueras.

These atrocities turned the war in Catalonia into a struggle even

more ferocious than that of 1809, for the natives, very naturally,

retaliated upon every French straggler that they caught, and the

Spanish regular officers had great difficulty in saving the lives

even of large bodies who had laid down their arms upon formal terms

of surrender.

[336] The text of this bloodthirsty document may be found

in Belmas, i. 429. There are details of its execution in

Barckhausen, who mentions that several priests were among the

victims.

Two roads lead from Gerona and the valley of the Ter to

Barcelona--that by Vich and that by Hostalrich. They unite near

Granollers, twenty miles outside Barcelona. Augereau marched with the

Italian division of Pino by the second road, while he sent Souham by

the other. Both met with opposition: the small castle of Hostalrich

was still held by the Spaniards--it was the only fortified place in

central Catalonia which was now in their hands, and commanded, though

it did not actually block, the main road to Barcelona. On arriving

before it, the Marshal ordered Mazzuchelli’s Italian brigade to form

the siege, trusting that the place would fall in a few days; but

finding the resistance more serious than he had expected, he finally

continued his march, with the remainder of the Italian division,

towards Granollers and Barcelona. He had ordered Duhesme to come out

to meet him at the former place, with as many of his troops as he

could spare from garrison duty.

[Illustration: CATALONIA]

Souham meanwhile, on the eastern road, had entered Vich on January

11. He found that it had just been evacuated by the main body of the

Spanish Army of Catalonia, whose head quarters had been maintained

in that town all through the later months of the siege of Gerona.

This force, still numbering about 7,000 men, was no longer under the

command of its old general. Blake had resigned at Christmastide,

after a lively altercation with the Junta of Catalonia, who laid the

blame for the fall of Gerona on his shoulders, while he maintained

that they were to blame for not having ordered the general \_levée

en masse\_ of the principality at an earlier date[337]. The command

then passed in quick succession to the two senior general officers of

the Catalan army, first to the Marquis of Portago, and then, after

he had fallen ill, to General Garcia Conde, Governor of Lerida. But

these interim commanders-in-chief were replaced in a few weeks by a

younger and much more active leader, Henry O’Donnell--the man who had

conducted the second convoy for Gerona, and had cut his way out of

the place with such splendid address and resolution. He had only just

been raised to the rank of Major-General, yet was now entrusted by

the Central Junta with the control of the entire army of Catalonia.

As he was setting to work to reorganize it, Souham arrived in front

of his head quarters. Judging it unwise to offer battle at the head

of demoralized troops, O’Donnell evacuated Vich, and fell back to the

mountains above it. Souham followed him with an advanced guard as far

as the pass called the Col de Suspina, where the Spaniard suddenly

turned upon the pursuing force, and hurled it back with loss upon the

main body of the division (January 12, 1810). He refused, however,

to face Souham next day, and retreated towards Manresa; thereupon

the French general also turned back, thinking it profitless to leave

the Vich-Barcelona road, and to plunge into the hills in pursuit of

an evasive enemy. He ended by making his way across the mountains to

join the Marshal.

[337] See pp. 62, 63 of this volume.

Meanwhile, Augereau, with Pino’s Italian brigades, reached

Granollers, and came into touch with Duhesme’s troops, just in time

to find that a disaster had preceded his arrival. The Governor of

Barcelona, in obedience to the orders sent him, had marched out on

January 16 with three battalions and 250 cuirassiers in order to meet

the Marshal. He waited four days at Granollers, and then left the

brigade under the charge of Colonel Guétry, and returned in person

to Barcelona, recalled by rumours of a threatened attack from the

side of Tarragona. On the morning after his departure Guétry’s force,

which believed itself in complete security, was suddenly surprised in

its camps by a detachment sent out by O’Donnell. That enterprising

officer had heard that Augereau was still twenty miles away, and

that Guétry had scattered his men in the three villages of Santa

Perpetua, Mollet, and Granollers, in order to cover them from the

bitter January weather. Accordingly, he resolved to risk an attack

on this unwary detachment. Two brigades--about 4,000 men--under the

Marquis of Campo Verde, made a forced march across the mountains,

and fell upon the villages at dawn. The battalion of the 112th in

Santa Perpetua was completely cut to pieces or captured--only two

men are said to have escaped. The 7th and the cuirassiers at Mollet

fared somewhat better, but were driven back to Barcelona with heavy

loss. Part of the third battalion, one of the 5th Italian Line

regiment, which was posted at Granollers, escaped destruction by

throwing itself into a fortified convent, and held out for two days,

till it was saved by the approach of Augereau along the high-road.

Altogether, Duhesme’s division was thinned by the loss of 1,000 men

on January 21-22: Guétry had been taken prisoner, with some 600 men

more and two guns. The Spaniards disappeared the moment that Augereau

came in sight, and rejoined O’Donnell in the hills.

Augereau entered Barcelona on the twenty-fourth, and at once

asserted his authority by deposing Duhesme from the governorship and

sending him home to France. They were old enemies, and the general’s

friends regarded his disgrace as a display of spite on the part of

his superior[338]. But as all the Spanish narratives describe the

eighteen-months’ dictatorship of Duhesme as having been as much

distinguished for private rapacity as for public oppression, it

is probable that the Marshal’s action was wholly justifiable. The

Emperor, however, refused to sanction the prosecution of the general

on the charges laid against him, remarking that such proceedings

would give too much pleasure to the Catalans, ‘il y avait bien autre

chose à faire que de réjouir les Espagnols par cette réaction[339].’

[338] Duhesme, or the friend writing under his name, gives

himself most handsome and unconvincing testimonials in the

narrative printed in 1823, as part of the \_Mémoires sur la Guerre

d’Espagne\_. They contrast strangely with Arteche’s quotations

from Barcelonese local writers.

[339] Napoleon to Clarke, Compiègne, April 24, 1810.

Having concentrated Pino’s and Souham’s troops at Barcelona, Augereau

would have proceeded to advance against the Catalans, and lay siege

to Tarragona, but for one fact--the magazines of the city were almost

empty, and no food could be procured for the army. Indeed, after a

very few days it was necessary for the Marshal to retrace his steps,

in order to bring up an enormous convoy for the revictualling of

the place, which was being collected at Perpignan and Figueras.

All that he had done by his march was to open up the road, and to

muzzle the fortress of Hostalrich, which was still being blockaded by

the Italians. Accordingly, on February 1 his two divisions marched

back each by the way that it had originally taken--Souham to Vich,

where he halted, Pino to Gerona, where the convoy began presently

to gather, escorted thither in detachments by a large body of

reinforcements which had just come up from France. For the Emperor

had strengthened the Army of Catalonia by a division of troops of the

Confederation of the Rhine, under General Rouyer, and by a Neapolitan

brigade--some 8,000 men in all. But the long train of carts and mules

came in slowly, and March began before Augereau was ready to move.

Meanwhile, his lieutenant Souham had been exposed to a sudden and

unexpected peril. O’Donnell had discovered that the division at Vich

was completely isolated and did not count much more than 5,000 sabres

and bayonets. Having reorganized his own field army at Moya, near

Manresa, and brought it up to a strength of 7,000 foot and 500 horse

by calling a few troops from Tarragona, he directed the somatenes

of Northern Catalonia to muster on the other side of Vich, so as to

fall on Souham from the rear. The indefatigable miquelete leaders

Rovira and Milans got together between 3,000 and 4,000 men, despite

of all their previous losses and defeats. On February 19 these levies

thrust in the pickets of the French division on the eastern side,

but Souham did not see his danger till, on the following morning, he

found O’Donnell’s regular troops pouring down into the plain of Vich

in three columns, and challenging him to a battle in the open. Since

the day of Valls the Catalan army had never tried such a bold stroke.

The French general was greatly outnumbered--he had but 4,000 infantry

and 1,200 horse to oppose to O’Donnell’s 7,500 regulars and the

3,500 miqueletes. The action fell into two separate parts--while

Rovira and Milans bickered with two battalions left to guard the

town of Vich, Souham fought a pitched battle against the Spanish

main body with the eight battalions and two and a half regiments of

cavalry[340] which constituted the remainder of his force. It was a

fierce and well-contested fight: O’Donnell took the offensive, and

his men displayed an unwonted vigour and initiative. Unhappily for

this enterprising general his small body of horsemen was utterly

unable to restrain or to cope with the superior French cavalry. Twice

the battle was turned by the charge of Souham’s squadrons: after the

first repulse O’Donnell rallied his beaten right wing, threw in all

his reserves, and tried to outflank the shorter French line on both

sides. The enemy was losing heavily and showing signs of yielding,

when the whole of his cavalry made a second desperate charge on the

Spanish right. It was completely successful; O’Donnell’s turning

column, composed of the Swiss regiments of Kayser[341] and Traxler,

was broken, and the larger part of it captured. Thereupon, the

Spanish general, who had displayed undaunted courage throughout the

day, and headed several charges in person, thought it time to retire.

He fell back on the mountains, leaving behind him 800 killed and

wounded, and 1,000 prisoners. The French had suffered at least 600

casualties[342], including Souham himself, desperately wounded in

the head, and had been within an ace of destruction: but for their

superiority in cavalry, the day was lost.

[340] 1st Léger (three batts.), 42nd Ligne (three batts.), 93rd

Ligne (one batt.), and 7th Ligne (one batt.). Meanwhile the

other battalion of the 7th Ligne and that of the 3rd Léger were

holding back the miqueletes. The cavalry were the 24th Dragoons,

3rd Provisional Chasseurs (soon afterwards rechristened the 29th

Chasseurs), and half the Italian ‘Dragoons of Napoleon.’

[341] This regiment had been formed on the ‘cadre’ of the old

Swiss regiment of Beschard, by means of deserters from the German

and Italian troops of the French Army of Catalonia.

[342] Martinien’s lists show 29 officers killed and wounded,

which, at the usual rate, presupposes about 600 or 700

casualties. Napier, Schepeler, and Arteche all three state the

French loss at 1,000 or 1,200--evidently too high.

On March 13, Augereau had at last collected his vast convoy at

Gerona--there were more than a thousand waggons laden with flour,

besides pack-mules, caissons, carriages, and other vehicles of all

sorts. He marched in person to escort it, with the Italians--who were

now under Severoli, Pino having gone home on leave,--and the newly

arrived German division of Rouyer. Verdier was left behind--as in

January--to defend the Ampurdam from the incursions of the miqueletes

of Rovira and Milans. Meanwhile, Souham’s division, which had passed

into the hands of General Augereau, the Marshal’s brother, since

its old chief had been invalided to France, pursued a line of march

parallel to that of the main force. Moving from Vich by the Col de

Suspina and Manresa, it came down into the valley of the Llobregat,

on the same day that Pino’s and Rouyer’s troops reached it by the

other route. The Marshal and the main column had made their way past

Hostalrich, which was found still unsubdued, and still blockaded by

Mazzuchelli’s brigade, which had been left opposite it in January.

These troops were ordered to join their division, a mixed detachment

under Colonel Devaux being left in their stead to watch the castle.

The Marshal then took up his residence in the palace at Barcelona,

and had himself proclaimed Governor of Catalonia with great state,

in consonance with the imperial decree of February 8, which had

taken the principality out of the hands of King Joseph, and made its

administrator responsible to Paris alone, and not to Madrid.

Augereau established himself permanently at Barcelona, and proceeded

during the next two months to act rather as a viceroy than as a

commander-in-chief. The conduct of military operations he handed

over to his brother, to the unbounded disgust of the other generals.

In what proportions the responsibility for the disasters which

followed should be distributed between the two Augereaus it is hard

to say. But Napoleon, very naturally and reasonably, placed it on

the Marshal’s shoulders, and wrote that ‘Ce n’est point en restant

dans les capitales éloignées de l’armée que des généraux en chef

peuvent acquérir de la gloire ou mériter mon estime[343].’ The force

assembled on the Llobregat was now a very large one, consisting of

three divisions, those of Augereau, Severoli, and Rouyer. It numbered

nearly 20,000 men, for along with the convoy there had marched a mass

of drafts for the old regiments of the 7th Corps, which brought their

battalions up to full strength[344].

[343] \_Correspondance\_, 16411. From Compiègne, 24 April, 1810.

[344] Severoli’s division alone numbered 6,900 foot and 900

horse, at the moment.

There were only two rational plans of campaign open to the French:

the one was to march on Tarragona with a siege-train, and to

complete the conquest of Catalonia by the capture of its greatest

fortress. The other was to mask Tarragona, and to strike across

the principality westward, in order to get into communication with

Suchet and the Army of Aragon, by way of Igualada, Cervera, and

Lerida. If the two corps could meet, Northern Catalonia would be

completely isolated from Tarragona, Tortosa, and Valencia. It was

this latter plan which Augereau had been ordered to carry out by

his master. He was directed to march on Lerida, and to join Suchet

before that place. By a dispatch of February 19 he had been informed

that on March 1 the Army of Aragon would have arrived before Lerida,

and would be forming its siege[345]. This prophecy was false: for

Suchet, as we have seen, had gone off on his Valencian expedition,

and was at Teruel on the appointed day. It was impossible to direct

from Paris a combined movement depending on accurate timing for its

success. But Augereau should have attempted to carry out the order

sent him by his master with proper zeal and dispatch. This he failed

to do: his own inclination was to strike a blow at Tarragona, and the

movements of his corps show that this was the operation which he had

determined to carry out. Instead of marching in person with his main

body, on Cervera and Lerida, he directed his brother to take his own

and Severoli’s divisions and to move by Villafranca on Reus, a large

town twelve miles to the north-west of Tarragona, and suitable as

a base of operations against that city (March 29). A battalion and

a half was dropped at Villafranca, to keep open the communications

between Reus and Barcelona, while a brigade of Rouyer’s newly arrived

Germans, under the ever-unlucky Schwartz--the vanquished of Bruch and

Esparraguera[346]--was placed as a sort of flank-guard at Manresa.

On March 27 a summons was sent in to Tarragona demanding surrender.

This was, of course, refused--the town was full of troops, for Henry

O’Donnell had just strengthened its garrison by retiring into it

himself, with the 6,000 men who represented the remains of his field

army.

[345] Napoleon to Clarke, Feb. 19, from Paris. Cf. another

dispatch of Feb. 26, no. 16294 of the \_Correspondance\_.

[346] See vol. i. pp. 309-11.

The Spanish general, contemplating the position of affairs with a

wary eye, had convinced himself that he could stop General Augereau’s

further movements by striking at his line of communication with

Barcelona. This he proceeded to do in the most skilful and successful

fashion. Before the enemy closed in upon Tarragona, he sent out

a picked force under General Juan Caro, with orders to attack

Villafranca and Manresa without a moment’s delay. This daring stroke

was completely successful: Caro stormed Villafranca at dawn on March

30, and took or captured the whole of the 800 men posted there. He

was wounded, and had to hand over his command to Campo Verde, who,

after some preliminary skirmishing lasting for three days, completed

the little campaign by driving Schwartz out of Manresa, after a heavy

fight, on April 5, in which the German brigade lost 30 officers and

800 men[347]. The somatenes turned out to hunt the routed force as

it retired on Barcelona, and inflicted many further losses, so that

Schwartz only brought back a third of his brigade to the Marshal.

[347] The Lippe-Bückeburg officer Barckhausen says in his diary

that only 20 officers and 620 men were lost. But Martinien’s

lists show 30 officers of the Nassau, ducal Saxon, and

Anhalt-Lippe regiments killed or wounded at or near Manresa on

the 2nd-5th of April.

The touch between the two divisions at Reus and the garrison of

Barcelona was thus completely severed. Moreover, Augereau feared

lest the next move of the raiding force might be an attack on the

isolated force under Colonel Devaux which was blockading Hostalrich.

He therefore sent out a brig with one of his aides-de-camp on

board, bearing orders to his brother and Severoli to return at

once to his head quarters with their troops. By good fortune the

messenger reached his destination without being intercepted by

English cruisers, and the two divisions started on their march back

to Barcelona on April 7. Only two days before, Severoli, more by

luck than by skill, had got for a moment into touch with the Army

of Aragon. An exploring column of two battalions under Colonel

Villatte, which he had sent out westward to Falcet, in the direction

of the Ebro, met--entirely by chance--a similar detachment of

Musnier’s division of the 3rd Corps, which had advanced to Mora. On

interchanging news of their respective armies, Villatte learnt from

his colleague that Suchet was at this moment marching on Lerida,

where, according to the Emperor’s instructions to Marshal Augereau,

he ought to have arrived more than a month before. Villatte brought

back the information to Severoli, but the latter could make no

use of it while he was under orders to return without delay to

Barcelona[348]. He and General Augereau accomplished their retreat

in three days, much harassed on the way, not only by the somatenes

of the mountains but also by O’Donnell, who followed them with

a detachment of the garrison of Tarragona. They took some small

revenge on him, however, at Villafranca, where they turned on the

pursuers and inflicted a sharp check on their advanced guard, which

was pressing in, with more courage than discretion, on a force which

outnumbered it by four to one. On April 9 the whole army was encamped

outside the walls of Barcelona. Counting the garrison, Augereau

had now more than 20,000 men in hand, but, not contented with this

concentration, he sent orders back to the Ampurdam, ordering Verdier

to bring forward as many troops as possible to Gerona, and from

thence to push forward down the high-road as far as Granollers, so

as to succour Devaux, if the Spaniards should show any intention of

relieving Hostalrich.

[348] For details of Villatte’s expedition see Vacani, iv. 140-1.

The Marshal’s next move lost him the favour of Napoleon, and led to

his removal in disgrace to Paris. On April 11 he issued orders to

Severoli to march on Hostalrich, and there to take over the conduct

of the siege from Devaux, while at the same time he himself moved

back to Gerona with his brother’s French division, and an immense

train, consisting partly of the empty carts of the convoy which he

had brought south in March, partly of confiscated property of all

sorts from Barcelona[349]. Augereau’s excuse for this retrograde

movement, which abandoned all Central Catalonia to the enemy, was

that his army would have exhausted the magazines of Barcelona if

he had kept it concentrated for ten days more, and that he had

no other way of feeding it, since the activity of the somatenes

made the dispatch of foraging detachments utterly impossible. The

moral effect of the move was deplorable: after taking in hand an

offensive movement against Tarragona, he had allowed himself to be

checked by an enemy hopelessly inferior in numbers, had lost over

3,000 men in petty combats, and then had retired to the base from

which he had started in January. Three months had been wasted, and

nothing had been gained save that the small castle of Hostalrich

was now in a desperate condition for want of food, and must fall if

not speedily succoured. What rendered the position of Augereau the

more shameful was that he had now in front of him only a skeleton

enemy. For O’Donnell at this moment was distracted by the advance

of Suchet against Lerida, and had been forced to draw off towards

the borders of Aragon two of the four divisions into which he had

reorganized his little field army. Facing Augereau there was only

Campo Verde’s division of regulars--not over 5,000 strong--and the

bands of the mountains. It was against such an enemy that the Marshal

had concentrated 25,000 men--including Verdier’s force--between

Hostalrich and Gerona.

[349] According to Spanish accounts this included much ill-gotten

property belonging to the Marshal himself, and other superior

officers. Ferrer (see Arteche, viii. 203) declares that Augereau

carried off all the furniture of the Royal Palace.

The food-problem, on which those who defend Augereau lay all the

stress possible[350], was no doubt a very real one. The feeding

of Barcelona, with its garrison and its large civil population, by

means of convoys brought from France, was no easy task. But it seems

clear that with the large force at his disposition--the 7th Corps was

over 50,000 strong[351]--Augereau could have organized convoy-guards

sufficiently powerful to defy the Spaniards, without abandoning the

offensive position in front of Barcelona, which was all-important to

him. He might have set aside 10,000 men for that purpose, and still

have kept a strong field army together. Had he done so, O’Donnell

could not have dared to march with 8,000 men, the pick of the Catalan

army, to relieve Lerida, while his old enemies were massed, awaiting

an impossible attack, a hundred miles away.

[350] For a defence of the Marshal on these lines, see \_Victoires

et Conquêtes\_, vol. xx. pp. 52-3.

[351] About 56,000 in all, but 10,000 were in hospital or

detached.

Meanwhile, the one task which was completed by the 7th Corps during

the months of April and May was the reduction of Hostalrich. The

little castle was a place of strength, perched high above the

abandoned town to which it belonged. It was garrisoned by two

battalions, one of Granadan regulars from Reding’s old division, the

other of local Catalan levies[352], under Colonel Juliano Estrada,

an officer of high spirit and commendable obstinacy. To the first

summons made to him in January by Augereau, he had replied that

‘Hostalrich was the child of Gerona, and would know how to emulate

the conduct of the mother-city.’ Nor was this high-flown epigram

belied by the after-conduct of the garrison. Hostalrich held out from

January 16 to May 12 without receiving either a convoy from without

or any reinforcements. Twice the local miqueletes attempted to pass

succours into the castle, but on each occasion they were driven off,

after having barely succeeded in communicating with Estrada. Their

convoys never got close enough to enter the gates. At last, on May

12, the provisions of the place were completely exhausted: thereupon

Estrada took in hand a scheme which was only tried by one other

governor during the whole Peninsular War--the Frenchman Brennier at

Almeida in May 1811. He put every able-bodied man of the garrison

under arms at midnight, issued silently from the castle, and

charged at the besiegers’ lines, with the intention of cutting his

way through to Campo Verde’s head quarters in the mountains. He was

fortunate enough to pierce the Italian outposts at the first rush.

But two whole brigades were presently at his heels, his guides lost

their way among cliffs and ravines, and he was overtaken. Turning

back with his rearguard to fend off the pursuers, he was wounded and

taken prisoner. Ten other officers and some 300 soldiers shared his

fate: the rest of the garrison dispersed in the hills, and reached

Vich in small parties to the number of 800 men. If only their gallant

commander had escaped with them, the exploit would have been an exact

parallel to the Almeida sortie of 1811.

[352] One battalion of Iliberia (or 1st of Granada) and one

tercio of levies from the province of Gerona: total strength

about 1,200 bayonets.

The reduction of Hostalrich and of a small fort on the Isles of Las

Medas near the mouth of the Ter, were the last achievements of the

Army of Catalonia while it was under the command of Augereau. On

April 24 the Emperor had resolved to remove him from his post, and

had ordered Marshal Macdonald, Duke of Tarentum, to relieve him.

In the \_Moniteur\_ it was merely stated that the elder Marshal had

been forced by ill-health to resign his charge. But the real causes

of his displacement are plainly stated in Napoleon’s letter to

the Minister of War. They were the blow which he had given to the

imperial prestige by his retreat to Gerona, and his disobedience

in having failed to march on Lerida in aid of Suchet. It must be

confessed that the wrath of the Emperor was justifiably roused. Its

final manifestation took the shape of a minute directing that when

the \_Moniteur\_ published the news of the successes at Hostalrich and

Las Medas, the name of Augereau was to be kept out of the paragraph,

and only those of his subordinates mentioned[353].

[353] See \_Correspondance\_, 16411, Napoleon to Clarke, of April

24, and 16500, same to same of May 23.

While the new commander of the 7th Corps was on his way from Italy

to Perpignan, and for some time after his arrival on May 22, there

was a complete suspension of active operations. None of the French

generals in the principality could do more than await orders, and

keep the neighbourhood of his cantonments safe from the irrepressible

miqueletes. The whole interest of the French operations in

North-Western Spain during this period turns on the movements of the

Army of Aragon.

On returning from his futile Valencian expedition, Suchet had found

awaiting him at Saragossa orders to commence without delay the siege

of Lerida, and promising that Augereau would ‘contain’ the Spanish

army of Catalonia, and would ultimately open up communication with

him by way of Cervera or Momblanch. In obedience to the imperial

mandate, the commander of the 3rd Corps collected more than half

his troops for the expedition against Lerida. This concentration

entailed the abandonment of the rough country of Southern Aragon to

Villacampa and his bands; for having determined to leave only Laval’s

division behind him to protect the central parts of the province,

Suchet had to evacuate the region of Teruel, Albaracin and Montalvan.

Laval’s two brigades remained in the valley of the Jiloca, between

Saragossa and Daroca, watching the debouches from the mountains.

The other two divisions of the Army of Aragon were destined for the

siege of Lerida. Musnier, with one column, marching down from Caspe

and Alcañiz[354], crossed the Ebro at Flix, and approached Lerida

from the south. Habert, with his division, coming from the side of

Saragossa, made for the same goal by way of Alcubierre and Monzon. It

might seem a dangerous experiment to march the two isolated columns

across the Spanish front, for a junction at a point so remote from

their respective starting-points. But, for the moment, there was no

hostile force of any importance in their neighbourhood. Severoli

and Augereau being still at Reus, when Musnier and Habert started

on their way, O’Donnell could spare no troops for the relief of

Lerida. It was not till they had retired, and the Duke of Castiglione

had withdrawn all his forces to Hostalrich and Gerona, that the

Captain-General found himself free for an expedition to the West. In

front of Musnier, while he was marching on Lerida, there were nothing

but trifling detachments sent out for purposes of observation by

the Governor of Tortosa. In front of Habert there were only 2,000

men under Colonel Perena, thrown out from Lerida to observe the

open country between the Segre and the Cinca. This was the sole

field-force which remained from the old Spanish Army of Aragon,

with the exception of the two dilapidated regiments that formed the

nucleus of Villacampa’s band.

[354] It was with a detachment of this column that Severoli’s

flanking party under Villatte got into communication on April 4,

as detailed above, page 296.

On April 10, Suchet arrived at Monzon with a brigade of infantry,

and the six companies of artillery and four of engineers which were

destined for the siege of Lerida. On the thirteenth he was before the

walls of the place on the west bank of the Segre, while on the next

day Habert appeared on the other bank, driving before him Colonel

Perena and his battalions. This second French column had passed the

Segre at Balaguer, from which it had expelled the Spanish brigade.

Perena, having the choice between returning into the mountains

or strengthening the garrison of Lerida, had taken the latter

alternative. On the same day Musnier came up from the South, and

joined the army with the force that had started from Alcañiz and had

crossed the Ebro at Flix. Suchet had now concentrated the whole of

the 13,000 men[355] whom he destined for the siege.

[355] For his strength at this moment, see the table which he

gives in his \_Mémoires\_, vol. i, Appendix 4. His figures cannot

always be trusted: for instance, purporting in this table to

give his whole force, present at Lerida or detached in Aragon,

he omits the six squadrons of gendarmerie which were guarding

his rear [37 officers, 1,121 men] and the four battalions of

\_Chasseurs des Montagnes\_, who were garrisoning Jaca, Venasque,

&c. [about 2,000 men].

The town of Lerida, then containing some 18,000 inhabitants, lies

in a vast treeless plain on the western bank of the broad and rapid

Segre. Its topography is peculiar: out of the dead level of the

plain rise two steep and isolated hills. One of these, about 800

yards long by 400 broad, and rising 150 feet above the surrounding

flats, is crowned by the citadel of the town; the other, somewhat

longer but rather narrower, is no other than the hill about which

Caesar and Afranius contended in the old Civil Wars of Rome, when

Lerida was still Ilerda. It lies about three-quarters of a mile from

the first-named height. In 1810 its culminating summit was covered

by a large work called Fort Garden, and its southern and lower end

was protected by the two small redoubts called San Fernando and El

Pilar. The town occupies the flat ground between the citadel-height

and the river. It has no trans-pontine suburb, but only a strong

\_tête-du-pont\_ on the other side of the Segre. The strength of the

place lay in the fact that its whole eastern front was protected

by the river, its whole western front by the high-lying citadel.

The comparatively short southern front was under the guns of Fort

Garden, which commanded all the ground over which an enemy could

approach this side of the town. There only remained, unprotected

by outer works, the northern front, and this was the point which a

skilful enemy would select as his objective. Another fact which much

favoured the defence was that the besieger was forced to make very

long lines of investment, since he had to shut in not only the town,

but the whole plateau on which lie Fort Garden and its dependent

works. Moreover, he must keep a force beyond the Segre, to block

the \_tête-du-pont\_, and this force must be a large one, because the

east was the quarter from which succours sent from Catalonia must

certainly appear. The garrison, on the other hand, was quite adequate

to man the works entrusted to it; the entry into the town of Perena’s

Aragonese battalions had brought it up to a strength of over 8,000

men. The artillery were the weak point--there were only 350 trained

men to man over 100 pieces. The Governor was Major-General Garcia

Conde, who owed his promotion to his brilliant achievements at Gerona

in the preceding September.

Suchet’s 13,000 men were insufficient for a close and thorough

investment of such a large space as that covered by the Lerida-Garden

fortifications. He was forced to leave a considerable part of

its southern front watched by cavalry posts alone. Of his total

force, Musnier, with six battalions and the greater part of the

cavalry--about 4,000 men in all, was beyond the river. Three

battalions blocked the \_tête-du-pont\_, the rest formed a sort

of covering force, destined to keep off the approach of enemies

from the side of Catalonia. On the hither side of the Segre the

three brigades of Habert, Buget, and Vergès were encamped facing

the western and north-western fronts of Lerida. They counted only

thirteen battalions, being weakened by 1,200 men who had been

detached to garrison Monzon and Fraga. The communication between

Musnier’s division and the rest of the army was by a flying bridge

thrown across the Segre two miles above the town; it was guarded

by a redoubt. The artillery park was placed at the village of San

Rufo, opposite the north-western angle of the town, from which it is

distant about 2,500 yards. It was evident from the first that this

would be the point of attack selected by the French engineers.

The army had barely taken up its position when, on April 19, rumours

were spread abroad that O’Donnell was on his way to relieve Lerida.

They must have been pure guesses, for the Spanish general on that day

was still at Tarragona and had made no movement. They were, however,

sufficiently persistent to induce Suchet to take off Musnier’s

covering corps, strengthened by three other battalions, on a mission

of exploration, almost as far as Tarrega, on the Barcelona road. No

Spanish force was met, nor could any information be extracted from

the inhabitants. The absence of the troops on the left bank of the

Segre was soon detected by Garcia Conde, who--to his great regret

three days later--sent messengers to inform O’Donnell that the French

lines to the east of the city were now almost unoccupied.

The fiery O’Donnell was already on his way when this news reached

him. The moment that he was sure that Augereau had left Barcelona

and was retreating northward, he had resolved to fly to the relief

of Lerida with the two divisions of which he could dispose. On

the twentieth he marched from Tarragona by Valls and Momblanch,

with 7,000 regular infantry, 400 horse, a single battery, and some

1,500 miqueletes. On the twenty-third he had reached Juneda, twelve

miles from Lerida, without having seen a French picket or having

been detected himself. He intended to drive off the few battalions

blocking the bridge-head, and to open up communication with the

besieged town that same day. Unfortunately for him, Suchet and

Musnier had returned on the previous night from their expedition to

Tarrega, and were now lying at Alcoletge, three miles north of the

bridge-head, with seven battalions and 500 cuirassiers.

Pushing briskly forward along the high-road, in a level treeless

plateau, destitute of cover of any kind, the leading Spanish

division--that of Ibarrola--came into contact about midday with

the small force guarding the bridge-head, which was now in charge

of Harispe, Suchet’s chief-of-the-staff. To the surprise of the

Spaniards, who had expected to see these three battalions and two

squadrons of hussars retire in haste, the French showed fight.

Harispe was aware that Musnier could come up to his aid within an

hour, and was ready for battle. His hussars charged the leading

regiment of Ibarrola’s column, and threw it into disorder, while his

infantry formed up in support. At this moment the Spanish general

received news that Musnier was moving in towards his flank; he

therefore retired, to get the support of O’Donnell, who was following

him with the second division. But at the ruined village of Margalef,

six miles from Lerida, the column of Musnier came up with Ibarrola,

and he was so hard pressed that he formed line, with 300 cavalry on

his right wing and his three guns on his left. The position was as

bad a one as could be found for the Spanish division--a dead flat,

with no cover. Musnier, on reaching the front, flung his cavalry,

500 cuirassiers of the 13th regiment, at the Spanish right wing.

The horsemen placed there broke, and fled without crossing sabres,

and the French charge fell on the flank battalion of the infantry,

which was caught while vainly trying to form square. It was ridden

down in a moment, and the horsemen then rolled up the whole line,

regiment after regiment. A great part of Ibarrola’s corps was

captured, and O’Donnell, who came on the field with the division of

Pirez just as the disaster took place, could do no more than retire

in good order, covering the scattered remnants of his front line. A

Swiss battalion, which he told off as his rearguard, was pierced by

the cuirassiers and for the most part captured. In this disastrous

affair the Spaniards lost 500 killed and wounded and several thousand

prisoners[356], as also four flags and the half-battery belonging

to Ibarrola’s division. The French, of whom the cavalry alone were

seriously engaged, are said by Suchet to have had no more than 23

killed and 82 wounded[357].

[356] Suchet says that he took 5,600 prisoners, a figure that

appears quite impossible, as Schepeler rightly remarks (iii.

649). Ibarrola’s division had only 4,000 bayonets, and of that

of Pirez only the one Swiss battalion was seriously engaged.

Moreover, Ibarrola’s division was not absolutely exterminated,

for O’Donnell on April 26 issued an order of the day, in which he

thanks the division for its courage, and praises the battalions

which kept their ranks and re-formed behind those of Pirez,

‘returning in good order to occupy the position (Juneda), from

which they had started at dawn.’ See the document, printed in

Arteche’s Appendix, no. 12 of vol. viii. I should doubt if 2,000

prisoners were not nearer the mark than 5,600.

[357] Figures probably correct. Martinien’s lists show one

officer killed and two wounded; of the latter, one was the

cavalry general Boussard.

It is clear that O’Donnell must take the blame for the ruin that

fell upon his little field army. He should not have been caught with

his two divisions marching with an interval of four miles between

them. Nor ought he to have been ignorant of the return of Musnier’s

force, considering that he had 400 cavalry, who should have been

exploring the whole country-side for miles around, instead of riding

in a mass along with Ibarrola’s infantry. The carelessness shown was

unpardonable: relying, apparently, on Garcia Conde’s dispatch--now

two days old--concerning the weakness of the French beyond the Segre,

the Spanish general was caught moving as if for an unopposed entry

into Lerida, instead of in battle order. It may be added that he

would have done well to collect more men before advancing against

Suchet--8,000 bayonets and sabres were too small a force to tackle

the main body of the 3rd Corps, even if they were aided by a sortie

from Lerida, as O’Donnell had intended. It would have been well to

make some endeavour to get troops from the Valencian army, whose

12,000 men were absolutely idle at the moment. It is true that José

Caro and the Valencian Junta were very chary of sending their men

outside their own border. But for such a great affair as the relief

of Lerida a brigade or two might have been borrowed. There was a

considerable Valencian force, at the moment, in the neighbourhood of

Alcañiz.

After the combat of Margalef Suchet summoned Lerida for a second

time, and offered to allow the Governor to see the prisoners and

guns which he had taken from O’Donnell. Garcia Conde very rightly

answered that he relied on his own forces alone, and should fight

to the end. Accordingly, the regular siege began. The trenches were

opened opposite the north front of the town on April 29; several days

of heavy rain hindered the completion of the first parallel, but on

May 7 the breaching batteries were ready and the bombardment began.

The front attacked--the Carmen and Magdalena bastions--was weak: it

was not protected by any flanking fires, and had neither a ditch nor

a covered way. It was bound to succumb before the very heavy fire

directed against it, unless the defence should succeed in beating

down the fire of the breaching batteries. The Spaniards did their

best, bringing up every gun that could be mounted, and replacing each

injured piece as it was disabled. But the end was obvious from the

first: the walls were not strong enough to resist the attack.

Meanwhile, Suchet made two successive assaults on a part of the

defences very far distant from the main front of attack--the two

isolated redoubts which stood on the south end of the extramural

plateau, of which Fort Garden formed the main protection. He wished

to gain a footing on this high ground, both because he could from

thence molest the south front of the town, and because he wished to

prevent the Spaniards from using the plateau as a place of refuge

after the fall of the city, which he regarded as inevitable. The

first attempt to take the works by escalade, on the night of April

23-24, was a disastrous failure: the Pilar was occupied for a moment,

but the attack on San Fernando failed, and the dominating fire from

it drove the stormers out of the smaller work, after they had held it

for a few hours.

The second escalade was more successful: it was carried out on the

night of May 12-13, and ended in the storming of both works. Only a

small part of their garrison succeeded in escaping into Fort Garden:

the besieged lost 300 men, the successful assailants only 120. The

greater part of the plateau was now in the hands of the French.

On the next day, May 13, the engineers announced that the two

breaches in the north front of the town walls were practicable, and

that same evening Lerida was stormed. The breaches were carried with

no great difficulty, but the garrison made a stubborn resistance

for some time, behind traverses and fortified houses in the rear of

them. When these were carried, the city was at Suchet’s mercy; but

it was not at the city alone that he was aiming--he wished to master

the citadel also. During the last siege of Lerida, that by the Duke

of Orleans in 1707, the high-lying castle had held out for many days

after the town had been lost. Suchet’s way of securing his end was

effective but brutal. On the whole, it was the greatest atrocity

perpetrated by any combatant, French, Spanish, or English, during

the whole Peninsular War. When his troops had entered the streets,

he directed columns towards each gate, and having secured possession

of them all, so as to make escape into the open country impossible,

bade his troops push the whole non-combatant population of Lerida

uphill into the citadel, where the beaten garrison was already taking

refuge. ‘The soldiery,’ as he writes, with evident complacency and

pride in his ingenuity, ‘were set in a concentric movement to push

the inhabitants, along with the garrison, towards the upper streets

and the citadel. They were dislodged by musketry fire from street

after street, house after house, in order to force them into the

castle. That work was still firing, and its discharges augmented the

danger and the panic of the civil population, as they were thrust,

along with the wreck of the garrison, into the ditch and over the

drawbridge. Pressed on by our soldiers, they hastily poured into the

castle yard, before the Governor had time to order that they should

not be allowed to enter.’ The castle being crammed with some fifteen

thousand men, women, and children, Suchet gave orders to bombard it

with every available mortar and howitzer. ‘Every shell,’ he writes,

‘that fell into the narrow space containing this multitude, fell on

serried masses of non-combatants no less than of soldiery. It had

been calculated that the Governor and the most determined officers

would be influenced by the presence of these women, children, old

folk, and unarmed peasants. As General Suchet had flattered himself

would be the case, the scheme had a prompt and decisive effect.’ On

the 14th at midday, Garcia Conde, unable to stand the slaughter any

longer, hoisted the white flag.

It is difficult to see how the forcing of thousands of

non-combatants, by means of musketry fire, on to the front of the

enemy’s line of defence, differs in any way from the device, not

unknown among African savages and Red Indians[358], of attacking

under cover of captured women and children thrust in upon the weapons

of their fathers and husbands. The act places that polished writer

and able administrator Louis-Gabriel Suchet on the moral level of

a king of Dahomey. He acknowledges that the plan was deliberately

thought out, and that scores of his victims perished not in the

subsequent bombardment, but by being shot down by his own men while

the crowd was being collected and hunted forward[359]. Historians

have denounced the atrocities committed by the French rank and file

at Tarragona or Oporto, by the English rank and file at Badajoz or

St. Sebastian, but the cultured general who worked out this most

effective plan for the reduction of a hostile citadel has never had

his due meed of shame. Napier’s remark that, ‘though a town taken by

assault is considered the lawful prey of a licentious soldiery, yet

this remnant of barbarism does not warrant the driving of unarmed and

helpless people into a situation where they must perish,’ seems a

sufficiently mild censure, when all the circumstances are taken into

account[360].

[358] One or two cases can also be quoted from the European

Middle Ages.

[359] Suchet, \_Mémoires\_, i. pp. 147-8.

[360] Napier, ii. 322.

The total number of Spanish troops surrendered by Garcia Conde in the

Citadel and Fort Garden, or captured by the French during the storm,

amounted to over 7,000 men, of whom about 800 were wounded lying in

the hospital. It was calculated that 1,200 or 1,500 more had perished

during the siege, and that about 500 of the civil population had

fallen victims to Suchet’s barbarous device. The French losses during

the whole series of operations had been 1,100 killed and wounded. The

Spaniards declared that Garcia Conde had betrayed Lerida, and ought

never to have surrendered. But the only ground for this accusation

was that, after a short captivity, he did homage to King Joseph, and

became an \_Afrancesado\_. Though he had shown dash and courage at

Gerona, it is clear that he lacked the firmness of governors such

as Mariano Alvarez, or Andrés Herrasti. His defence of Lerida had

not been particularly skilful nor particularly resolute: with over

8,000 men within the walls he ought to have been able to hold out

longer against Suchet’s 13,000. The most blameworthy part of his

arrangements was his neglect to retrench the breaches, and to form

a strong second line of temporary works behind them. Alvarez, under

similar conditions, and with a garrison far less strong in comparison

to the besieging army, held out for months after his walls had been

breached, simply because he treated them only as an outer line of

resistance, and was prepared to fight on behind his inner defences.

After the fall of Lerida, Suchet, having received through France

the news that the whole of Augereau’s army was collected in the

neighbourhood of Hostalrich and Gerona, made up his mind that he

had better attempt nothing ambitious until the 7th Corps was in a

position to help him. But there was a small task close to his hand,

which was well worth undertaking in a moment of enforced leisure.

This was the siege of Mequinenza, the only fortress left in Spanish

hands on the eastern side of Aragon. It was a small place, but not

without its strategic importance, for not only did it cover the

junction of the Segre and the Ebro, but it was the highest point open

for navigation on the last-named river. Any one holding Mequinenza

can use the Ebro as a high-road, except in times of drought, and

this was an advantage of no small importance, since the country from

thence to the sea chances to be singularly destitute of roads of

any kind. A few months later, Suchet found the place invaluable, as

he was able to prepare his battering-train for the siege of Tortosa

within its walls, and then to send all the heavy material down-stream

with the minimum of trouble. Mequinenza was a small place, consisting

of a few hundred houses along the river bank enclosed by a weak

and old-fashioned wall, but dominated by a strong castle, which

towers 500 feet above the water at the end of a spur of the Sierra

de Montenegre. The garrison consisted of about 1,000 men, under a

Colonel Carbon.

The very day after Lerida had fallen, Suchet sent a brigade to invest

Mequinenza: more troops followed after an interval. It was clear that

the taking of the town would offer small difficulty: but the castle

was another matter. Its defences were independent of those of the

place below, and its site was so lofty and rocky that it could not

be battered from any ground accessible by existing roads. Indeed,

it could only be approached along the crest of the Sierra, of which

it forms the last lofty point. The main interest of the siege of

Mequinenza lies in the fact that, in order to reduce the castle, the

French engineers had to build a road practicable for heavy guns in

zig-zags up the side of the Sierra. They had arrived in front of the

place on May 15: by June 1 the road was completed: it was a piece

of hard work, as in order to utilize the easiest possible slopes it

had been made no less than five miles long. But when the guns had

once been got up on to the crest of the mountain, Mequinenza--town

and castle alike--was doomed. The town was stormed on June 5; it

might have been captured long before, but there was little use in

taking possession of it until the attack upon the castle had been

begun. Before the storm, Colonel Carbon had wisely ordered all the

large river craft in the place, eleven in number, to run down-stream

to Tortosa; he was well aware that Suchet wanted to open up the

navigation of the Ebro, and was resolved that he should find no

vessels ready for him. Two of the craft ran ashore and were captured;

the other nine got off clear.

When the three batteries erected on the summit of the Sierra opened

on the castle, the walls began to crumble at once. At the end of

eight days its front towards the French trenches was a mass of

shapeless ruins. Carbon then surrendered, without waiting for an

assault, which must undoubtedly have proved successful. There was

nothing particularly obstinate, or, on the other hand, particularly

discreditable, in the defence. The castle was not a modern fortress;

its sole strength had lain in its inaccessible position; and when the

French had climbed up on to a level with it, nothing more could be

done.

Having mastered Lerida and Mequinenza, and obtained a firm footing

in the plain of Western Catalonia, Suchet had now harder work before

him. His first necessity was to clear the country behind him of

the insurgents, who had swarmed down from the hills to attack the

troops left behind in Central Aragon, while the main army had been

concentrated before Lerida. Villacampa had half destroyed a column

of 350 men at Arandija on the Xalon on May 14. Catalan somatenes

had attacked the garrison of the valley of Venasque, on the very

frontier of France, on May 16. Valencian bands had besieged the

castle of Alcañiz for many days. But all the enemies of Suchet had

to fly, as soon as his main army became once more free for field

service. No attempt was made to oppose a serious resistance to his

movable columns: the insurgents fled to right and left: the most

extraordinary proof of their demoralization was that, on June 13,

General Montmarie, at the head of one of these columns, found the

strong fort of Morella, within the Valencian border, absolutely

unoccupied. He seized and garrisoned it, knowing that this place,

which commands the mountain-road from Aragon to Valencia, was of

immense strategical importance.

When June came round, Suchet had once more mastered all Aragon, and

was free for work outside its borders. A march against Valencia, on

the one side, or against Tortosa and Tarragona on the other, was

equally possible. But at this moment Napoleon was set on proceeding

‘methodically’--in Eastern Spain no less than in Portugal--and the

orders issued to the Commander of the 3rd Corps were, to proceed

against Tortosa, and cut off Valencia from Catalonia by its capture.

The longer and more difficult advance against Valencia itself was

relegated to a distant date; there must be no more fiascos like that

of February. Accordingly, Suchet was ordered to follow up the capture

of Lerida and Mequinenza by the reduction of Tortosa[361]. He was

informed at the same time that Macdonald, the new commander of the

Army of Catalonia, was ordered to attack Tarragona. In this way, the

restless O’Donnell would find his hands full at home, and would not

be able to spare time or men for the relief of Tortosa. Only from the

Valencian Army, which had always been badly led, and managed with the

most narrow particularism by José Caro and his Junta, need Suchet

expect any trouble.

[361] Napoleon to Berthier, \_Correspondance\_, May 29, 1810.

But until Macdonald was prepared to lead down his corps to the

neighbourhood of Tarragona and the lower Ebro, Suchet felt that his

own enterprise must be held back, or at least conducted with caution.

And although Macdonald had received his orders in May, on taking

over Augereau’s post, it was some time before he was able to execute

them. June and July had passed, and August had arrived, before he

appeared in the regions where Suchet had been told to expect him,

and at last placed himself in communication with the Army of Aragon.

This long delay was entirely due to the burden imposed upon him by

the necessities of Barcelona, with its large garrison and its vast

civil population. The provisions which Augereau had introduced into

the city in the early spring were exhausted, and his successor was

forced to replace them by escorting thither two new convoys of great

size in June and July. So active were the miqueletes that Macdonald

found himself obliged to take with him his French and his Italian

division as escort on each occasion. For a first-class convoy is a

vast affair, stretching out to long miles in a mountain country,

and requiring to be strongly guarded at every point of its unwieldy

length. The Emperor was bitterly disappointed at Macdonald’s delays:

it was hard to convince him that the problem of food-supply in

Catalonia was almost insoluble, and that neither Barcelona nor the

field army could be permanently fed by seizing the resources of

the valley of the Llobregat, or the Campo of Tarragona, and making

war support war in the regular style. Catalonia had never fed its

whole population even in time of peace, but had largely depended

on corn brought up from Aragon or imported by sea. But the British

Mediterranean squadron now made the transport of food to Barcelona

by water impossible, while, till the 3rd Corps and the 7th Corps

should finally meet, it was impossible to supply the latter from

the Aragonese base. While neither of the normal ways of procuring

a regular supply of provisions was practicable, nothing remained

but the weary task of escorting convoys from Perpignan and Figueras

to Barcelona. This Macdonald accomplished thrice, in June, July,

and August: it was only after the third journey that he left the

storeshouses of Barcelona so thoroughly replenished that he was

able to think of further offensive operations, and to concert the

long-delayed junction with Suchet and the 3rd Corps. The Marshal in

his autobiography confesses that he hated the task set him, and found

it entirely out of the lines of his experience. He began his career

by repealing Augereau’s hanging edicts, and endeavoured to introduce

more humane methods of warfare. But his own men were out of hand, and

the Spaniards being as fierce as ever, his task was a very hard one.

Meanwhile, Henry O’Donnell was granted three months in which to

reorganize the Catalan army, which had suffered so severely at

Margalef. His untiring energy enabled him to raise his force by the

end of July to 22,000 men, organized in five divisions, with which

he formed a double front, facing Suchet on the west and Macdonald

on the east. One division under Campo Verde lay northward in the

mountains, with head quarters at Cardona, and detachments pushed

forward as far as Urgel and Olot: its main task was to harass the

French garrison of the Ampurdam, and to threaten Macdonald’s rear

every time that he moved forward towards Barcelona. A second division

lay facing that city, on the lower Llobregat, with detachments

at Montserrat and Manresa, which kept up the communications with

Campo Verde and the North. Two more divisions lay westward, in the

direction of Falcet and Borja Blanca, watching Suchet, and prepared

to oppose any serious attempt on his part to close in upon Tortosa.

The fifth division, or reserve, formed a central mass of troops,

ready to reinforce either the detachments which watched Suchet or

those which watched Macdonald; it lay south of Tarragona, at the Col

de Alba. Thus posted O’Donnell waited for further developments, and

continued to drill and exercise his new levies, to dismiss inactive

and incompetent officers, to collect magazines, and to quarrel

with the local Junta. For this active and intelligent, if reckless

and high-handed, young officer was on even worse terms with the

Catalan authorities than his predecessor, Blake. The main cause of

quarrel was that O’Donnell wished to strengthen his regular troops,

by drafting into the depleted \_cadres\_ of Reding’s and Coupigny’s

old battalions every recruit that he could catch. He held that the

French could only be brought to a final check by disciplined troops.

The Junta, on the other hand, believed in guerrilla warfare, and

preferred to call out from time to time the miqueletes and somatenes,

who drifted back to their homes whenever a crisis was over. Both

sides had much to say for themselves: the Catalans could point out

that the regular troops had been beaten times out of number, while

their own irregulars had achieved many small successes, and done

the French much harm. O’Donnell, on the other hand, was quite right

in holding that guerrilla operations, much as they might incommode

the enemy, would never deal him a fatal blow or finish the war. He

dreamed of recruiting his army up to a force of 50,000 men at some

happy future date, and of delivering a stroke with superior numbers

which should destroy the French hold on Catalonia. Meanwhile, much as

they quarrelled, the Irish-Spanish general and the local Junta were

both too good haters of France to allow their disputes to prevent

a vigorous resistance from being kept up in the principality.

O’Donnell carried his point to the extent of persuading the Junta to

allow him to form many of the ever-changing tercios of miqueletes

into ‘legions,’ which were to be kept permanently embodied[362], and

to count as part of the regular army. Hence came the large rise in

his muster-rolls.

[362] To please the Catalans, who hated the idea of long service,

the enlistment in the Legions was made for two years only, and

the men were to be entitled to fifteen days’ leave during each

half-year of service.

SECTION XX: CHAPTER II

OPERATIONS IN THE SOUTH OF SPAIN DURING THE SPRING AND SUMMER OF 1810

(MARCH-OCTOBER 1810)

The situation which had been created by King Joseph’s rapid conquest

of the open country of Andalusia in January and February 1810, and

by his failure to capture Cadiz, was destined to remain unchanged

in any of its more important details for a full year. Soult, with

the three corps of Victor, Sebastiani, and Mortier, was strong

enough to hold the towns and plains, strong enough also to blockade

Cadiz and to spare expeditionary forces at intervals for operations

outside the limits of his own sphere of command. From time to time

he sent the greater part of Mortier’s corps against Estremadura,

and the greater part of Sebastiani’s corps against Murcia. But his

70,000 men were not sufficient to provide an army for the permanent

conquest of either of these provinces. And every time that 10,000 or

15,000 sabres and bayonets were distracted to one of these raids,

the total of troops left behind to watch Cadiz, to guard Seville,

and to repress the interminable activity of the guerrilleros of the

mountains was found to be dangerously small. Ere long the force that

had marched out for external operations had to be called back in

haste, to ward off some peril to one or other of the vital points of

Andalusia.

Soult himself remained for the greater part of his time at Seville,

occupied not only in keeping the movements of his three corps in

unison--no easy task, for both Victor and Sebastiani had wills of

their own, and even the placid Mortier occasionally murmured--but

in superintending the details of civil administration. It was

very seldom that he marched out in person at the head of his last

reserves, to strengthen some weak point in his line of offence

or defence. During the next two years he was quite as much the

Viceroy as the Commander-in-Chief in Andalusia. Though the Emperor

had refrained from naming that kingdom one of the ‘Military

Governments,’ which he had created by his decree of Feb. 15, 1810,

yet Soult made himself in fact, if not in name, as independent as

the governors of Aragon or Navarre or Catalonia. The bond of common

interests and desires which had united him to King Joseph during

the winter of 1809-10 was soon broken. The monarch at Madrid soon

discovered that his presence was not desired in Andalusia--some

good military reason could always be discovered which made it

impracticable that he should revisit Seville. Little or no money

was remitted to him from the South: rich as was Soult’s sphere of

governance, it was always made to appear that the expenses of the

sustenance of the army and of the siege of Cadiz were so great

that no surplus remained for the central government. When the King

murmured, and appealed to Paris, his brother usually supported the

Marshal[363]; it was Napoleon’s first maxim that war should maintain

war, and he thought it of far more importance that the army of

Andalusia should pay for itself, than that the bankrupt exchequer at

Madrid should be recruited[364]. As the months rolled on, and Joseph

gradually realized the position, his hatred for the plausible Marshal

became as bitter as it had been during their earlier quarrel in the

summer of 1809. He had good reason to be angry, for Soult undoubtedly

sacrificed the interests of the King of Spain to those of the Viceroy

of Andalusia. He played a selfish game, though he had always a good

military excuse for any particular refusal to fall in with the King’s

plans or to obey his orders. In 1810 his conduct may be justified,

but in 1811 and 1812 he undoubtedly--as will be shown in chapters to

come--ruined what small chance there was of bringing the Peninsular

War to a successful termination, by pursuing a policy which made the

maintenance of the French authority in Andalusia its chief end, and

not the general good of the imperial arms in Spain.

[363] Though not always. See the case of the revenue from the

quicksilver mines, in \_Correspondance\_, no. 17,076.

[364] Cf. ibid., July 10, to Soult.

Soult’s conduct at Oporto in the days of his invasion of Portugal

must never be forgotten when his doings in Andalusia are discussed.

He undoubtedly yearned after supreme power, and though the lesson

which he had received after his vain attempt to create himself king

of ‘Northern Lusitania’ had not been forgotten, his ambitions were as

great as ever. He suppressed his desire for the royal name, but gave

himself the reality of the royal power. He practically kept a court,

a ministry, and a revenue of his own[365], despite of all the angry

complaints of his immediate master at Madrid. Secure in the support

of the Emperor, who reckoned him the ‘best military head in Spain,’

he ignored or disobeyed all such communication from Joseph as did

not suit his purpose. To a great extent he justified his policy by

success: the plain-land of Andalusia was undoubtedly the part of the

French holding in Spain where the administration was most successful,

and the occupation most thorough. Soult not only built up, but

kept together, an \_Afrancesado\_ party among the local population,

which was stronger and more compact than in any other part of the

Peninsula. He even succeeded in raising a small permanent force of

Spanish auxiliaries, which was decidedly more trustworthy and less

given to desertion than the regiments of the same class which King

Joseph was perpetually creating in Madrid--only to see them crumble

away under his hand. The Army of Andalusia was strengthened by two

regiments of Chasseurs à Cheval, which were attached to the 5th

Corps[366], and some free companies of infantry[367], which were used

for garrison and blockhouse work. But it was far more important that

Soult succeeded in enlisting many battalions of a sort of national

guard, which he called \_Escopeteros\_ (fusiliers); with them he kept

the peace of the larger towns, such as Seville, Cordova, and Jaen.

The very existence of such a force, which King Joseph had vainly

attempted to establish in Madrid, was of evil omen for the patriotic

cause in Andalusia. On several occasions they fought well against

the guerrilleros, when the latter attempted raids dangerously close

to the great cities. For the \_Juramentado\_ was well aware that if the

national cause were at last to triumph an evil fate would await him.

Having once committed himself to the French side, he was forced to

defend his own neck from the gallows.

[365] There was desperate quarrelling with Madrid when Soult

tried to get hold of the port-revenues--small as these were,

owing to the English blockade--and when he tried to nominate

consuls on his own authority. See Ducasse’s \_Correspondance du

Roi Joseph\_, vol. vii. p. 337.

[366] 3rd and 4th Chasseurs à Cheval, both present at Albuera and

other fights in Estremadura in 1810-12. They seem to have gone to

pieces on the evacuation of Andalusia in the autumn of 1812.

[367] Cazadores de Jaen, Francos de Montaña, &c. There was a

company of this sort in Badajoz when it was taken in 1812. The

Spanish government shot the officers after trial by court martial.

Soult’s civil government was conducted with a far greater decency

than that of Duhesme, Kellermann, and other noted plunderers among

the French governors. But it involved, nevertheless, a considerable

amount of more or less open spoliation. The Marshal’s own hands

were not quite clean: his collection of the works of Murillo and

Velasquez, the pride of Paris in after years, represented blackmail

on Andalusian church-corporations, when it did not come from

undisguised confiscation. Unless he was much maligned by his own

compatriots, no less than by the Spaniards, hard cash as well as

pictures did not come amiss to him[368]. But his exactions were

moderate compared with those of some of his subordinates: though

Mortier and Dessolles had good reputations Sebastiani had an infamous

one, and Perreymond, Godinot (who shot himself early in 1812 when

called to face a commission of inquiry), and certain other generals

have very black marks against them. Still the machine of government

worked, if not without friction, at least with an efficiency that

contrasted favourably with the administration of any other province

of Spain save Suchet’s domain of Aragon.

[368] Cf. Observations by his aide-de-camp St. Chamans, in his

\_Memoirs\_, pp. 203-5, as to the Marshal’s administration. It may

serve as an example of the liberal way in which the superior

officers were allowed to draw in money, that Soult gave his

ex-aide-de-camp 1,500 francs a month, when he was commanding in

the town of Carmona, besides his pay and free food and quarters.

It is small wonder that he and other governors began, as he said,

‘à trancher du grand seigneur.’ Cf. Arteche, viii. 109, for

Spanish views on Soult’s administration.

But it was only the valley of the Guadalquivir which lay subdued

beneath the feet of Soult. Cadiz and the mountains had yet to be

dealt with, and, as the months went on, the difficulties of the

French Army of Andalusia became more and more evident. It was only

by degrees that the French generals came to comprehend the absolute

impregnability of Cadiz, and the advantage that the possession of the

island-city and the fleet depending on it gave to the Spaniards. In

the first months of the siege Victor’s engineers and artillerists

had flattered themselves that something might be done to molest the

place, if not to reduce it to surrender, by pushing batteries forward

to the extreme front of the ground in their possession all around the

harbour. Within the first weeks of his arrival in front of Cadiz,

Victor made an attempt to push forward his posts along the high-road

which crosses the broad salt-marshes of the Santi Petri. But the bogs

and water-channels were found impracticable, and the Spanish works

in front of the bridge of Zuazo too strong to be attacked along the

narrow causeway. The French drew back to Chiclana, which became the

head quarters of the left wing of the blockading force, and where

Ruffin’s division was permanently encamped. It was then thought that

something might be accomplished further to the north, by working

against the Arsenal of La Carraca, at the one end of the Spanish

line, or the projecting castle of Puntales at the other. The struggle

for the points of vantage from which Puntales could be battered

formed the chief point of interest during the early months of the

siege. The French, pushing down from the mainland on to the peninsula

of the Trocadero, began to erect works on the ground most favourable

for attacking the fort of Matagorda, which had once more become the

outermost bulwark of Cadiz.

There was a bitter fight over this work, which stands on the tidal

flats below the Trocadero, surrounded by mud for one half of the day,

and by water for the other. It will be remembered that Matagorda had

been blown up at the time of the first arrival of the French before

Cadiz. But after a few days of reflection the English and Spanish

engineer officers in command of the defence grew uneasy as to the

possibilities of mischief which might follow from the seizure of the

ruined fort by the enemy. Their fears, as it afterwards turned out,

were unnecessary. But they led to the reoccupation of Matagorda on

February 22 by a detachment of British artillery, supported by a

company of the 94th regiment. The front of the work facing toward

the mainland was hastily repaired, and heavy guns brought over the

harbour from Cadiz were mounted on it. Moreover, it was arranged

that it should be supported by a Spanish ship-of-the-line and some

gunboats, as far as the mud banks permitted.

Victor took the reoccupation of the fort as a challenge, and

thought that the Allies must have good reasons for attaching so

much importance to it. Accordingly he multiplied his batteries on

the Trocadero, till he had got forty guns mounted in a dominating

position, with which to overwhelm the garrison in their half-ruinous

stronghold. There was a long and fierce artillery contest, but the

French had the advantage both in the number of guns and in the

concentric fire which they could pour upon the fort. The naval help

promised to Matagorda proved of little assistance, partly owing to

the impracticability of the mud flats when the tide was out, partly

because the gunboats could not endure the fire of the French heavy

artillery. On April 22 General Graham, who had arrived at Cadiz and

taken command of the British forces over the head of General Stewart,

ordered Matagorda to be evacuated. It was high time, for the fort was

shot to pieces, and 64 men out of a garrison of 140 had been killed

or wounded[369]. The enemy took possession of the ruins, and rebuilt

and rearmed the fort; they also re-established the ruined forts of

San Luis and San José, on the firm ground facing Matagorda, to which

they had not possessed a safe access till the outer work in the mud

had been captured. These were the most advanced points toward Cadiz

which the French could hold, and here they mounted their heaviest

guns, in the hope of demolishing the Castle of Puntales on the other

side of the water, and of making the inner harbour useless for

shipping. Their purpose was only partly accomplished: the ships, it

is true, had to move east or west, into the outer harbour or nearer

to the Carraca and the Isla de Leon. But Puntales was never seriously

injured, and maintained an intermittent artillery duel with Matagorda

across the strait as long as the siege lasted. The occasional bombs

that fell beyond Puntales, in the direction of the Cortadura, did not

seriously incommode the garrison, and ships could always pass the

strait between the two forts at night without appreciable risk. Later

on Soult caused mortars of unprecedented dimensions to be cast in the

arsenal of Seville, on the designs presented to him by an artillery

officer of the name of Villantroys. But even when these had been

mounted on Matagorda no great damage was done, one bomb only--as a

Spanish popular song recorded--ever touched Cadiz town, and that only

killed a street dog.

[369] There is a good account of the desperate life of the

garrison of Matagorda during the bombardment in the \_Eventful

Life of a Scottish Soldier\_, by Sergeant Donaldson of the 94th.

[Illustration: \_Spanish Infantry 1810\_

(\_showing the new uniform introduced under British influence\_)]

After the fall of Matagorda, the next most notable event of the

spring in front of Cadiz was a fearful hurricane, lasting from the

6th to the 9th of March, which caused grave losses to the vessels

in the outer harbour. A south-wester from the Atlantic drove three

Spanish line-of-battle ships, one of which, the \_Concepcion\_, was a

three-decker of 100 guns, and a Portuguese 74, upon the coast about

Puerto Santa Maria and Rota. The French opened upon them with red-hot

shot, and destroyed them all, slaying a great part of the unfortunate

crews, who had no thought of resistance, and were only trying to

escape to land, where they were bound to become prisoners. More than

thirty merchant ships, mostly British, were destroyed by the same

storm. One was a transport containing a wing of the 4th regiment,

which was coming to reinforce the garrison of Cadiz. Some 300 men

from this unlucky vessel got ashore and were captured by the French.

A month after the loss of Matagorda the outer harbour of Cadiz again

saw some exciting scenes. Moored beside the Spanish fleet were a

number of pontoons, old men-of-war from which the masts and rigging

had been removed, and which were used as prison-ships. On them there

were still kept several thousands of French prisoners, mostly the men

captured with Dupont in 1808. It is astonishing that the Regency had

not ordered their removal to some more remote spot the moment that

Victor’s army appeared in front of Cadiz. Overcrowded, and often kept

without sufficient food for days at a time, these unhappy captives

were in a deplorable position. The sight of their fellow-countrymen

in possession of the opposite coast drove them to desperation, and

they were prepared to take any risks for a chance of escape. Having

noted, during the hurricane of March 6th-9th, that every vessel

which broke loose from its moorings had been cast by the set of

the tide upon the coast in the direction of Rota, the prisoners on

the \_Castilla\_, on which nearly all the officers were confined,

waited for the next south-wester. When it came, on the night of the

15th-16th May, they rose upon their small guard of Spanish marines,

overpowered them, and then cut the cables of the pontoon, committing

themselves to the perils of the sea as well as to the risk of being

sunk by the neighbouring men-of-war. But it was supposed that they

had got adrift by accident, and they had been carried by the tide

almost to the opposite shore before it was realized that an escape

was on foot. Two gunboats sent to tow the \_Castilla\_ back met with

resistance, the prisoners firing on them with the muskets taken from

their guard, and throwing cold shot down upon the little vessels when

their crews tried to board. Just as they were beaten off, the pontoon

went ashore. The French garrisons of the neighbouring batteries ran

down to help their countrymen to escape; at the same moment other

gunboats, Spanish and English, came up, and began firing on the

crowd, who strove to swim or scramble ashore. Some were killed, but

over 600 got to land. It is surprising that after this incident the

Spaniards did not take better care of the remaining pontoons, but

ten days later the prisoners on the \_Argonauta\_ were able to repeat

the trick of their comrades. On this occasion the absconding vessel

ran ashore upon a mud-bank some hundreds of yards from the shore of

the Trocadero. The stranded vessel remained for hours under the fire

of the gunboats which pursued it, and a large proportion of the men

on board perished, for when the troops on shore brought out boats

to save the survivors, many of them were sunk as they plied between

the \_Argonauta\_ and the land. Finally the pontoon was set on fire,

and several wounded Frenchmen are said to have been burnt alive. The

English seamen who were engaged in this distressing business were

heartily disgusted with their share in it[370].

[370] See the letter of Charles Vaughan deploring the ‘beastly

necessity of firing into the poor devils’ quoted by Napier in his

Appendix, vol. ii. p. 482. For a narrative by one of the escaping

French officers see the \_Mémoires\_ of Colonel Chalbrand.

After this the Regency at last ordered the removal of the rest of

the French prisoners from Cadiz. The few remaining officers were

sent to Majorca, and afterwards to England. Of the men part were

dispatched to the Canaries, part to the Balearic Islands. But the

islanders protested against the presence of so many French in their

midst, raised riots, and killed some of the prisoners. Thereupon the

Regency ordered 7,000 of them to be placed upon the desolate rock

of Cabrera, where there were no inhabitants and no shelter save one

small ruined castle. The wretched captives, without roofs or tents

to cover them, and supplied with food only at uncertain intervals

and in insufficient quantity, died off like flies. Once, when storms

hindered the arrival of the provision ships from Majorca, many scores

perished in a day of sheer starvation[371]. The larger half did not

survive to see the peace of 1814, and those who did were for the most

part mere wrecks of men, invalids for life. Even allowing for the

desperate straits of the Spanish government, which could not feed its

own armies, the treatment of the Cabrera prisoners was indefensible.

They might at least have been exchanged for some of the numerous

Spanish garrisons taken in 1810-11; but the Regency would not permit

it, though Henry O’Donnell had arranged with Macdonald a regular

\_cartel\_ for prisoners in the neighbouring Catalonia. This is one of

the most miserable corners of the history of the Peninsular War.

[371] Nothing can be more distressing reading than the chronicles

of the Cabrera prisoners, Ducor, Guillemard, Gille and others.

Actual cannibalism is said to have occurred during the longest of

the spells of fasting caused by the non-arrival of provisions.

[See Gille, p. 240.]

But to return to Andalusia. By the month of May the Regency at Cadiz

had recovered a certain confidence, in view of the utter inefficacy

of Victor’s attempt to molest their city. From that month began a

systematic attempt to organize into a single system all the forces

that could be turned to account against Soult. There were now in

the Isla some 18,000 Spanish troops, as well as 8,000 British and

Portuguese. This was a larger garrison than was needed, now that

the defences had been put in order; and it was possible to detach

small expeditionary corps to east and west, to stir up trouble in

the coast-land of Andalusia, and serve as the nuclei round which

the insurgents of the mountains might gather. For the insurrection

in the remoter corners of the kingdom of Granada had never died

down, despite of all the efforts of Sebastiani to quell it. The

Regency had now determined that an effort should be made to extend

it westward--the Sierra de Ronda being quite as well suited for

irregular operations as the Alpujarras. At the other end of the line,

too, there were opportunities in the Condado de Niebla and the lands

by the mouth of the Guadiana, which the French had hardly touched:

trifling detachments of the 5th Corps at Moguer and Niebla observed

rather than occupied that region. By means of the large fleet always

moored in Cadiz harbour, it was possible to transfer troops to any

point of the coast, for the French could not guard every creek and

fishing-village, and if an expedition failed it had a fair chance of

escaping by sea. Moreover any force thrown ashore in the south had

the option of retiring into Gibraltar if hard pressed, just as any

force sent to the west might retire on Portugal.

In addition to the insurgents and the garrison of Cadiz there were

two regular armies whose energies might be turned against Soult.

The relics of Areizaga’s unfortunate host, which had fled into the

kingdom of Murcia, and had been rallied by Blake, were now 12,000

strong, and since Suchet’s expedition against Valencia had failed,

and there was no danger from the north, this force could be employed

against Sebastiani and the French corps in the kingdom of Granada. It

was in a deplorable condition, but was yet strong enough to render

assistance to the insurgents of the Alpujarras, by demonstrating

against Granada, and so forcing Sebastiani to keep his troops massed

for a regular campaign. Whenever the French general was threatened

from the east, he had to abandon his smaller posts, and to desist

from hunting the guerrilleros, who thus obtained a free hand.

The Regency could also count to a certain extent upon aid from

La Romana and the Army of Estremadura. The Marquis--it will be

remembered--was now confronted in his own province by Reynier and

the 2nd Corps[372], but he had thrust his flanking division, under

Ballasteros, into the mountains of North-Western Andalusia, where it

had been contending with Mortier’s corps in the direction of Araçena

and Zalamea, as has already been recounted[373]. This outlying

division was in communication with Cadiz, via Ayamonte and the

lower Guadiana, and could always compel Soult to detach troops from

Seville by descending into the plains. La Romana himself could, and

occasionally did, provide further occupation for the 5th Corps by

moving other troops southward, on the Seville high-road, when he was

not too much engrossed by Reynier’s demonstrations in his front.

[372] See pp. 213-14 of this volume and p. 246.

[373] See pp. 215-16 of this volume.

Thus it was possible to harass the French troops in Andalusia on

all sides. With the object of securing some sort of unity for their

operations, the Regency made Blake Commander-in-Chief of the forces

in Cadiz as well as of those in Murcia, declaring them parts of a

single ‘Army of the Centre.’ Albuquerque’s separate charge had come

to an end when, after many quarrels with the Cadiz Junta, he resigned

the post of governor, and accepted that of Ambassador to the Court

of St. James’s at the end of March. He died not long after his

arrival in London, engaged to the last in a hot warfare of pamphlets

and manifestos with the Junta, whose monstrous insinuations against

his probity and patriotism are said to have driven him into the

brain-fever which terminated his life. He was a man of unsullied

honour and high personal courage, but not a lucky general, though

his last military action, the direction of the Army of Estremadura

on Cadiz, was a sound and meritorious piece of strategy. He and

La Romana were the only Spanish officers with whom Wellington was

able to work in concert without perpetual friction, but the British

Commander-in-Chief had a greater respect for his allies’ hearts

than for their heads as may be gathered from constant references

in the \_Wellington Dispatches\_, as well as from the confidential

conversations of the Duke’s later years[374].

[374] See \_Wellington Dispatches\_, v. p. 292, &c., and Stanhope’s

\_Conversations with the Duke of Wellington\_, pp. 10 and 23.

Blake arrived in Cadiz on April 22, having turned over the temporary

command of the Murcian army to General Freire, the ever-unlucky

cavalry commander who had served under Venegas and Areizaga in the

campaigns of Almonacid and Ocaña. He set himself to reorganize the

various Estremaduran and other troops in Cadiz into one division

of horse and three divisions of foot, which he numbered Vanguard,

2nd, and 4th of the Army of the Centre. The Murcian forces were

distributed into the 1st, 3rd, and 5th infantry divisions of the

same army, and two small cavalry divisions. This reorganization of

the regular troops was followed by systematic attempts to foster the

insurrection to right and left of Seville. General Copons was sent

to Ayamonte, at the mouth of the Guadiana, with 700 men, round whom

he collected a miscellaneous assemblage of peasantry, which often

descended from the hills to worry the French garrisons of Moguer and

Niebla. When chased by stronger forces detached from Mortier’s corps,

he would retire into Portugal. When unmolested he joined hands with

Ballasteros and the flanking division of the army of La Romana, or

executed raids of his own in the central plain of the kingdom of

Seville. Often chased, and sometimes dispersed, his bands were never

completely crushed, and kept Western Andalusia, or ‘Spanish Algarve,’

as it was called in the old days when the boundaries of Castile and

Portugal had only just been fixed, in a state of constant ferment.

The diversion which was prepared on the other flank by Blake and the

Regency was far more important. Their intention was to wrest from

the French the whole district of the Sierra de Ronda, the mountain

region between Gibraltar and Malaga, and so to thrust in a wedge

between Victor and Sebastiani. There was already the nucleus of an

insurrection in this quarter; soon after King Joseph’s triumphal

progress from Xeres by Ronda and Malaga to Granada, the first small

bands had appeared. They were headed by local chiefs, such as

Becerra, Ruiz, and Ortiz--better known as El Pastor--whose original

followers were a party of the smugglers who, in times of peace and

war alike, had been wont to ply a contraband trade with Gibraltar.

In March and April they were not strong enough to do more than

molest the convoys passing from Malaga and Seville to the French

garrison of Ronda. But finding the enemy in their neighbourhood weak

and helpless--the bulk of the 1st Corps was before Cadiz, and that

of the 5th Corps was still watching La Romana on the roads north

of Seville--they multiplied in numbers and extended their raids

far afield. They asked for aid both from the British Governor of

Gibraltar and from the Regency at Cadiz, promising that, if they were

backed by regular troops, they would easily expel the French and

master the whole country-side. Already their activity had produced

favourable results, for Soult sent down from Seville Girard’s

division of the 5th Corps, a detachment which left Mortier too weak

for any serious operations on the side of Estremadura, and Sebastiani

drew back from an expedition against Murcia, which might otherwise

have proved most prejudicial to the Spanish cause.

This raid deserves a word of notice: just after Blake had left Murcia

for Cadiz, Sebastiani (who had for the moment got the better of the

insurgents in the Alpujarras) assembled at Baza, in the eastern

extremity of the kingdom of Granada, the greater part of the 4th

Corps, and marched with 7,000 men on Lorca. Freire, distrusting

his troops, refused to fight, threw 4,000 men into the impregnable

harbour-fortress of Cartagena, and retired with the rest of his army

to Alicante, within the borders of Valencia. Thus, the rich city of

Murcia, along with the whole of the rest of its province, which had

never seen the French before, was exposed undefended to Sebastiani.

He entered it on April 23, and commenced by fining the corporation

50,000 dollars for not having received him with a royal salute

and the ringing of the bells of their churches. The rest of his

behaviour was in keeping: he entered the cathedral while mass was in

progress, and interrupted the service to seize the plate and jewels.

He confiscated the money and other valuables in all the monasteries,

hospitals, and banks. He permitted his officers to blackmail many

rich inhabitants, and his rank and file to plunder houses and shops.

Two days after his entry he retraced his footsteps, and retreated

hastily towards Granada, leaving a ruined city behind him[375]. The

cause of his sudden departure was the news that the insurgents of the

Alpujarras, whom he had vainly imagined that he had crushed, were

beleaguering all his small garrisons, and that Malaga itself had been

seized by a large band of the Serranos, and held for a short space,

though General Perreymond had afterwards succeeded in driving them

out. But the whole of the Alhama and Ronda Sierras were up in arms,

no less than the more eastern hills where the rising had begun. It

would have been absurd for Sebastiani to proceed any further with

the offensive campaign in Murcia, when Southern Andalusia was being

lost behind his back.

[375] For strange and scandalous details of Sebastiani’s doings

in Murcia, see Schepeler, iii. pp. 566-7.

Throughout the month of May Girard and Sebastiani, with some small

assistance from Dessolles, who spared a few battalions from the

kingdom of Cordova, were actively engaged in endeavouring to repress

the mountaineers. The larger bands were dispersed, not without

severe fighting--Girard’s men had hot work at Albondonates on May

1, and at Grazalema on May 3[376]. But just as the main roads had

been reopened, and the blockade of the French garrison of Ronda

raised, the whole situation was changed by the landing at Algeciras

of General Lacy, with a division of 3,000 regulars sent from Cadiz

by the Regency (June 19). His arrival raised the spirits of the

insurgents, and they thronged in thousands to his aid, when he

announced his intention of marching against Ronda. Lacy, however,

was both irresolute and high-handed--as he afterwards showed on a

larger stage when he became Captain-General of Catalonia. On arriving

before Ronda he judged the rocky stronghold too formidable for him

to meddle with, and turned aside to Grazalema, to the disgust of his

followers. He then fell into a quarrel with the Serranos, dismissed

many of them--smugglers and others--from his camp, as unworthy to

serve alongside of regular soldiers, and even imprisoned some of

the more turbulent chiefs. At this moment Girard from the north

and Sebastiani from the east began to close in upon him. Uneasy

at their approach, Lacy fell back towards the coast, and after

some insignificant skirmishes re-embarked his force at Estepona

and Marbella, from whence he sailed round to Gibraltar and landed

at the Lines of San Roque, under the walls of that fortress (July

12)[377]. Almost the only positive gain produced by his expedition

had been the occupation of Marbella, where he left a garrison which

maintained itself for a considerable time. It was no doubt something

to have detained Girard and Sebastiani in the remote mountain of the

south for a full month, when they were much needed by Soult in other

directions. Yet the evil results of Lacy’s timid manœuvres and hasty

flight upon the morale of the insurgents might have been sufficiently

great to counterbalance these small advantages, if the Serranos had

been less tough and resolute. It is surprising to find that they did

not lose courage, but kept the rising afoot with undiminished energy,

being apparently confirmed in their self-confidence by the poor show

made by the regular army, rather than disheartened at the ineffective

succour sent them from Cadiz. Despite of all the efforts of Soult’s

flying columns, they could not be entirely dispersed, though they

were hunted a hundred times from valley to valley. The power of the

viceroy of Andalusia stopped short at the foot-hills, though his

dragoons kept the plains in subjection. Every time that Ronda and the

other isolated garrisons in the mountains had to be revictualled,

the convoy had to fight its way to its destination through swarms of

‘sniping’ insurgents[378].

[376] Martinien’s lists show that the 40th regiment of Girard’s

division lost four officers at Albondonates, and the 64th the

same number at Grazalema--so the skirmishes must have been fairly

vigorous.

[377] That Lacy’s force was not so entirely destroyed as Napier

implies is shown by the fact that many of the same regiments

could be utilized for the subsequent expedition to the Condado de

Niebla.

[378] For illustrative anecdotes of warfare in the Serrania de

Ronda, see the autobiography of Rocca of the 2nd Hussars, who was

busy in this region in the spring and summer of 1810.

The Regency had not yet done with Lacy and his expeditionary force.

After they had lain for some time under the walls of Gibraltar, they

were re-embarked and taken back to Cadiz, from where a short time

after they were dispatched for a raid in the Condado de Niebla. In

this region, where Copons was already in arms, the French forces,

under Remond and the Duke of Aremberg, were so weak that the

Junta believed that Lacy’s division would easily clear the whole

country-side of the enemy. Its liberation would be most valuable,

because Cadiz was wont to draw both corn and cattle from the lands

between the Rio Tinto and Guadiana, and had felt bitterly the want of

its accustomed supplies since the war had been carried thither.

Lacy landed in the Bay of Huelva on August 23 with nearly 3,000 men.

He had the good fortune to meet and to overcome in succession two

small French columns which marched against him from Moguer and from

San Juan del Puerto. Thereupon the Duke of Aremberg--whose whole

force in this region was less than 1,500 men (two battalions of the

103rd of the line and the 27th Chasseurs)--evacuated Niebla and fell

back on Seville. Copons, who had been told to join Lacy but had

failed to receive his instructions in time, pursued a separate French

column under General Remond for some distance, but was soon stopped

by the news that a large force was moving against him, to repair

this check to the French arms. Lacy, meanwhile, to the surprise and

disgust of the inhabitants of the Condado, re-embarked on August

29 and went back to Cadiz, professing to regard the purpose of his

expedition as completed. He had this much justification, that the

news of his raid had induced Soult to send out against him, at a most

critical moment, the main body of Gazan’s division, which marched to

Niebla, vainly sought the expeditionary force, and returned to its

base after wasting a fortnight. But a larger garrison was now left in

Western Andalusia, Copons was hunted more vigorously than before, and

cruel reprisals were made on the inhabitants of Moguer and Huelva,

who had aided Lacy.

Feeble as it had been, Lacy’s raid on the Condado had staved off a

serious danger to the Spanish Army of Estremadura, by forcing Soult

to detach Gazan against him, at a moment when he was concentrating

the 5th Corps for a blow at La Romana, and was already engaged in

active operations against the Marquis. A complete change had taken

place in the situation in Estremadura at the end of July, when

Reynier, acting under orders from Masséna[379], had marched northward

from his old base at Merida and Medellin, and crossed the Tagus at

the ferry of Alconetar above the broken bridge of Alcantara[380]

(July 16). This removal of the whole 2nd Corps to the north, followed

(as we have already seen) by the corresponding transference of Hill’s

British force from Portalegre to the neighbourhood of Castello

Branco, had left La Romana at Badajoz with no enemy in front of him,

and had caused a complete rupture of communications between the

French Army of Andalusia and the Army of Portugal, who could for

the future only hear of each other by the circuitous route through

Madrid, since that by Almaraz was closed.

[379] See pp. 246-7 of this volume.

[380] Not marked in any contemporary map that I have seen. It is

situated, however, opposite the junction of the River Almonte

with the Tagus, about eighteen miles above Alcantara, near the

ancient ruined bridge of Mantible.

Soult had now thrown upon his hands, to his immense disgust, the

task of containing the whole of La Romana’s force, which Reynier had

been keeping in check from March till July. Accordingly he called

back from the Sierra de Ronda the division of Girard, wishing to

reunite the whole 5th Corps for the protection of the northern

approaches to Seville. He was only just in time, for La Romana had

seen his opportunity, and had resolved to concentrate his army for

a demonstration against Andalusia, which seemed to offer great

temptations while nothing but the solitary division of Gazan stood

between him and Seville, and that division, moreover, was weakened by

the detachments under Remond and Aremberg which lay in the Condado de

Niebla. Accordingly the Marquis, leaving Charles O’Donnell to watch

Reynier on the Tagus, and another division to guard Badajoz, marched

with his cavalry and the infantry of La Carrera[381] and Ballasteros

to invade Andalusia. He also told Copons to come up to reinforce him

with his levies from the lower Guadiana. Even without the help of the

latter, who never succeeded in reaching him, he had 10,000 foot and

1,000 horse. But La Romana was always unlucky when he fought: just

as he started, Girard had returned from Ronda to Seville. On hearing

that the Army of Estremadura was on the move, Soult pushed the newly

returned division, strengthened by part of Gazan’s regiments and a

brigade of cavalry, out towards the passes of the Morena. On August

11, Girard, with about 7,000 bayonets and 1,200 sabres, encountered

La Romana at Villagarcia, just outside the town of Llerena. The

Spaniards were eager to fight, believing that they had only to deal

with some fraction of Gazan’s division; the news of Girard’s return

from Ronda had not yet reached them. They got involved in a severe

combat, were beaten, and were forced back to Zafra and Almendralejo,

with a loss of 600 men--triple that of the French.

[381] Which had just rejoined him from the north, after the fall

of Ciudad Rodrigo. See p. 253.

Soult then strengthened Girard’s column, placed Mortier in command,

and bade him push for Badajoz. But just as the Duke of Treviso was

preparing to advance, the news of Lacy’s disembarkation at Moguer

arrived. There were hardly any troops left in Seville, wherefore

Soult hastily recalled from Mortier such of Gazan’s regiments as

were with him, and nearly all the cavalry, and sent them off against

Lacy. Girard’s division retired from Zafra and took up a defensive

position in the passes covering Seville. Thus a dangerous crisis was

avoided, for if the whole 5th Corps had marched on Badajoz in August,

and had driven back La Romana into Portugal, Wellington’s flank in

the Alemtejo would have been left exposed. There was no longer a

British division south of the Tagus to support the Spanish Army of

Estremadura, since Hill had transferred himself to Castello Branco

in order to ‘contain’ Reynier. Of regular troops, indeed, Wellington

had nothing left on the Alemtejo frontier save Madden’s brigade of

Portuguese horse, and the two infantry regiments of the same nation,

who formed part of the garrison of Elvas. Hence he was much troubled

at La Romana’s tendency to take the offensive against Seville, and

repeatedly begged him to content himself with defensive operations,

and not to attract the notice of Soult. For the Duke of Dalmatia, if

left alone, had enough to occupy his attention in Andalusia, yet, if

provoked, might abandon some outlying part of his viceroyalty, in

order to concentrate a force which might crush the Estremaduran army,

and then execute that diversion against Portugal south of the Tagus

which Wellington so much dreaded[382].

[382] See Wellington, \_Dispatches\_, vi. p. 343. ‘I am a little

anxious about Mortier’s movement into Estremadura, not on account

of the progress he can make, but because I think that the Marquis

de la Romana is inclined to fight a battle. If we could only

avoid a disaster for some time, I hope we may do some good at

last.’ Cf. also vi. pp. 348 and 393.

Yet despite the warning that he had received at the combat of

Villagarcia, and, despite of his ally’s entreaties, La Romana

renewed in September the project that had cost him so dear in

August. Learning that the passes in front of Seville were once more

weakly held by the French, he began to move his army southward in

detachments, till he had gathered a heavy force at Guadalcanal and

Monasterio. Attributing his misfortunes in the last month to the

weakness of his cavalry, he brought down with him Madden’s Portuguese

horsemen, a weak brigade of 800 men[383], which Wellington had put

at his disposition, not foreseeing that its existence would add to

the inclination which the Marquis felt for offensive demonstrations.

The inevitable result followed. Disquieted by the activity of the

Estremaduran army--its raiding parties had already pressed as far

as Santa Olalla on the Seville road, and Constantina on the Cordova

road--Soult ordered Mortier to concentrate the main body of the 5th

Corps at Ronquillo, and to attack the enemy. La Romana gave back

at once, evacuating the passes, but his rearguard was overtaken at

Fuente Cantos, behind Monasterio, by the French horse (Sept. 15). His

cavalry, under La Carrera[384], turned to bay to cover the retreat,

but was charged and scattered with heavy loss by Briche’s Chasseurs,

who captured the battery that accompanied it, and enveloped a large

mass of the beaten horsemen, who would have been forced to surrender

if Madden’s Portuguese, charging at the right moment, and with great

vigour, had not checked the French advance, and given time for the

routed brigades to save themselves in the hills. Madden, though

pursued by the French reserves, made a steady and successful retreat,

with small loss. The Spaniards, however, left behind them six guns

and 500 killed and wounded, while the French loss had not exceeded

100.

[383] The brigade consisted of three squadrons each of the 5th

and 8th regiments, and two of the 3rd. Beresford’s report to

Wellington speaks of their behaviour in the highest terms. See

Soriano da Luz, vol. iii. pp. 66-7.

[384] Dissatisfied with all his cavalry officers, La Romana had

removed La Carrera to the command of the horse, making over his

old infantry division to Carlos d’España.

Mortier then pursued La Romana to Zafra, and pushed his advanced

cavalry as far as Fuente del Maestre, only thirty miles from Badajoz.

Thus the situation which Wellington most dreaded had come into

existence once again: a considerable French army was moving into

central Estremadura, and threatening the Alemtejo frontier south of

the Tagus, at a moment when every man of the Anglo-Portuguese field

army was fully employed in Beira by the advance of Masséna. But

again, as in August, Mortier did not push his advantage, though La

Romana actually retired behind the Tagus to Montijo, after raising

the garrison of Badajoz to its full strength, and left the Duke

of Treviso the opportunity of laying siege either to that city,

to Olivenza, or even to Elvas, if he should so please. But the

governing fact in all the operations of Soult and his lieutenants at

this period was, as we have already pointed out, that if any great

concentration of the French for offensive purposes took place, it

was only made by withdrawing the garrison troops from some one of

the many disturbed regions of Andalusia. When the whole 5th Corps

was united, and had advanced to Zafra, Western Andalusia was almost

stripped of troops. Indeed, at Seville itself, Soult had nothing

but his new Spanish levies, and the convalescents from his central

hospital, together with some detachments escorting convoys which

happened to be passing through the city, and had been detained in

order to add a few hundred bayonets to its garrison. When, therefore,

Copons began to make himself felt once more in the Condado de Niebla,

and a second raiding expedition from Cadiz landed at Huelva, Soult

felt very uncomfortable.

His perturbation of mind was increased by news from the East:

Sebastiani at this moment had been molested by demonstrations of

the Spanish Army of Murcia against his flank. Blake had returned in

August from Cadiz to inspect the section of his forces which he had

left behind under Freire, and which he had not seen since April. He

had pushed reconnaissances to Huescar in the kingdom of Granada,

had sent supplies to aid the insurgents of the Alpujarras, and was

beginning to stir up a new rising on the side of Jaen. This provoked

Sebastiani to concentrate the larger part of the 4th Corps, and to

march against him with 8,000 men[385]. Blake gave back before his

enemy as far as the neighbourhood of Murcia, where he had prepared

a fortified position by inundating the Huerta, or suburban plain,

which is watered by many canals drawn from the river Segura, and

by stockading all the villages. Fourteen thousand regulars, with

a powerful artillery, held the approaches, while a mass of armed

peasantry hung around Sebastiani’s flanks. The French, however, only

advanced as far as Lebrilla, twelve miles from Murcia, and then

halted (Aug. 28). Sebastiani, after reconnoitring Blake’s line,

thought it too powerful to be meddled with, and retired two days

later towards his base, much harassed by the peasantry on his way.

But during the three weeks that it took for the French general to

concentrate his field-force, to march on Murcia, and to return,

all had gone to wrack and ruin behind him. The insurgents of the

Alpujarras had captured the important seaport towns of Almunecar and

Motril, and had garrisoned their castles with the aid of English guns

sent from Gibraltar. The people of the Sierra de Alhama had cut the

roads between Malaga and Granada, and 4,000 mountaineers had attacked

Granada itself; they were defeated outside its gates by the garrison

on Sept. 4, but were still hanging about its vicinity.

[385] The 4th Corps was now a little stronger than it had been in

the spring, the 32nd regiment, 2,000 strong, having joined from

Madrid. But it was still short of its German division, which now

lay in La Mancha, but had never crossed the Sierra Morena.

The news of all these troubles had reached Soult while Sebastiani

was quite out of touch, lost to sight in the kingdom of Murcia. They

undoubtedly had their part in inducing the Marshal to recall Mortier

and the 5th Corps from Estremadura. He once more divided its two

divisions, drawing back Gazan to Seville to form his central reserve,

while Girard watched the passes as before. Meanwhile Copons had

already been beaten in the Condado by the column of General Remond

(Sept. 15), and Sebastiani on his return cleared the neighbourhood

of Granada and Malaga of insurgents, and drove the untameable bands

of the Alpujarras to take refuge in their mountains. Motril and

Almunecar were both recovered. Thus the storm passed, as soon as the

two French expeditionary forces under Mortier and Sebastiani returned

once more to their usual garrison-posts.

Only two more incidents remain to be chronicled in the Andalusian

campaign of 1810. Campbell, the governor of Gibraltar, had

resolved--somewhat too late--to lend a small detachment to aid the

Granadan insurgents. The plan which he concerted with the Spanish

governor of Ceuta was that Lord Blayney with two British battalions

from the Gibraltar garrison--the 82nd and 89th [\_erratum\_: “Lord

Blayney’s force had only a half-battalion, not a whole battalion of

the 89th, but contained 4 companies of foreign chasseurs”], and a

Spanish regiment (Imperial de Toledo) from Ceuta, 2,200 men in all,

should be thrown on shore at Fuengirola, twenty miles on the nearer

side of Malaga, where there was a small French garrison and a dépôt

of stores, which was serving for a brigade then engaged in the siege

of Marbella, the town which had been garrisoned by Lacy in June[386],

and which was still holding out gallantly in October.

[386] See p. 328 of this chapter.

It was calculated that, on hearing of a descent at Fuengirola,

Sebastiani would come with the larger part of the garrison of

Malaga to relieve the fort. But the moment that he was known to be

nearing the expeditionary force, Lord Blayney was to re-embark and

to make a dash at Malaga itself, which he could reach more swiftly

by water than Sebastiani by land. Secret partisans within the city

were ready to take arms, and the peasantry of the Sierra de Alhama

were also enlisted in the enterprise. The scheme seems liable to

many criticisms--the whole was at the mercy of the winds and waves

of stormy October: what would happen if the weather was too rough to

allow of re-embarkation, or of easy landing at Malaga? And if Malaga

were captured for the moment, for how long could 2,000 regulars,

backed by a mass of undisciplined insurgents, hold it against the

whole of Sebastiani’s corps, which would be hurled upon it at short

notice? The expedition, however, was not actually wrecked on either

of these dangers, but ruined by the folly of its chief. Lord Blayney

landed successfully on October 13, and laid siege to Fuengirola,

which was held by 150 Poles under a Captain Milokosiewitz. Instead of

making the attack a mere demonstration, he brought some 12-pounders

ashore, and set to work to batter the castle in all seriousness.

Finding its walls commencing to crumble, he held on for two days,

though, if he had reflected, he must have remembered that the

garrison of Malaga might be with him at any moment. He was busily

preparing for an assault, when Sebastiani suddenly fell upon him

with 3,000 men from the rear. Apparently the English commander had

neglected to keep up any watch on the side of the inland, and the

peasantry had failed to send any intelligence of the fact that the

French were on the move. The besiegers, taken entirely by surprise,

and distracted also by a sortie of the little garrison, were rolled

down to the sea-shore in confusion. Lord Blayney--a short-sighted

man--rode in among some French whom he mistook for Spaniards, and

was made prisoner in the most ignominious fashion. The Spanish

regiment got off with little loss: it had kept its ranks, and forced

its way to the boats after beating off an attack. The 82nd was

partly on shipboard at the moment of the combat, and the companies

which were on shore saved themselves by a steady rearguard action.

But the battalion of the 89th was half destroyed, losing over 200

prisoners besides some forty killed. The utter incapacity of the

British commander was best shown by the fact that if he had but

carried out the plan on which he was acting, he would certainly have

captured Malaga--for Sebastiani had left only 300 men in the city

when he marched on Fuengirola, and, if the expeditionary force had

re-embarked twenty-four hours before the disaster, it would have

found the place practically undefended, and Sebastiani a long day’s

march away, and incapable of returning in time to save it[387].

[387] Lord Blayney, a humorous person save when the absurdities

of his own generalship were in question, wrote an interesting

narrative of his ‘Forced Journey to France,’ which contains one

of the best accounts of the state of Madrid under King Joseph’s

government, as well as some curious notes on the state of the

English prisoners at Verdun in 1811-13.

The very last military event of the year 1810 on the Andalusian

side was a disaster far worse than that of Lord Blayney--suffered

by a general whose almost unbroken series of defeats from Medina

de Rio Seco down to Belchite ought to have taught him by this time

the advantages of caution, and the doubtful policy of risking a

demoralized army in a fight upon open ground. When Sebastiani retired

from the kingdom of Murcia in the first days of September, Blake had

brought back his army to its old positions on the frontier of that

realm. Seven weeks later, finding the French line in front of him

very weak, he resolved to try a demonstration in force, or perhaps

even a serious stroke against the force of the enemy in Granada. On

November 2 he crossed the Murcian border, with 8,000 foot and 1,000

horse, and occupied Cullar.

On the next day he was at the gates of Baza, where there were four

battalions of the French force which covered Granada[388]. But on

the next morning General Milhaud rode up with a powerful body of

horsemen, the greater part of his own division of Dragoons and the

Polish Lancers from Sebastiani’s corps-cavalry, some 1,300 men

in all. Though he had only 2,000 infantry to back him, Milhaud

determined to fight at once. Blake’s army invited an attack; it was

advancing down the high-road with the cavalry deployed in front, one

division of infantry supporting it, while a second division was some

miles to the rear, on the hills which separate the plain of Baza

from the upland of the Sierra de Oria. A rearguard of 2,000 men was

still at Cullar, ten miles from the scene of action. The situation

much resembled that of Suchet’s combat of Margalef, and led to the

same results. For Milhaud’s squadrons, charging fiercely along and

on each side of the road, completely routed Blake’s cavalry, and

drove it back on to the leading infantry division, which broke, and

was badly cut up before its remnants could take shelter with the

other division in reserve on the hill behind. Blake gave the order

for an instant retreat, and Milhaud could not follow far among the

rocks and defiles. But he had captured a battery of artillery and a

thousand prisoners, and killed or wounded some 500 men more, in the

few minutes during which the engagement lasted. The French cavalry

lost no more than 200 men. The infantry had hardly fired a shot.

Blake, not being pursued, retired only as far as the Venta de Bahul

on the other side of Cullar, and remained on the Murcian border,

cured for a time of his mania for taking the offensive at the head of

a demoralized army.

[388] From the 32nd and 58th Line, Rey’s brigade of Sebastiani’s

corps. The 88th, in \_Victoires et Conquêtes\_, xx. 127, and

Arteche is a misprint. That regiment was with Girard in the

Sierra Morena, 150 miles away.

Thus ended the inconclusive campaign of 1810 in Andalusia--the

French on the last day of the year held almost precisely the same

limits of territory that they had occupied on the 1st of March. They

had beaten the enemy in four or five considerable actions, yet had

gained nothing thereby. They were beginning to understand that Cadiz

was impregnable, and that the complete subjection of the mountains

of the South and East was a far more serious task than had been at

first supposed. Things indeed had come to a deadlock, and Soult kept

reporting to his master that another 25,000 men would be required to

enable him to complete his task. Almost as many battalions belonging

to the 1st, 4th, and 5th Corps as would have made up that force had

been sent by the Emperor into Spain. They were intended to join

their regiments in the end, but meanwhile they had been distracted

into the 8th and 9th Corps, and were marching in the direction of

Portugal, when Soult wished to see them on the Guadalquivir[389].

Very little of the mass of reinforcements which had been poured

into the Peninsula in the spring of 1810 had come his way. While the

whole battalions had been sent away with Junot or Drouet, the drafts

in smaller units had been largely intercepted by the generals along

the line of communication. There were 4,000 of such recruits detained

in New Castile alone, and formed into ‘provisional battalions’ to

garrison Madrid and its neighbourhood. King Joseph must not be

blamed too much for thus stopping them on their way: he had been

left with an utterly inadequate force, when the Emperor turned

off everything on to the direction of Portugal. During the summer

and autumn of 1810 there were with him only two French infantry

regiments[390], the same number of light cavalry regiments[391],

Lahoussaye’s weak division of dragoons[392], and the German division

of the 4th Corps less than 4,000 strong, over and above his own guard

and untrustworthy ‘juramentado’ battalions[393]. The royal troops

numbered about 7,000 men, the other units, including Soult’s detained

drafts, about 12,000: with them Joseph had to garrison Madrid, Avila,

Segovia, Toledo, and Almaraz, and hold down all New Castile and La

Mancha--which last province was described at the time as ‘populated

solely by beggars and brigands’. He had the duty of maintaining the

sole and very circuitous line of communication between Soult and

Masséna, which, after Reynier went north in July, had to be worked

via Almaraz. He was frequently annoyed not only by the Empecinado

and other guerrilleros, but by Villacampa, who descended from

higher Aragon into the Cuenca region, and by Blake’s cavalry, which

often raided La Mancha. But his great fear was lest La Romana or

Wellington should send troops up the vast gap left between Reynier at

Zarza and Coria and Mortier in the Sierra Morena; there was nothing

but Lahoussaye’s dragoons and two infantry battalions in the whole

district about Almaraz and Talavera, where such a blow would have

fallen. It was small wonder that he felt uncomfortable.

[389] The 8th Corps had in its ranks the 4th battalions of the

following regiments whose first three battalions were in the

south of Spain, and belonged to the 1st, 4th, or 5th corps--the

28th, 34th, and 75th. But the 9th Corps was almost entirely

composed of 4th battalions of the corps of Victor, Sebastiani,

and Mortier, including those of the 8th, 24th, 45th, 54th, 63rd,

94th, 95th, 96th Line, and 16th and 27th Léger, of the 1st corps,

and of the 17th Léger, and 40th, 88th, 100th and 103rd Line of

the 5th Corps.

[390] 28th and 75th, the remaining brigade of the 1st Division of

the 4th Corps, which never joined Sebastiani in Andalusia.

[391] 26th Chasseurs and 3rd Dutch Hussars.

[392] 17th, 18th, 19th, and 27th Dragoons, only two squadrons

each--only 1,300 men.

[393] As a sample of their behaviour it may be mentioned that the

whole guard of the south gate of Toledo once marched off to join

the insurgents, officers and all.

But military sources of disquietude formed only the smaller half of

King Joseph’s troubles at this date. His political vexations, which

engrossed a much larger portion of his time and energy, must be dealt

with elsewhere. They will be relegated to the same chapter which

treats of the new development of Spanish politics consequent on the

long-delayed meeting of the Cortes in the winter of 1810-11.

SECTION XXI

BUSSACO AND TORRES VEDRAS (SEPTEMBER-DECEMBER 1810)

CHAPTER I

MASSÉNA’S ADVANCE TO BUSSACO (SEPTEMBER 1810)

After the fall of Almeida Masséna waited much longer than Wellington

had anticipated. The reasons for his delay were the usual ones

that were always forthcoming when a French army had to advance

in the Peninsula--want of transport and penury of supplies. The

Marshal had just discovered that the country-side in front of

him had already been depopulated by Wellington’s orders, and

that the only inhabitants that were to be met would be the armed

Ordenança, who were already shooting at his vedettes and attacking

his foraging parties. He was inclined to treat them as brigands;

his Provost-marshal, Colonel Pavetti, having been surprised and

captured along with five gendarmes of his escort by the villagers

of Nava d’Avel on September 5, he caused the place to be burned,

shot the one or two male inhabitants who could be caught, and

issued a proclamation stating that no quarter would be given to

combatants without uniforms. This provoked two stiff letters from

Wellington[394], who wrote to say that the Ordenança were an integral

part of the Portuguese military forces, and that, if they wore no

uniforms, the Marshal should remember that many of the revolutionary

bands which he had commanded in the old war of 1792-7 were no

better equipped: ‘vous devez vous souvenir que vous-même vous avez

augmenté la gloire de l’armée Française en commandant des soldats qui

n’avaient pas d’uniforme.’ If Ordenança were shot as ‘brigands and

highway robbers’ in obedience to the proclamation of September 7,

it was certain that French stragglers and foragers would be knocked

on the head, and not taken prisoners, by the enraged peasantry. At

present the number of them sent in to the British head quarters by

the Portuguese irregulars proved that the laws of war were being

observed. Masséna replied that Pavetti had been ambushed by men who

hid their arms, and ran in upon him and his escort while he was

peaceably asking his way. His letter then went off at a tangent, to

discuss high politics, and to declare that he was not the enemy of

the Portuguese but of the perfidious British government, &c., &c.

Finally he complained that the Arganil and Trancoso militia, whom he

had sent home after the fall of Almeida, had taken up arms again; if

caught, ‘leur sort sera funeste’[395]. The last statement Wellington

denied; he said that the capitulation had been annulled by the French

themselves, when they debauched the 24th regiment, and detained 600

of the militia to form a battalion of pioneers, but stated that as

a matter of fact the militia battalions had not been re-embodied.

The French continued to shoot the Ordenança, and the Ordenança soon

began to reply by torturing as well as hanging French stragglers;

Wellington forbade but could not prevent retaliation.

[394] Wellington to Masséna, Sept. 9 and Sept. 24.

[395] Masséna to Wellington, Sept. 14, from Fort Concepcion

(\_Archives du Ministère de la Guerre\_).

In his dispatch to Berthier of September 8[396], Masséna explains

that the depopulation of the district in front of him, and the fact

that the Ordenança had taken arms throughout the country-side, have

compelled him to make an enormous provision of food for his army.

Since the land has been swept bare, he must collect fifteen or twenty

days’ rations for the 6th and 8th Corps. ‘Each day demonstrates the

necessity of this more clearly, but each day makes it more evident

that we are not obtaining as much as our activity deserves. The small

amount of transport available, and the destruction by the Spanish

brigands of several convoys of corn which were coming up from the

province of Valladolid, have occasioned delay in the accumulation

of the stores. An additional vexation is that while it was reported

that we had captured 300,000 rations of biscuit in Almeida, there

turn out really to be only 120,000 rations.’ But it was the loss

of draught-beasts that was the most serious trouble; to his great

regret Masséna had to cut down the artillery of each division from

twelve to eight guns, for want of horses, with a similar reduction

of the caissons. Every animal that could be procured was given over

to the train, yet it could not carry even the fifteen days’ food

which the Marshal considered the minimum that he could afford to

take with him. There was also a deficiency in cartridges for the

infantry, for whom 1,200,000 rounds were only procured by setting the

artificers of the train to make up as many as was possible from the

powder captured at Ciudad Rodrigo. Finally Masséna explains that the

losses in the two late sieges, the necessity for garrisoning Almeida

and Rodrigo, and the effects of a sickly summer, have reduced the

two corps and the reserve cavalry under his hand to 42,000 or 45,000

men, so that he must incorporate Reynier with his main army, in order

to get a sufficient force concentrated for the invasion. When this

has been done, he will have no force to leave behind to guard his

communications, and Kellermann and Serras are too much occupied to

spare a man for that purpose. The Spaniards will press in between

the army and Salamanca the moment that the troops have entered the

Portuguese mountains. He will advance, therefore, on September 15,

but only with grave apprehension for his rear, and he begs that

at all costs a division of the 9th Corps should be brought up to

Salamanca. He had been promised long ago that this should be done,

but no signs of Drouet’s arrival were yet visible.

[396] In the \_Archives du Ministère de la Guerre\_, see Appendix

to this vol.

Reynier accordingly was called up, at last, to join the main army; he

left Zarza and Penamacor on the 10th of September, crossed the Pass

of Perales, and on the 12th was at Alfayates, with cavalry in front

at Sabugal. Hill, always vigilant, perceived Reynier’s movement as

soon as it had taken place. On the 12th his corps quitted Sarzedas,

leaving nothing behind in the Castello Branco country save Lecor’s

Portuguese at Fundão, who were ordered to follow, unless Reynier

should send back any detachments to the south side of the Sierra de

Gata. Leith started from the banks of the Zezere three days later,

and on the 20th the two divisions were drawing near to Wellington’s

rear in the valley of the Mondego, Hill being at Espinhal that day,

and Leith (who had less distance to cover) a march further to the

front, at Foz d’Aronce. Wellington’s concentration on the Alva must

obviously be completed before the French could strike.

On September 15, 1810, Ney and Junot broke up from the encampments

in front of Almeida, while Reynier drew in close to the main body by

marching up from Sabugal towards Guarda. It was clear that the attack

of the French was to be delivered along the line of the Mondego, but

whether by its southern or its northern bank Wellington could not yet

be sure, though he was under the impression that the former would be

the chosen route, since the \_chaussée\_ from Almeida by Celorico and

Ponte de Murcella is good for a Portuguese road, while the mountain

track by Trancoso and Vizeu is abominable. Yet one of the three

columns of the French pointed from the first towards the north bank:

while Ney took his way by Freixadas and Alverca towards Celorico,

Junot was reported to have turned off from the main road at Valverde,

and to be marching by Pinhel westward or north-westward. What Reynier

would do after reaching Guarda remained yet to be seen.

The total force which Masséna had drawn together for the invasion

was 65,000[397] officers and men. He had left behind a regiment of

dragoons and four battalions of infantry to take care of Almeida

and Ciudad Rodrigo. In the latter place he had also deposited

his siege-train, with the considerable body of artillerymen

belonging to it. Brennier and Cacault commanded at the two places

respectively. They had between them some 3,500 men, a force which

perceptibly diminished the army of invasion, yet was insufficient

to do more than to hold the two fortresses. Gardanne, with five

squadrons of dragoons, was to maintain touch between them. Not

a man would be available from the garrisons for service against

Spanish or Portuguese insurgents--indeed both Almeida and Rodrigo

were practically under blockade from the moment that the main army

went forward, and were destined to learn nothing of its doings

for many days. Wellington’s \_cordon\_ of Ordenança proved perfectly

efficient[398].

[397] For details see the Tables in the Appendix. All the troops

left behind have been rigidly deducted. The figures given by

Fririon, 59,806, are not quite exact, see proofs in Appendix: he

makes some troops enter Portugal which were left as garrisons,

and on the other hand omits whole battalions which marched, as if

they had never existed.

[398] The troops left behind were the fifth battalion of

the 82nd, the fourth battalions of the 15th and 86th, and a

provisional battalion of convalescents, or about 2,000 infantry;

a squadron of the 3rd Dragoons (157 men), the whole of the 10th

Dragoons (718 men) under Gardanne, and some 800 men belonging to

the siege-train and park.

On the evening of the 15th the 2nd Corps had reached Guarda, from

which it drove out a picket of the 16th Light Dragoons, who retired

towards the Mondego. The 6th Corps bivouacked at Freixadas, having

pushed back from it two squadrons of the 14th Light Dragoons and the

German Hussars. The 8th Corps, which had to come up from the Azava,

passed Almeida and slept beyond the Coa. In its rear was Montbrun’s

reserve cavalry division, and behind this again the reserve artillery

of the whole army. This column, therefore, was by far the longest and

(owing to the amount of guns and caissons) the most unwieldy of the

three masses in which the French were marching.

On the 16th Wellington hoped to see Masséna’s designs unmasked. But

it proved a day of continued doubt: Reynier left Heudelet’s division

at Guarda, and moved on with Merle’s and the cavalry to Celorico.

Here he met Ney, who had marched from Freixadas to Celorico, and had

pushed his light cavalry through it in advance. One body of horsemen

took a hill road high up the side of the Serra da Estrella, and

reached Linhares, another followed the great \_chaussée\_ as far as

Carapichina, and detached a squadron or two from that point to seize

the bridge of Fornos d’Algodres, over which passes the bad side-road

from Celorico to Vizeu. Was the enemy about to turn aside on this

path, or to pursue the more probable policy of continuing along

the \_chaussée\_ to Ponte de Murcella? Nothing could yet be deduced

from Junot’s movements: his heavy column only reached Pinhel that

day: from thence he might either come down to Celorico (the most

probable course), or make a move towards Oporto, by the high-road

Pinhel-Marialva-St. João da Pesqueira, or (what seemed least likely)

follow the very bad mountain-road from Pinhel by Povoa d’el Rei to

Trancoso and Vizeu. Meanwhile Wellington ordered the continuation of

the retreat of his army towards Ponte de Murcella and the position

behind the Alva. The 1st, 3rd, and 4th Divisions retired at their

leisure along the great \_chaussée\_, by Saragoça and Chamusca: the

Light Division moved parallel to them by the mountain-road Gouvea-San

Martinho-San Romão. The appearance of Ney’s cavalry at Linhares on

this track made the Commander-in-Chief anxious to have it watched,

since it was possible that the 6th Corps might use it. The cavalry,

keeping the rear well guarded, lay this day at Pinhanços on the

\_chaussée\_ and San Martinho on the hill-road. Head quarters were

at Cea, on the latter line. The only troops now left north of the

Mondego, on the route which Junot might possibly follow from Pinhel,

were a few cavalry-pickets, wherefore the Commander-in-Chief,

conceiving it just possible that the 8th Corps might be intending

to make a dash at Oporto, while the other two kept him in check,

sent urgent letters to Trant, the officer in charge of the militia

of Northern Beira, and to Baccelar, who lay at Oporto with the

militia of the Entre-Douro-e-Minho, to take precautions against this

movement. Trant, from Moimento de Beira, was to feel for Junot’s

front and flank: Baccelar was to send out some picked battalions,

under J. Wilson, to the line of the Vouga, and to get into touch with

Trant on his left.

On the 17th Masséna’s intentions at last became clear to his

adversary. The cavalry of the 6th Corps crossed the bridge of Fornos,

which it had seized on the previous night, and the leading division

of infantry followed it to Juncaes, on the Mondego bank: nothing

came along the \_chaussée\_, all the French columns turning off it at

Carapichina, and pursuing the cross-road. Ney’s rear was still at

Celorico, to which place the whole of the 2nd Corps also came up that

day. In the evening the head of the cavalry of the 6th Corps was near

Mangualde, many miles along the road north of the Mondego. It seemed

probable therefore, that a transference of the whole French army to

the right bank, over the bridge of Fornos, was about to take place.

This became almost certain when the simultaneous news arrived that

Junot had marched that day from Pinhel not towards Celorico, nor on

the Oporto road (that by Marialva and St. João da Pesqueira), but by

the abominable cross-road by Povoa d’el Rei to Trancoso. The 8th and

6th Corps therefore were showing a tendency to converge on Vizeu.

If so, they must be aiming at reaching Coimbra without touching

Wellington’s chosen position of Ponte de Murcella, where he had hoped

to fight. This deduction once made, the British commander had to

recast his plans. ‘The 2nd and 6th Corps came to Celorico yesterday,’

he wrote to Leith that evening, ‘and a part of them crossed the

Mondego at Fornos. More have crossed this day, while no part of the

enemy’s army has moved this way [i. e. along the great \_chaussée\_

south of the river]. It is generally understood that their whole

army is between the Douro and the Mondego, and that they are about

to move on Coimbra. I shall have troops in Coimbra to-morrow[399].’

All the divisions were ordered back at once, so as to be ready on the

Lower Mondego to resist the French, when they should appear from the

direction of Vizeu. Only cavalry were left at Sampayo and Gouvea,

to watch the passage of the Mondego by the French army, and to make

certain that its rear (i. e. Reynier’s corps) might not be about to

use the main \_chaussée\_, a move which was even yet possible.

[399] To Cotton and to Leith, both dated Sept. 17.

Masséna’s resolve to use the route by the north bank of the Mondego

surprised all British and some French observers at the time, and has

been censured by most historical critics. He left a good for a bad

road: he imposed two extra marches on his army at a moment when it

was short of provisions. He gave Wellington ample time to call up

Hill and Leith, and to select a new position for battle to replace

that of Ponte de Murcella. The Bussaco hillsides, where the clash

was to come, were as formidable as those behind the Alva. But these

considerations were less obvious to Masséna in 1810 than they appear

to the critic of 1907. It must first be remembered that his maps were

abominable: the actual case of plans used by the staff of the Army of

Portugal is preserved[400]: it is that issued by Lopez in 1778, which

in the remoter parts of Portugal not only offers a mere travesty of

the natural features, but actually marks as existing roads that never

had been made, and omits others that were actually available. It

shows, moreover, no distinction between \_chaussées\_, country roads,

and mere mule tracts. Places of considerable importance are misplaced

by several miles, e. g. Almeida is placed on the Coa instead of two

miles from it: Vizeu is much too far north, as is also Bussaco.

As far as this map goes, the physical difficulties in the way of

an advance north of the Mondego look no greater than those on the

southern bank. But, it may be said, Masséna should have supplemented

the use of the map by collecting oral information, and by sending

reconnaissances in every direction. He did so, so far as was in

his power. But exploration far afield was only possible with large

bodies of men, since the Ordenança blocked every road to the isolated

staff-officer, and the only oral information which was forthcoming

was defective. Masséna asked for it from Alorna, Pamplona, and the

other Portuguese officers on his staff--there were no less than

eighteen of them in all. They were absolutely ignorant of their own

country,--a normal thing in the military men of the old Portuguese

army. Even Pamplona, whose estates lay in the neighbourhood of

Coimbra, gave hopelessly erroneous information about the routes

leading into that town. But, from natural \_amour propre\_ they avoided

confessing their ignorance, and, when taken into council by Masséna,

gave him copious but wholly misleading details. They assured him

that the roads Pinhel-Trancoso-Vizeu and Fornos-Mangualde-Vizeu

were no worse than other lines of communication, and that the great

\_chaussée\_ by Sampayo and Ponte de Murcella was crossed by so many

torrents and climbed so many slopes that it was not preferable to the

routes north of the river. The news that a formidable position behind

the Alva had been entrenched had reached the French head quarters;

hence Masséna had fair reasons for taking the route that he selected,

so far as strategy went. It undoubtedly enabled him to turn the line

of the Alva. Moreover, on it lay a large town--Vizeu--from which it

was hoped that much food would be procured, for the invaders were

still ignorant of the thoroughness with which Wellington’s plans for

devastating the country before them had been carried out. Even after

Celorico and Guarda had been found empty of inhabitants, they hardly

believed that such a large place as Vizeu, a town of 9,000 souls,

would be deserted.

[400] For a most interesting article on these maps, and all

that they show, see Mr. T. J. Andrews’s article in the \_English

Historical Review\_ for 1901. The maps, captured at Vittoria, are

now in the Library of Queen’s College, Belfast.

Masséna’s mistake became evident to his soldiers on the first day on

which he ordered his columns to quit the main-roads and take to the

by-paths. The infantry could still get forward, but the artillery

and waggon-train began to drag behind, to lose horses, and to see

vehicle after vehicle broken, disabled, or abandoned. On the 18th the

infantry of the 6th Corps got as far as Mangualde on the north bank

of the Mondego, but the artillery was so much delayed in the defile

after passing Juncaes that it could not catch up the rear of the

marching troops, and had to be parked at night not many miles beyond

the bridge of Fornos. The 2nd Corps on reaching this spot found the

road blocked, and bivouacked with one division beyond the Mondego,

and one still in the rear of the bridge. But the troubles of this

column were nothing to those of the 8th Corps on the miserable road

from Pinhel to Vizeu. The journal of the commandant of the artillery

of Junot’s first division, Colonel Noël, may be quoted as giving a

fair description of the marches of the 17th and 18th September:--

‘After passing the little town of Trancoso, with its battlemented

wall, all the country-side is mountain and rock. There is no road,

only a stony narrow dangerous track, which the artillery had all the

pains in the world to follow without meeting accidents. It is all

steep ups and downs. I had to march with a party of gunners ahead

of me, with picks and crowbars to enlarge the track. As each arm

only looked out for itself, the artillery soon got left to the rear,

and deserted by the infantry and cavalry. We only arrived at our

halting-places late at night, utterly done up. The guns were almost

always abandoned to themselves; we did not know what road to follow,

having no one to give us information but a few infantry stragglers,

who had themselves lost their way. At noon on the 18th I halted with

my two batteries after two hours of incessant uphill, to find myself

at the crest of a mountain, with a precipitous descent before me, and

beyond that another ascent winding upwards, as far as the eye could

reach. We were so exhausted that it was useless to go further that

day, but on the 19th, with a party of gunners always working in front

to enlarge the road, we moved over hill and vale, completely out of

touch with the army. I had to ride out with four mounted men to hunt

for any trace of it. At last, in a deserted village, we found an old

peasant who pointed out the road to Vizeu. But it was only on the

20th that we got there.’ Noël’s batteries, it may be remarked, were

moving all the time between the infantry, which was ahead, and the

Grand Park which was behind them, with Montbrun’s cavalry bringing

up the rear. Yet they were absolutely lost and had to shift for

themselves without orders or escort[401].

[401] \_Mémoires\_ of Col. Noël, pp. 112-13.

The Park fared even worse; when nearing Sotojal, on the 20th, it was

unexpectedly beset by Colonel Trant, who had come down from Moimenta

with a brigade of his militia and two squadrons of Portuguese regular

cavalry. The Park was escorted by one company of grenadiers, who

marched at its head, and a battalion of the Irish Legion, who were

far to the rear, while Montbrun’s immense cavalry column was quite

out of sight. Trant had a great opportunity, for the long file of

vehicles and guns, caught in a narrow road, was almost helpless. But

he failed to do all that was in his power; his cavalry charged the

company at the head of the column and was repulsed. He then filed

his battalions along the hillside, opened fire on the horses and

men of the train, and, descending into their midst, captured and

destroyed some caissons and took some eighty prisoners. But when

the escort-battalion came hurrying up from the rear, his levies

were stricken with panic and hastily retired, though they were

strong enough to have held off the five hundred Irish, and to have

smashed or rolled over the precipices the greater part of the guns

and waggons. Montbrun’s cavalry did not get up till all was over,

and would have been perfectly useless on the precipitous road, even

if they had arrived earlier. If Trant’s foray had been properly

carried out, Masséna might have lost his reserve artillery and most

of his provisions--a disaster which might have forced him to turn

back to Almeida. He deserved such a punishment for having marched

his all-important train on the extreme flank of his army, with an

insufficient escort[402].

[402] A lively account of this affair may be found in Marbot,

ii. 378; details may not be all trustworthy, but the general

narrative agrees with Trant’s report, printed in Soriano da Luz,

vol. vii, Appendix.

Though Junot’s infantry divisions reached the deserted walls of

Vizeu on Sept. 19th and there met the corps of Ney, the divisional

artillery did not arrive till next day, while the reserve artillery,

the trains and the heavy cavalry were struggling in upon the 21st and

22nd by detachments. For Montbrun had halted the great convoy after

Trant’s attack, and parked it, fearing that the Portuguese might

come back in greater numbers and give more trouble. When he started

it again, on the 21st, he took care to give it better marching

arrangements, and to attach cavalry escorts to each section. But

this caused much delay, and meanwhile the 8th Corps waited at Vizeu

‘marking time’ and unable to move. Even the 6th Corps remained there

two days, waiting while its gun-carriages and cannons were being

repaired; for the Fornos-Vizeu road, though infinitely less rough

than that which the 8th Corps and the park had followed, was still

bad enough to shake many vehicles to pieces. The Intendant-General

reported that nineteen caissons carrying 2,900 rations of biscuit

belonging to the 6th Corps broke down and had to be burnt; the

food was distributed among the regiments as they passed, with much

consequent waste[403]. All that Ney could do between the 18th of

September, when he reached Vizeu, and the 21st, was to push forward

an advanced guard to Tondella, fifteen miles down the Vizeu-Coimbra

road, with an infantry division in support at Fail. Meanwhile the 2nd

Corps, following in the wake of the 6th, had also made its way to

Vizeu. The bulk of Reynier’s force took the Fornos-Mangualde-Lagiosa

route, as Ney’s had done. But an advanced guard of all arms descended

the great \_chaussée\_ south of the river as far as Taboa, driving in

the pickets of the English cavalry, and then crossed the Mondego at

the bridge of Taboa, and fell into the rear of the rest of the corps

beyond Mangualde. This apparently was intended to keep Wellington

uncertain, as long as possible, as to whether part of the French

army was not intending, after all, to follow the \_chaussée\_ and

present itself before the position on the Alva[404]. But it was

executed by so small a force that the British general was not for

an hour deceived[405]. He was at this moment in a cheerful frame

of mind; Masséna had made a mistake in choosing his route, and was

merely wasting time when time was most precious. ‘There are certainly

many bad roads in Portugal,’ he wrote, ‘but the enemy has taken

decidedly the worst in the whole kingdom’[406]; and again, ‘I imagine

that Marshal Masséna has been misinformed, and has experienced more

difficulty in making his movement than he expected. He has certainly

selected one of the worst roads in Portugal for his march[407].’

Owing to the necessary delays of the enemy Wellington was now in a

position as strong as that on the Alva; his head quarters were at

the convent of Bussaco, his divisions, including Leith and Hill,

so placed that they could be concentrated on the Serra de Alcoba,

right across the Vizeu-Coimbra road, long before the French could

descend from Vizeu. ‘We have an excellent position here, in which I

am strongly tempted to give battle[408],’ he wrote on the evening of

the 21st, foreseeing six days ahead the probability of the engagement

which was to make Bussaco famous. There was a road by which his

position might be turned, but it was doubtful whether the enemy would

discover it, and ‘I do not yet give up hopes of discovering a remedy

for that misfortune[409].’

[403] Report of Lambert, Intendant-General, dated Vizeu, Sept. 23.

[404] Wellington to Lord Liverpool, from Lorvão, Sept. 20.

[405] Indeed, an exploring party under Captain Somers Cocks, of

the 16th Light Dragoons, had dogged the steps of the detachment,

and counted every battalion. See Tomkinson’s Diary, pp. 39-40.

[406] Wellington to Charles Stuart, Sept. 18.

[407] Wellington to Lord Liverpool, Sept. 20.

[408] Ibid., Sept. 20.

[409] Wellington to Stapleton Cotton, Sept. 21.

[Illustration: THE MONDEGO VALLEY]

Masséna, meanwhile, was chafing at his self-imposed delays, and

writing querulous letters from Vizeu to Berthier. ‘The grand park

and the baggage,’ he wrote on the 22nd, ‘are still in the rear,

and will only get up to-morrow. It is impossible to find worse

roads than these; they bristle with rocks; the guns and train have

suffered severely, and I must wait for them. I must leave them two

days at Vizeu when they come in, to rest themselves, while I

resume my march on Coimbra, where (as I am informed) I shall find

the Anglo-Portuguese concentrated. Sir, all our marches are across

a desert; not a soul to be seen anywhere; everything is abandoned.

The English push their barbarity to the point of shooting the

wretched inhabitant who tries to remain in his village; the women,

the children, the aged, have all decamped. We cannot find a guide

anywhere. The soldiers discover a few potatoes and other vegetables;

they are satisfied, and burn for the moment when they shall meet

the enemy.’ The plan of devastation was already beginning to work;

Masséna had exhausted seven of the thirteen days’ provisions which

his army carried, and it was not with the potatoes gleaned in the

fields of Vizeu, or the ripe grapes of its vineyards, that he could

refill the empty store-waggons. He must push on for Coimbra as fast

as possible; this, no doubt, was why he made up his mind to march

on that place, not by descending from Vizeu to Aveiro and entering

the coast plain, but by taking the direct road by Santa Comba Dao,

Mortagoa, and Bussaco. Even Lopez’s faulty map shows the ridge of

Bussaco as a serious physical feature, but the Marshal does not seem

to have reflected for a moment that Wellington might choose to defend

it. The orders drawn up on September 24th for the march on Coimbra

presuppose an unobstructed progress[410]. Having met no active

resistance as yet from the Anglo-Portuguese army, Masséna wrongly

took it for granted that he might count on the prolongation of this

good fortune.

[410] See the orders in the \_Archives du Ministère de la Guerre\_.

Before moving on from Vizeu the organization of the French army

was slightly modified. Junot’s corps contained a number of fourth

battalions, belonging to regiments whose three senior battalions were

serving in the 2nd Corps. The two corps had never met till both lay

at Vizeu. Masséna then ordered the fourth battalions of the 36th,

47th, 70th of the Line, and the 2nd and 4th Léger to join their

regiments in Reynier’s corps; this reduced the 8th Corps by 2,850

men; in return, however, Reynier was ordered to make over to Junot

two regiments of old troops, the 15th and 86th of the line (each of

three battalions) making in all 2,251 bayonets. Thus the two corps

were somewhat equalized in quality, the 2nd receiving five battalions

of recruits, while the 8th (in which there were too few veterans)

got in return six battalions which had served in Spain since the

commencement of the war. The net result was to make the 2nd Corps

a little stronger (17,024 men) and the 8th Corps a little weaker

(15,904 men)[411].

[411] It is this interchange of troops which makes all the

figures of the Army of Portugal so divergent. Fririon, for

example, ignores it, as do most French statisticians. But see

Masséna’s orders (14), and the ‘situations’ in the \_Archives\_ of

Sept. 14 and Sept. 27 respectively.

On September 21st the advance of the Army of Portugal was

recommenced, though the train and heavy baggage was not yet prepared

to start, and some of its rear detachments had not even reached

Vizeu. But on that day the advanced guard of the 6th Corps advanced

from Tondella, and found in front of it some light cavalry and two

Portuguese regiments--the first hostile troops that the French had

seen since the campaign began. The whole of the 2nd and 6th Corps

followed behind, and bivouacked that night at Casal-de-Maria,

Tondella, Sabugoça and other villages on the steep downward road from

Vizeu to Coimbra. The 8th Corps still remained at Vizeu, guarding

the belated reserve artillery and train. On the 22nd the 2nd Corps,

passing the 6th, which had hitherto taken the lead, crossed the Criz

and drove in the British outposts, who retired on Mortagoa. But Ney

and the 6th Corps remained stationary, and the 8th did not even yet

make a start. These delays seem extraordinary, but Masséna was still

paying for his evil choice of roads; the infantry had to wait for the

guns, and the guns could only creep forward as the sappers enlarged

and improved the roads for them.

Wellington, meanwhile, was recasting his dispositions at his leisure.

When Masséna’s march on Vizeu had become certain, the British

Commander-in-Chief thought at first that the enemy would take the

good \_chaussée\_ Vizeu-Aveiro, so as to descend into the coast-plain

and attack Coimbra from the easiest side. He therefore, on the 18th

moved the 1st Division back from Ponte de Murcella to Coimbra, where

it was joined by a new brigade from Lisbon, composed of the 1st

battalions of the 7th and 79th, newly landed. A. Campbell’s and

Coleman’s Portuguese also moved to the same point. The 3rd and 4th

Divisions remained at Ponte de Murcella in the entrenched position,

with the Light Division and Pack’s Portuguese in front of them at

Venda do Porco and Sampayo.

But on the 20th, when Ney’s advanced guard began to come out from

Vizeu on the Santa Comba Dao road, not on the Aveiro road, Wellington

discovered that it was on the mountain of Bussaco, and not on the

plain in front of Coimbra, that he would next meet the enemy.

Accordingly Pack’s Portuguese and the Light Division forded the

Mondego below Sampayo, as did the light cavalry, and a detaining

force was thus thrown across the Vizeu-Coimbra road. The Portuguese

brigade took post behind the Criz torrent, Craufurd’s men a little

to the rear at Mortagoa. At the same time the 1st Division and the

troops attached to it moved out from Coimbra to Mealhada on the

Aveiro road, a point from which they could easily be called up to

the Bussaco position, if no French columns were discovered coming

down the Aveiro road, as now seemed probable. This day, Leith’s

division, to Wellington’s intense satisfaction, arrived at San Miguel

de Payares behind the Alva, and so joined the main body. Hill was

reported to be a day’s march only to the rear, at Foz d’Aronce. Thus

the whole of the Anglo-Portuguese regular forces between Douro and

Tagus were neatly concentrated. At the same time Trant was told to

bring the militia of Northern Beira down the Oporto-Coimbra road to

Agueda and Sardão, and Baccelar was directed to support him with

Wilson’s militia brigade, in case Masséna should have some subsidiary

operation against Oporto in his mind.

On the 24th the first skirmish of the campaign took place; the 2nd

Corps, advancing into the plain in front of Mortagoa, found Pack’s

Portuguese facing them on the right, and Craufurd’s division on the

left, with a screen of cavalry in front. They pushed in the horsemen

upon the infantry, but halted when artillery opened upon them, and

made no further advance. On this day the belated 8th Corps, with the

reserve cavalry, at last started from Vizeu. Next morning Reynier

pressed on in force with two heavy columns each formed by a division,

and Craufurd was ordered by Wellington to retire, which he did with

some reluctance by alternate échelons of brigades[412]. The 95th and

43rd had some sharp skirmishing with the French van, and made a stand

by the village of Moura under the Bussaco heights, before retiring

up the high-road, and taking position upon the crest of the great

ridge[413], which they did at six o’clock in the evening.

[412] According to Napier (iii. 22-3) Craufurd risked his

division somewhat in their skirmish. But this criticism is not

made by D’Urban, Leach, and other eye-witnesses.

[413] The Light Division had been first divided into brigades on

Aug. 8, when the 1st was constituted of the 43rd, four companies

of the 95th, and the 1st Caçadores, under Beckwith: the 2nd of

the 52nd, four companies of the 95th, and the 3rd Caçadores,

under Barclay. See Atkinson’s lists of the Peninsular Army in the

\_Eng. Hist. Rev\_.

While the advanced guards of Reynier and Ney were driving in Craufurd

and Pack, the Anglo-Portuguese army was assembling on Wellington’s

chosen fighting-ground. Picton and Cole, with the 3rd and 4th

Divisions, had already taken up their quarters on the Bussaco ridge

on the 21st, the first across the road from San Antonio de Cantaro

to Palheiros, the second across the \_chaussée\_, behind the spot to

which the troops of Pack and Craufurd were retiring. Leith, who had

been brought over the Mondego by the fords of Peña Cova on the 23rd,

moved up on to the southern tract of the Bussaco heights on the

24th. Hill, who reached the line of the Alva on the 22nd, followed

in Leith’s wake, and on the 25th was at Peña Cova waiting for orders

to cross. The 1st Division with Campbell’s and Coleman’s Portuguese

alone were still absent, though not far off. They had started from

Mealhada, when it became clear that no French force was coming by the

Aveiro-Coimbra road, but on the night of the 25th were still some

eight miles away, and did not get into position between Cole and

Picton till between nine and ten o’clock on the morning of the 26th.

Nevertheless, nearly 40,000 men, composed of the Light, 3rd, 4th,

5th Divisions and their Portuguese auxiliaries, and of Hill on their

flank, only four miles away, were concentrated on the night of the

25th, when Reynier’s vanguard deployed in front of the heights.

Before ten o’clock on the following morning Spencer had arrived,

and Hill was over the fords and encamped along the rear slopes of

the heights. There seems to be no truth whatever in the allegation

that the British army was in a somewhat dangerous position on the

evening of the 25th, for the French had only their vanguard up, and

there were less than two hours of daylight left when Craufurd retired

from Moura, and Reynier and Ney obtained their first view of the

British position. Before the enemy could have collected in strength

sufficient for an attack, night would have set in.

NOTE ON THE SITUATION ON SEPT. 25

Napier wholly misrepresents the state of affairs in vol. iii. pp.

22-3. He writes as follows: ‘Before 3 o’clock 40,000 French infantry

were embattled on the two points (the \_chaussée\_ and the San Antonio

de Cantaro road), their guns trying the range above, while the

skirmishing clatter of musketry arose from the dark wooded chasms

below. Ney, whose military glance was sure, instantly perceived

that the mountain, a crested not a table one, could hide no great

reserves, that it was only half occupied, and that the allies were

moving with the disorder usual on the taking of unknown ground.

He wished therefore to attack, but Masséna was ten miles to the

rear, the officer sent to him waited two hours for an audience, and

then returned with orders to attend the Prince’s arrival. Thus a

great opportunity was lost, for Spencer was not up, Leith’s troops

were only passing the Mondego, and Hill was still behind the Alva.

Scarcely 25,000 men were in line, and with great intervals.’

Almost every statement here is incorrect.

(1) The French did not reach the ground in front of the heights till 5

o’clock: they were not up at 3 p.m. [D’Urban’s \_Diary\_: ‘At noon, the

heads of the French infantry columns having reached the lower falls

leading from the Mortagoa Valley, he pushed forward his cavalry and

began to skirmish with our pickets. It not being Lord Wellington’s

intention to dispute this ground, but rather to entice Masséna to

follow and attack him in his position of Boçaco, the Light Division was

gradually withdrawn, the 95th and 43rd covering the retreat and Ross’s

artillery playing upon the enemy’s advance from hill to hill, till at

5 o’clock they were halted by the fire of the 43rd before the village

of Sula. At about 6 the firing ceased, and our advance (heretofore

at Moura and Sula) took up their ground (as well as General Cole’s

division) upon the heights of Boçaco.’] This diary, \_written that same

night\_, cannot be wrong as to the dating of the hours. D’Urban was

riding with Beresford at Wellington’s side. Napier was writing from

memory twenty years after.

(2) Ney did not ‘perceive the mountain only half occupied, and wish

to attack,’ on the evening of the 25th. His reconnaissance was made

on the morning of the 26th, and it was \_then\_ that he expressed

his wish to attack, when Wellington had every man in line. This is

conclusively proved by the following note of Ney to Reynier, dated at

10.30 on the morning of the 26th, from his advanced posts, which lies

in the French archives:--

‘Je reçois à l’instant, mon cher général, votre lettre de ce jour.

Je pense qu’une grande partie de l’armée anglo-portugaise a passé

la nuit sur la crête des montagnes qui dominent la vallée de Moura.

Depuis ce matin l’ennemi marche par sa gauche, et semble diriger ses

colonnes principales sur la route d’Oporto. Cependant il tient encore

assez de monde à la droite du parc, qui couvre le couvent de Minimes

appelé Sako, et montre une douzaine de pièces d’artillerie. Le chemin

de Coimbre passe tout près de ce couvent. Si j’avais le commandement

j’attaquerais sans hésiter un seul instant. Mais je crois que vous

ne pouvez rien compromettre en vous échellonant sur la droite de

l’ennemi, et en poussant ses avant-postes le plus possible: car

c’est véritablement par ce point qu’il faudrait le forcer à faire sa

retraite.’ What Ney had seen, and wrongly took for a general movement

of the English army towards its left, was Cole taking ground to the

left on the arrival of Spencer, who came up between 8 and 10 that

morning, just before Ney was scribbling this hasty note to Reynier.

(3) The stretch of mountain opposite Ney and Reynier was \_not\_

‘crested’ but ‘table’--so much so that Wellington took two squadrons

of cavalry up to it, for use in the battle. The British general

\_never\_ took up a position where he had no space to hide his reserves.

(4) The time when Ney sent an officer to Masséna to ask leave to

attack was the morning of the 26th, not the evening of the 25th. How

could Ney have hoped to get the permission to fight and carry it out,

when the time when he reached Moura was 5 o’clock, and dusk falls at

6.30? The messenger had twenty miles to ride, to Mortagoa and back.

See Fririon’s note in his ‘Aperçu sur la Campagne de Portugal’ in

\_Victoires et Conquêtes\_, xxi. 320.

(5) Leith’s troops, so far from being ‘only passing the Mondego’

on the afternoon of the 25th, had passed it on the 23rd [\_Journal\_

of Leith Hay, aide-de-camp of Leith, i. 228]. On the night of the

22nd-23rd Wellington wrote to Hill, ‘Leith’s, Picton’s, and Cole’s

divisions are now on the Serra de Busaco’ [\_Dispatches\_, vi. 462].

Hill was not ‘behind the Alva,’ but massed at the fords of Peña Cova,

only four miles from the battlefield. He crossed at dawn on the 26th,

but could have been in action within two hours of the first shot, if

the attack had been made on the 25th.

(6) Wellington, including Hill’s division, had therefore 40,000 men,

not 25,000. But the latter number would have sufficed, for Ney and

Reynier had only their advanced guards up, and in the hour and a half

before dusk could not have brought up their whole corps by the bad

and narrow roads from behind. The \_Diary\_ of the 6th Corps mentions

that only the vanguard division (Loison) bivouacked in front of the

heights. The rearguard was as far back as Barril that night.

(7) The exact moment of the arrival of the British 1st Division may

be gauged from the fact that it passed Luzo, the village behind

Bussaco, at 8 a.m. on the 26th--Diary of Stothert (3rd Foot Guards),

p. 188. There is only two miles from Luzo to the position taken up by

the 1st Division.

SECTION XXI: CHAPTER II

THE BATTLE OF BUSSACO (SEPTEMBER 27, 1810)

It remains that we should describe the ground which Wellington had

chosen on the 21st, and on which he fought with such splendid success

upon the 27th. The ridge which takes its name from the convent of

Bussaco is one of the best-marked positions in the whole Iberian

Peninsula. A single continuous line of heights covered with heather

and furze, with the dull-red and dull-grey granite cropping up

here and there through the soil, extends from the Mondego on the

right--where it ends precipitously--to the main chain of the Serra

de Alcoba on the left. The ridge is very irregular in its altitude:

the two loftiest sections are one at a distance of two miles from

the Mondego, and the other to the immediate right of the convent

enclosure, where the original obelisk commemorating the battle was

set up[414]. Between these two culminating summits the ridge sinks

down, and is at its lowest where the country-road from San Antonio

de Cantaro to Palheiros passes over it. There are three other points

where it is crossed by lines of communication; two lie far to the

east, not far from the Mondego, where bad paths from San Paulo to

Palmazes and from Carvalhal to Casal exist. The third and most

important is in its left centre, where (close to the convent) the

\_chaussée\_ from Celorico to Coimbra, the main artery of the local

road-system, passes the watershed. It does so at a place which is

by no means the least lofty point of the ridge; but the line was

obvious to the road-making engineer, because a spur (the only one

of any importance in the heights) here runs gradually down from the

Serra into the lower ground. To lead the \_chaussée\_ up the side of

this spur, past the village of Moura, and so to the crest of the

ridge on gentle slopes, was clearly better than to make it charge the

main range, even at a less lofty point. The convent lies just to the

right of the spot where the \_chaussée\_ passes the sky-line, a few

hundred yards off the road. It was a simple, low quadrangle, with a

small chapel in its midst, standing in a fine wood of pine and oak,

surrounded by a ten-foot wall. The wood is sprinkled with hermitages,

picturesque little buildings hewn in the rock, where those of the

monks who chose practised the anchorite’s life. The outer wall

of the wood and the tops of its trees are just visible on the

sky-line of the main ridge: the convent is not, being well down the

reverse-slope. The point where the convent wood tops the heights is

the only section of them where trees are seen on the summit: the rest

of the line is bare heath, with occasional outbreaks of rock, falling

in slopes of greater or lesser steepness towards the broken wooded

foot-hills, where the French lay. On part of the left-centre there is

ground which it is no exaggeration to describe as precipitous, to the

front of the highest piece of the ridge, below the old obelisk. The

effect of the whole line of heights is not dissimilar to, though on a

smaller scale than, the Malvern Hills. The highest point on the Serra

is about 1,200 feet above sea-level--but much less, of course, above

the upland below.

[414] There are two monuments: this simple weather-beaten obelisk

on the culminating height where the 1st Division stood, a point

where no fighting took place, and the modern column lower down

and close to the high-road, behind the spot where Craufurd

fought. Here the Portuguese to this day maintain a small military

post, and hoist a flag to do honour to the victory.

The position of Bussaco is fully nine miles long[415] from end

to end, from the steep hill above the Mondego to Cole’s western

flank: this was a vast front for an army of 50,000 men to cover,

according to the ideas of 1810. There were absolute gaps in the line

at more than one place, especially above Carvalho, where about a

mile separated Leith’s left from his central brigade. The defence

of such a position could only be risked because of two facts: one

was that every movement of the enemy on the lower ground before

the ridge could be accurately made out from above: he could not

concentrate in front of any section of the heights without being

seen. His only chance of doing so would have been to take advantage

of the night; but even if he had drawn up for the attack before

dawn--a thing almost impossible in the broken, ravine-cut, wooded

bottoms--he could not have moved till full daylight, because the

face of the position presents so many irregularities, such as small

gullies and miniature precipices, that columns climbing in the dark

must undoubtedly have got lost and broken up on the wild hillside.

Moreover, there was a thick cordon of British pickets pushed forward

almost to the foot of the ridge, which would have given warning by

their fire and their preliminary resistance, if any advance had been

attempted in the grey dawn.

[415] Which makes astounding Fririon’s statement that it was only

three-quarters of a league long (p. 46).

The second advantage of the Bussaco position is that on its

left-centre and right-centre the ridge has a broad flat top, some

300 or 400 yards across, on which all arms can move laterally with

ease to support any threatened point. It is so broad that Wellington

even ventured to bring up a few squadrons of dragoons to the summit,

rightly arguing that a cavalry charge would be of all things the most

unexpected reception that an enemy who had breasted such a hillside

could meet at the end of his climb. As a matter of fact, however,

this section of the heights was never attacked by the French. The

right of the position is not flat-topped like the centre, but has

a narrow saddle-back, breaking into outcrops of rock at intervals:

but though here prompt motion from right to left, or left to right,

is not possible on the crest, there is a rough country-path, good

for infantry and available even for guns, a few hundred yards down

the reverse side of the slope. Along this troops could be moved

with ease, entirely out of sight of the enemy. It proved useful for

Leith’s division during the battle. Wellington calculated, therefore,

with perfect correctness, that he could count on getting an adequate

force of defenders to any portion of his long line before the enemy

could establish himself on the summit. The extreme left, where Cole’s

division lay, was the hardest part of his line to reinforce, for want

of good lateral communication: it was also a good deal lower than

Craufurd’s post; here, therefore, Wellington had placed the main mass

of his reserves; the German Legion, and two Portuguese brigades were

lying on his left-centre very close to the 4th Division, so that

they would be available at short notice, though they would have a

stiff climb if the French chose that section of the position as their

objective, and it had to be strengthened in haste.

The distribution of the army remains to be described. On the extreme

right, on the height of Nossa Senhora do Monte, just overhanging the

Mondego, was a battalion of the Lusitanian Legion, with two guns.

Next to them, on very high ground, lay Hill’s division, three British

and two Portuguese brigades[416], with a battery on each flank. Then

came a slight dip in the ridge, where the road from San Paulo to

Palmazes crosses it: athwart this path lay Leith’s newly constituted

5th Division, consisting of three British and seven Portuguese

battalions. The British brigade lay on the right, then came (after

a long interval) two battalions of the Lusitanian Legion, the only

troops guarding two miles of very rough ground. On Leith’s extreme

left, towards Picton’s right, was Spry’s Portuguese brigade, and

three unattached battalions (8th Line and Thomar militia). Beyond the

8th regiment, where the watershed sinks again, and is crossed by the

road from San Antonio de Cantaro to Palheiros, Picton’s line began.

On his right, across the road, was Arentschildt’s Portuguese battery,

supported by the 74th British regiment, and Champlemond’s Portuguese

brigade of three battalions. The 45th and 88th, the two remaining

battalions of the brigade of Mackinnon, were placed to the left of

the road, the former on the first spur to the north of it, the latter

nearly a mile to the left. Lightburne’s brigade, and Thompson’s

British battery were a short distance beyond the 88th. North of

Picton’s position the ridge rises suddenly again to its loftiest

section; along this almost impregnable ground, with its precipitous

front, were ranged the three British brigades of Spencer’s 1st

Division--the Guards on the right, Blantyre’s on the left, Pakenham’s

in the centre, 5,000 bayonets dominating the whole country-side

and the rest of the position. North of them again, where the ridge

falls sharply along the back wall of the convent wood, was Pack’s

Portuguese brigade, reaching almost to the high-road. Along the curve

of the high-road itself, in column, was Coleman’s Portuguese brigade,

and beside it A. Campbell’s Portuguese, with the German Legion

beyond them on the Monte Novo ridge. Coleman, Campbell, and the

Germans were the main reserve of the army, and were in second line,

for, far to the front of them, on a lower slope, along a curve of the

\_chaussée\_, lay Craufurd and the Light Division, looking down on the

village of Sula almost at the bottom of the heights. Between Craufurd

and his next neighbour to the right, Pack, was a curious feature of

the field, a long narrow ravine, with steep grassy sides, terraced

in some places into vineyards[417]. This cleft, between Sula on the

left and Moura on the right, cuts deep up into the hillside, its

head almost reaching the crest of the watershed below the convent.

In order to circumvent this precipitous gully, the \_chaussée\_, after

passing through the village of Moura, takes a semicircular curve to

the right, and goes round the head of the cleft. For half a mile

or more it overhangs the steep declivities on its right, while on

its left at this point it is dominated by a pine wood on the upper

slopes, so that it forms more or less of a defile. The gully is so

narrow here that guns on Craufurd’s position had an easy range on the

road, and enfiladed it most effectively. The battery attached to the

Light Division--that of Ross--had been placed in a sort of natural

redoubt, formed by a semicircle of boulders with gaps between;

some of the guns bore on the village of Sula, on the lower slope

below, others across the ravine, to the high-road. They were almost

invisible, among the great stones, to an enemy coming up the hill or

along the \_chaussée\_. Craufurd had got a battalion of his Caçadores

(No. 3) in the village, low down the slope, with his other Portuguese

battalion and the 95th Rifles strung out on the hillside above, to

support the troops below them. His two strong Line battalions, the

43rd and 52nd, were lying far above, in the road, at the point where

it has passed the head of the gully in its curve, with a little fir

wood behind them and a small windmill in their front. The road being

cut through the hillside here, they were screened as they stood, but

had only to advance a few feet to reach the sky line, and to command

the slope stretching upwards from the village of Sula.

[416] Archibald Campbell’s and Fonseca’s brigades, forming

Hamilton’s Portuguese Division, which was attached to the British

2nd Division throughout the war, and shared with it the triumphs

of Albuera, Vittoria, and St. Pierre.

[417] This is the feature which Napier, somewhat hyperbolically,

describes as ‘a chasm so profound that the naked eye could hardly

distinguish the movement of troops in the bottom, yet so narrow

in parts that 12-pounders could range across (iii. 21).’ It does

\_not\_, as he says, separate the Serra de Bussaco from the last

ridge in front of it, that which the French held, as it only

lay in front of Craufurd and Pack. There is no chasm between

Spencer’s, Picton’s, Leith’s, or Hill’s position and the French

knolls.

To the left rear of Craufurd’s position, and forming the

north-western section of the English line lay Cole’s 4th Division,

reaching almost to the villages of Paradas and Algeriz. Its

Portuguese brigade (11th and 23rd regiments) was thrown forward on

the left under Collins, its two English brigades were at the head of

the slope. The ground was not high, but the slope was very steep, and

as a matter of fact was never even threatened, much less attacked.

Sixty guns were distributed along the line of the Serra. Ross’s

horse artillery troop were with Craufurd, Bull’s with Cole; of the

field-batteries Lawson’s was with Pack, Thompson’s with Lightburne,

Rettberg’s [K.G.L.] with Spencer, Cleeves’ [K.G.L.] with Coleman.

There were also four Portuguese field-batteries; Arentschildt’s was

on the high-road with Picton, Dickson’s two batteries with Hill,

Passos’s with Coleman, alongside of Cleeves’ German guns. Counting

their artillerymen, and the two squadrons of the 4th Dragoons on

the summit of the plateau, Wellington had 52,000 men on the field.

Of the rest of his disposable army, the Portuguese cavalry brigade

(regiments 1, 4, 7, 8; 1,400 sabres under Fane) and one British

regiment (13th Light Dragoons) were beyond the Mondego, far to

the south-east, watching the open country across the Alva as far

as Foz Dao and Sobral. Their head quarters were at Foz de Alva.

To defend the Ponte de Murcella position against any possible

flanking force the French might have detached, Wellington had left

Le Cor’s Portuguese, two regular regiments (Nos. 12 and 13) and

three battalions of the Beira militia. All these troops were ten or

twelve miles from the nearest point at which a shot was fired, in a

different valley, and were alike unseeing and unseen. In a similar

fashion, far out to the west, on the other side of the watershed,

in the low ground by Mealhada, was the English cavalry, with the

exception of the one regiment at Foz de Alva and two squadrons on the

Convent ridge.

Reynier’s corps, pushing the English rearguard before it, had

arrived in front of the Bussaco position on the afternoon of

September 25th. When Ney’s corps came up at dusk Reynier edged

away to the left, and established himself on the low hills above

the hamlet of San Antonio de Cantaro, leaving the ground about the

high-road to the 6th Corps. The 8th and Montbrun’s cavalry were still

some way behind, beyond Barril. Masséna, for reasons which it is

hard to divine, had not come to the front, though he must have heard

the guns firing all through the afternoon, and had been informed by

Reynier that the English were standing at bay on the Bussaco ridge.

He came no further to the front than Mortagoa on the 25th. Ney on the

morn of the next day was busy reconnoitring the position; he sent

forward \_tirailleurs\_ to push in Craufurd’s outposts, and ventured

as far to the front as was possible. So well hidden was Wellington’s

line that the Marshal formed an entirely erroneous conception of

what was before him. At 10.30 in the morning he wrote to Reynier to

say that the whole English army seemed to be moving to its left,

apparently on the road towards Oporto, but that it had still a

rearguard, with a dozen guns, in position to the right of the park

which covers the convent. Apparently Cole’s division, taking ground

to its left on Spencer’s arrival, and Craufurd on the \_chaussée\_ was

all that he had made out. He had not discovered Leith and the 5th

Division, and could not, of course, know that Spencer was at this

moment arriving at the convent, and that Hill was across the Mondego

at Peña Cova.

The Marshal added that if he had been in chief command he should

have attacked whatever was in front of him without a moment’s

hesitation[418]. But things being as they were, he thought that

Reynier would risk nothing by pushing forward on the English right,

and thrusting back Wellington’s outposts, for it was desirable to

make him retreat towards his left. It is clear that Ney, if he had

possessed a free hand, would have brought on a battle, when he was

only intending to drive in a rearguard. For by 10.30 on the 26th

Wellington had every man upon the field whom he intended to use in

the fight, and would have welcomed an assault. Of the French, on the

other hand, Junot’s 8th Corps and the cavalry and artillery were

still far away to the rear. They only came up in rear of Ney on the

night of the 26th-27th.

[418] See the letter quoted on page 358.

Masséna, on receiving Ney’s report, rode up to the front at about

two o’clock on the 26th--a late hour, but he is said to have been

employed in private matters at Mortagoa[419]. When he had at last

appeared, he pushed forward as near to the foot of the British

position as was safe, and reconnoitred it with care. In the evening

he drew up orders for attacking the Bussaco heights at their most

accessible points--along the \_chaussée\_ that leads from Moura up to

the convent, and along the country-road from San Antonio de Cantaro

to Palheiros.

[419] See Marbot, ii. p. 384--if that lively writer may be

trusted.

The Prince of Essling had no hesitation whatever about risking a

battle. He had never seen the English before, and held concerning

them the same views as the other French officers who had no

experience of Wellington’s army. Some confused generalization from

the misfortunes of the Duke of York’s troops in 1794-5 and 1799

determined the action of all the marshals till they had made personal

acquaintance with the new enemy. The English were to be dealt with by

drastic frontal attacks pushed home with real vigour. It is curious,

as Napoleon remarked soon after[420], that Reynier, who had been

badly beaten by the English at Alexandria and Maida, had learnt no

more than the others, and committed exactly the same errors as his

colleagues. He, who had experience of his adversaries, and Ney, who

had not, adopted precisely the same tactics. These, indeed, were

indicated to them by Masséna’s order to attack in columns, each at

least a division strong, preceded by a swarm of \_tirailleurs\_. There

was no question of a general advance all along the line; the two

Corps-Commanders were directed to choose each his point, and to break

through the British army at it, by force of mass and impact. Only

two sections of Wellington’s nine-mile position were to be touched,

there being a long gap between the objectives assigned to Ney and

to Reynier. But by throwing 13,000 or 14,000 men in close order at

each of the two short fronts selected, Masséna thought that he could

penetrate the thin line of the defenders.

[420] See Foy’s account of his interview with the Emperor in his

\_Vie Militaire\_, p. 108.

As none of the historians of the battle have thought it worth while

to give the Marshal’s orders in detail, and many writers have

misconceived or mis-stated them, it is necessary to state them[421].

The attacks of the 2nd and 6th Corps were not to be simultaneous;

Reynier, having the easier ground before him, was told to move first.

He was to select the most accessible stretch of the hillside in his

front, and to climb it, with his whole corps in one or two columns,

preceded by a skirmishing line. Having gained the crest, and pierced

the British line, he was to re-form his men, and then drop down the

reverse slope of the heights on to the Coimbra road, along which he

was to press in the direction of the convent of Bussaco, toward the

rear of Wellington’s centre.

[421] This unpublished document from the \_Archives du Ministère

de la Guerre\_ seems to have escaped all historians.

Ney was directed not to move till he should have learnt that Reynier

had crowned the heights; but when he should see the 2nd Corps on the

crest, was to send forward two columns of a division each against

the British left-centre. One division was to follow the \_chaussée\_,

the other to mount the rough path up the spur on which the village

of Sula stands. Both columns, like those of the 2nd Corps, were to

be preceded by a thick line of skirmishers. They were to halt and

re-form when the crest of the English position should be carried, and

then to adapt their movements to suit those of Reynier’s corps.

Junot was to assemble his two infantry divisions behind Moura, and

to have them ready to reinforce either Ney or Reynier as might be

needed. His artillery was to be placed on the knolls on each side of

the \_chaussée\_, so as to be able to hold back the allied army if,

after repulsing Ney, it should attempt a forward movement. Montbrun’s

cavalry and the reserve artillery were to be placed on either side of

the \_chaussée\_ behind Junot’s centre[422].

[422] These orders are printed in the Appendix.

The horsemen were obviously useless, save that in the event of

Wellington being defeated they could be sent forward in pursuit. Nor

were the guns much more serviceable: they could sweep the lower parts

of the slopes of Bussaco, but could not reach its crest with their

fire. Indeed, the only French artillery used successfully on the

next day were two batteries which Ney’s columns of attack took with

them along the \_chaussée\_, as far as the elbow of road in front of

Moura. These were in effective range of Craufurd’s and Pack’s troops,

since the latter were on a level with them, and not on the highest

crest of the British position. Reynier’s guns could just reach the

summit of the pass of San Antonio de Cantaro, but not so as to play

upon it with any good result.

It is said that Junot and Reynier were in favour of trying the

frontal attack which Masséna had dictated, as was also Laszowski, the

Polish general who commanded the engineers of the army. Fririon, the

chief of the staff, and Eblé, commanding the artillery, spoke against

the policy of ‘taking the bull by the horns.’ Masséna, according to

Fririon, turned on the doubters with the words ‘You come from the

old Army of the Rhine, you like manœuvring; but it is the first time

that Wellington seems ready to give battle, and I want to profit by

the opportunity[423].’ Ney, too, as we read with some surprise, is

said to have given the opinion that it would have been feasible to

assault the heights yesterday, but that now, when Wellington had been

given time to bring up his reserves and settle his army down into

the most advantageous position, the policy of taking the offensive

had become doubtful. He therefore advised that the army should turn

aside and make a stroke at Oporto, which would be found unprotected

save by militia. Masséna, according to his official biographer,

announced ‘that the Emperor had ordered him to march on Lisbon, not

on Oporto. This was entirely correct: the capture of Lisbon would

end the whole war, that of Oporto would prolong it, and bring no

decisive result. Moreover, it was quite uncertain whether Wellington

would not be able to prevent such a move. He has troops échelloned

as far as the Vouga, and he could get to Oporto in three marches,

because he possesses the Oporto-Coimbra \_chaussée\_, while the French

army, moving by worse roads, would require five marches to reach

it.’ It is suggested that Ney’s policy was really to goad his

superior into making the frontal attack at Bussaco, by feigning to

believe it dangerous and to counsel its abandonment. For he thought

that Masséna would do precisely the opposite of what he was advised,

out of his personal dislike for himself, and general distaste for

having counsel thrust upon him. If this was so, the Duke of Elchingen

carried his point--to the entire discomfiture both of himself and his

commander-in-chief[424].

[423] So Fririon in his \_Campagne de Portugal\_, p. 47. But his

enemy Pelet says (\_Vic. et Conq.\_, xxi. p. 321) that Ney, like

Reynier, ‘demanda la bataille à grands cris.’ Cf., for what it is

worth, Marbot’s tale, ii. 384.

[424] All this is told at great length in Koch’s \_Vie de

Masséna\_, vii. p. 192, where the Council of War is described with

many details.

[Illustration: BATTLE OF BUSSACO Sep. 27th, 1810.

\_Position of the Troops at the commencement of the French Attack\_]

On the 26th, after Masséna had retired to his head quarters at

Mortagoa, there was a little skirmishing on the English right-centre,

where Reynier’s advanced guard drove the light company of the 88th

off some knolls at the foot of the heights, opposite San Antonio de

Cantaro. Much about the same time there was some bickering on Ney’s

front: the pickets of Pack’s 4th Caçadores and Craufurd’s 95th were

attacked, but held their ground. The contest was never very serious

and the fire died down at dusk. That evening the British army slept

in order of battle, ‘each man with his firelock in his grasp at his

post. There were no fires, and the death-like stillness that reigned

throughout the line was only interrupted by the occasional challenge

of an advanced sentry, or a random shot fired at some imaginary foe.’

Below and in front, all the low hills behind Moura and San Antonio

were bright with the bivouac fires of the French, of which three

great masses could be distinguished, marking the position of the 2nd,

6th, and 8th Corps[425].

[425] Grattan’s \_Adventures with the 88th\_, pp. 28-9, and Leith

Hay, i. 231.

The dawn of the 27th was somewhat misty, but as soon as the light was

strong enough Reynier commenced his attack. He had chosen for his

objective, as was natural, the lowest point of the ridge opposite

him, the dip where the country-road from San Antonio de Cantaro

crosses the Serra. His two divisions, according to order, were drawn

up in two heavy columns preceded by a dense swarm of \_tirailleurs\_.

Heudelet’s division on the left was across the high-road, with the

31st Léger in front, then the two regiments of Foy’s brigade, the

70th and 17th Léger, with the 47th in reserve. The whole made 15

battalions, or 8,000 men. Merle’s division had the right, and was

to attack north of the road: of its eleven battalions, making 6,500

men, the 36th of the Line led, the 2nd Léger followed, the 4th Léger

brought up the rear. All the battalions were in serried column with a

front of one company only, and in each regiment the three, or four,

battalions were originally drawn up one behind the other. But the

involuntary swerving of the attack soon turned the two divisions into

an irregular échelon of battalion-columns, the right in every case

leading. And the roughness of the hillside soon broke the ordered

ranks of each column into a great clump of men, so that to the

British defenders of the ridge the assault seemed to be delivered

by a string of small crowds crossing the hillside diagonally. It

is curious that Reynier placed no troops to his left of the road;

a study of his orders (as of those of Masséna[426]) leads to a

suspicion that they had failed to discover Leith’s division, and

still more Hill’s, and imagined that the road was on the extreme

right, not in the right-centre, of the British position. Otherwise

Reynier would have taken some precaution to guard himself from a

flank attack from Leith, to which he was deliberately exposing his

left column.

[426] Masséna’s orders for the battle call Reynier’s attack one

on ‘la droite de l’armée ennemie,’ but it was really on the

right-centre, Hill and Leith extending for four miles south of

the point assailed.

There were, as has already been pointed out, several gaps in

the nine-mile British line. One was between the 8th regiment of

Portuguese, on Leith’s extreme left, and the rest of the 5th

Division. Another was between Picton’s troops at the pass of San

Antonio and his left wing--the 88th and Lightburne’s brigade.

Between the 45th and the 88th there was three-quarters of a mile of

unoccupied ground. The first gap led to no danger, the second caused

for a moment a serious crisis. Such was indeed almost bound to occur

when a line so long was held by such a small army. But this morning

there arose the special danger that fog hid the first movements of

the enemy from the eye, if not from the ear.

Merle’s division seems to have been the first of Reynier’s two

columns to move: at dawn, with the mist lying thick on the hillside,

it began to move up the steep slope some three-quarters of a mile to

the right of the San Antonio-Palheiros road. Here its \_tirailleurs\_

came in contact with the light companies of the 74th, 88th, and 45th

regiments, which were strung out along the front, and soon began

to push this thin line up hill. For some reason undetermined--a

trick of the mist, or a bend of the hillside--the three French

regiments all headed somewhat to their left, so as to pass across

the front of the 88th, and to direct their advance precisely to the

unoccupied piece of crest between that regiment and the troops placed

immediately above the pass of San Antonio. Their progress was slow:

the \_tirailleurs\_ left far behind them the eleven battalion-columns,

which were trampling through the dense matted heather which here

covers the hillside. Hearing the bicker of the skirmishing far to

his left, Picton took the alarm, and though he could see nothing

in the fog, detached first a wing of the 45th under Major Gwynne,

and then the two battalions of the 8th Portuguese, to fill the

unoccupied space which intervened between him and the 88th. If he

had suspected the strength of the column that was aiming at it he

would have sent more. But he was already distracted by the frontal

attack of Heudelet’s vanguard along the high-road. A column of four

battalions--the 31st Léger--was pushing up the road, and driving in

the skirmishers of Champlemond’s Portuguese brigade. Just at this

moment the mist began to lift, and Arentschildt’s guns opened on

the broad mass, and began to plough long lanes through it. It still

advanced, but was soon brought to a standstill by the fire of the

British 74th and Portuguese 21st, which were drawn up in line to

right and left, a little below the guns. The 31st Léger tried to

deploy, but with small success, each section being swept away by the

converging fire of the Anglo-Portuguese musketry, as it strove to

file out of the disordered mass. Nevertheless, the French regiment

gallantly held its ground for some time, shifting gradually towards

its right to avoid the fire of the guns, and gaining a little of the

hillside in that direction with its first battalion, while the other

three were tending to edge away from the road, and to break up into a

shapeless crowd[427].

[427] The \_Mémoires\_ of Lemonnier Delafosse, a captain in

the 31st Léger, give an excellent and clear account of its

sufferings, see pp. 69-70 of his work.

Picton soon saw that there was no danger here, handed over the

command at the Pass of San Antonio to Mackinnon, and started off

towards his left, where the firing was growing heavier every minute,

and the vast column of Merle’s division, climbing the hillside

diagonally, had become visible through the mist.

It was fortunate that the attack of Merle was made very slow by

the steepness of the hillside and the heather that clung about the

soldiers’ stumbling feet. For the leading regiment reached the crest

before there were any British troops yet established on the point at

which it aimed. It was lurching over the sky-line on to the little

plateau above, just as the defenders arrived--the 88th descending

from the British left, the wing of the 45th and the two battalions

of the 8th Portuguese coming along the hill-road from the right. If

the French had been granted ten minutes to rest from the fatigue of

their long climb, and to recover their order, they might have broken

the British line. But Wallace, the commander of the 88th, was one of

Wellington’s best colonels, the very man for the emergency. Seeing

that the French must be charged at once, ere they had time to make a

front, he threw out three of his companies as skirmishers to cover

his flanks, called to the wing of the 45th to fall in on his right,

and charged diagonally across the little plateau on to the flank of

the great disordered mass before him. At the same moment the 8th

Portuguese, a little further along the hilltop, deployed and opened

a rolling fire against the front of the enemy, while Wellington

himself, who had been called down from his post of observation on

the Convent height by the noise of the fighting, came up with two of

Thompson’s guns, and turned their fire upon the flank and rear of the

climbing mass, which was still surging up the hillside. Apparently

at the same instant the light companies of the 45th and 88th,

which had been engaged in the earlier skirmishing with the French

\_tirailleurs\_, and had been driven far away to their right, were

rallied by Picton in person, and brought up along the plateau, to the

right of the 8th Portuguese. They drew up only sixty yards from the

flank of the leading French regiment, and opened a rolling fire upon

it.

At any other juncture and on any other ground, four battalions would

have been helpless against eleven. But Wallace had caught the

psychological moment: the French 36th, dead beat from its climb, and

in hopeless disorder, was violently charged in flank by the Connaught

Rangers and the wing of the 45th, while it was just gathering itself

up to run in upon the Portuguese battalions that lay in its front.

The French had no time to realize their position, or to mark the

smallness of the force opposed to them, when the blow fell. The four

battalions of the 36th were rolled down hill and to their left by

the blasting fire of Wallace’s little force, followed by a desperate

bayonet charge. They were thrust sideways against the 2nd Léger,

which was just reaching the sky-line on their left, and was beginning

to struggle in among some rocks which here crown the crest of the

heights. Then the whole mass gave way, trampled down the 4th Léger in

their rear, and rushed down the slope. ‘All was confusion and uproar,

smoke, fire, and bullets, French officers and soldiers, drummers

and drums, knocked down in every direction; British, French, and

Portuguese mixed together; while in the midst of all was to be seen

Wallace fighting like his ancestor of old, and still calling to his

soldiers to “press forward.” He never slackened his fire while a

Frenchman was within his reach, and followed them down to the edge of

the hill, where he formed his men in line waiting for any order that

he might receive, or any fresh body that might attack him[428].’ This

was certainly one of the most timely and gallant strokes made by a

regimental commander during the war, and the glory was all Wallace’s

own, as Picton very handsomely owned. ‘The Colonel of the 88th and

Major Gwynne of the 45th are entitled to the whole of the credit,’

he wrote to Wellington, ‘and I can claim no merit whatever in the

executive part of that brilliant exploit, which your Lordship has so

highly and so justly extolled[429].’

[428] Grattan’s \_Adventure with the Connaught Rangers\_, p. 35.

[429] Picton to Wellington, \_Supplementary Dispatches\_, vi. p.

635. I do not know whether Wallace really descended from the

famous Sir William, but Craufurd of the Light Division (as his

descendant and biographer has pointed out to me) chanced to have

a connexion with the Knight of Ellerslie.

The victorious British troops followed the enemy far down the

hillside, till they came under the fire of Reynier’s artillery,

and were warned to retire to their former position. They thus

missed the last episode of Reynier’s attack, which occurred along

the hillside just to the left of the point at which their collision

with Merle’s battalions had taken place. The Commander of the 2nd

Corps, seeing his right column rolling down the slope, while the

31st was melting away, and gradually giving ground under the fire of

the Anglo-Portuguese troops at the Pass of San Antonio, hurried to

Foy’s brigade and started it up the hill to the right of the 31st.

Foy had been told to support that regiment, but had taken Reynier’s

orders to mean that he was to follow up its advance when it began

to make headway. His Corps-Commander cantered up to him shouting

angrily, ‘Why don’t you start on the climb? You could get the troops

forward if you choose, but you don’t choose.’ Whereupon Foy rode to

the leading regiment of his brigade, the 17th Léger, put himself at

its head, and began to ascend the heights, his other regiment, the

70th, following in échelon on his left rear. At this moment Merle’s

division was still visible, falling back in great disorder some way

to the right, and pursued by Wallace--a discouraging sight for the

seven battalions that were about to repeat its experiment. Foy chose

as his objective the first and lowest hilltop to the French right of

the pass of San Antonio, and took his string of columns, the right

always leading, up towards it at such pace as was possible over the

long heather, and among the occasional patches of stones. The troops

which were in front of them here were those sections of Picton’s

division which were neither far away on the English left with Wallace

and Lightburne, nor actively engaged on the road against the 31st

Léger, viz. the right wing of the British 45th under Colonel Meade,

and the Portuguese 8th of the Line which had just been aiding in the

repulse of Merle. These were soon afterwards joined by one battalion

of the 9th Portuguese from Champlemond’s brigade, and the unattached

battalion of Thomar militia, which Picton sent up the hill. Yet this

was still far too small a force to resist Foy’s seven battalions,

unless speedily supported.

But support in sufficient quantity was forthcoming. General Leith

had received orders from Wellington to close in to Picton’s right

if he saw no hostile troops in his own front. As it was clear that

Reynier had kept no reserves or flanking detachments to the south

of the high-road, it was possible for the 5th Division to move at

once[430]. While the fog was still hanging thickly along the crests

of the Serra, Leith ordered a general move of his brigades to the

left, while Hill detached troops from the southern end of the

position to occupy the heights which the 5th Division was evacuating.

This general move to the left was carried out along the rough but

serviceable country-road which passes along the rear of the plateau,

out of sight of the French. At the moment when Foy’s attack was

beginning, Leith had just reached the Pass of San Antonio, with

Spry’s Portuguese brigade at the head of his column, then the two

battalions of the Lusitanian legion, and lastly, Barnes’s British

brigade. One of Dickson’s Portuguese batteries was also with him. He

dropped the guns at the pass to aid Arentschildt’s battery, whose

fire was beginning to slacken from want of ammunition, and left Spry

in their rear and the Legionary battalions on the country-road hard

by, while he brought up Barnes’s brigade to the front, and reported

his arrival to Picton. The latter said, it appears, that he was

strong enough at the Pass, but would be obliged if Leith would attend

to the attack which was being made at this moment on the height to

its immediate left[431]. This movement of Foy’s was now becoming

dangerous: forcing his way to the summit under a destructive fire, he

had met on the edge of the plateau the three Portuguese battalions

and the wing of the British 45th, and had driven them back--the

Thomar militia broke and fled down the rear declivity of the heights,

and the 8th Portuguese, though they did not fly, gave way and fell

back in disorder. Just at this moment Leith, with Barnes’s three

battalions, came up along the communication-road at the back of the

plateau. ‘A heavy fire of musketry,’ writes Leith, ‘was being kept

up upon the heights, the smoke of which prevented a clear view of

the state of things. But when the rock forming the high part of the

Serra became visible, the enemy appeared to be in full possession of

it, and a French officer was in the act of cheering, with his hat

off, while a continued fire was being kept up from thence, and along

the whole face of the slope of the Serra, in a diagonal direction

towards its bottom, by the enemy ascending rapidly in successive

columns, formed for an attack upon a mass of men belonging to the

left battalion of the 8th and the 9th Portuguese, who, having been

severely pressed, had given way, and were rapidly retiring in

complete confusion and disorder. The enemy had dispersed or driven

off everything opposed to him--was in possession of the rocky

eminence of the Serra.’ A few of his \_tirailleurs\_ were even on the

upper edge of the rear slope.

[430] Leith’s nephew and aide-de-camp, Leith Hay, had explored

all the villages in this direction on the previous afternoon,

with a squadron of Portuguese horse, see his \_Narrative\_, i. 381.

[431] Picton and Leith each rather slur over the part taken by

the other in their parallel narratives of the crisis. Picton

says that he took command of Leith’s troops: ‘at this moment

Major-General Leith’s aide-de-camp came up to report the arrival

of that general and his division, on which I rode from the post

of San Antonio to the road of communication, and directed the

leading regiment of the brigade to proceed without loss of time

to the left, as I had no occasion for assistance. General Leith’s

brigade, in consequence, moved on and arrived in time to join the

five companies of the 45th and the 8th Portuguese in repulsing

the enemy’s last attempt.’ Leith, on the other hand, speaks of

having taken command of some of Picton’s troops, as if the latter

had not been present, and says nought of their conversation.

‘Major-General Leith thereupon directed a movement of succession,

ordering Colonel Douglas with the right battalion of the 8th

Portuguese to support the point attacked. He also directed the

9th Portuguese under Colonel Sutton (belonging to Major-General

Picton’s division) to move up to the support of General Picton’s

division,’ and again, ‘He (General Leith) ordered the 8th and 9th

Portuguese to support the point attacked, and where the enemy

were fast gaining ground.’ Each general speaks as if he had been

in command, and I fear that each is using undue reticence as to

the other’s doings. See note at the end of this chapter.

Leith, realizing that there was still time to save the position--for

only the head of the French column had crowned the rocky

knoll,--deployed his leading battalion, the 9th, across the summit of

the plateau, while sending on his second, the 38th, to get between

the enemy and the reverse slope of the position. This last move

turned out to be fruitless, for the rear face of the knoll is so

steep and so thickly covered with large boulders[432], that the 38th

was unable to climb it, and came back to fall in on the right of

the 9th. But before it could get back, the senior regiment had done

its work. Leith had led it diagonally across the plateau, so as to

place it along the flank of the leading battalions of Foy’s column,

of which the first was now ensconced on the summit of the heights,

while the others were struggling up to join it. The 9th opened with

a volley at 100 yards, and then advanced firing, receiving hardly

any return from the enemy, who seemed entirely disconcerted by the

appearance of a new force parallel with its flank. At twenty yards

from the French, the 9th lowered its bayonets and prepared to charge,

Leith riding at its head waving his plumed hat. Then the enemy gave

way. ‘My heroic column,’ writes Foy, ‘much diminished during the

ascent, reached the summit of the plateau, which was covered with

hostile troops. Those on our left made a flank movement and smashed

us up by their battalion volleys; meanwhile those on our front,

covered by some rocks, were murdering us with impunity. The head of

my column fell back to its right, despite my efforts; I could not

get them to deploy, disorder set in, and the 17th and 70th raced

down-hill in headlong flight. The enemy pursued us half-way to the

foot of the heights, till he pulled up on coming under effective fire

from our artillery[433].’

[432] Napier calls it a ‘precipice,’ but this is not the right

word. I found that I could walk freely about on it, but no formed

body of men could have passed up the slope.

[433] Foy’s diary, pp. 103-4, tallies exactly with Leith’s

narrative in \_Wellington Supplementary Dispatches\_, vi. 678, and

Cameron’s letter in Napier, Appendix to vol. vi.

The battle was now over on this side: Reynier had in reserve only

one regiment, the 47th of the Line. His other twenty-two battalions

had all been beaten to pieces; they had lost over 2,000 men,

including more than half their superior officers: Merle commanding

the 1st Division was wounded, his junior brigadier Graindorge was

killed; Foy, commanding the first brigade of the other division, was

wounded. Of the six colonels who had gone up the heights, those of

the 31st Léger, 2nd Léger, 4th Léger, and 70th had been hit: of the

twenty-three battalion commanders four were killed, seven wounded.

Of 421 officers in all who went into action, 118--more than one

in four--had been disabled. Of the 2,023 casualties, 350 men and

fifteen officers were prisoners in the hands of the British. And

these losses had been suffered without inflicting any corresponding

loss upon the defenders of the position: Picton’s division had 427

killed and wounded; Leith’s 160. The only regiments appreciably

diminished were the 45th, 88th, and Portuguese 8th--with 150, 134,

and 113 casualties respectively. The only superior officers hit were

the Portuguese brigadier Champlemond, and a major each in the 45th

and 88th. Of the 3rd and 5th Divisions only six British and five

Portuguese battalions had been engaged[434]--the superiority of force

against them had been about two to one. Yet Reynier complained in

his dispatch to Masséna of being crushed by ‘a triple superiority of

numbers’! As a matter of fact, it was the position that beat him, not

the imagined numbers of the allies. Wellington could risk much in

taking up a long line, when he had a good road of communication along

its rear, to shift troops from point to point, and when he could

descry every movement of the enemy half an hour before it began to

take effect.

[434] Viz. British: Mackinnon’s 1/88th, 1/45th, 74th, Barnes’s

3/1st, 1/9th, 2/38th. Portuguese: Champlemond’s 9th Line (2

batts.) and 21st Line (1 batt.), with the 8th from Leith’s

division (2 batts.). Spry’s brigade and the Lusitanian Legion

from Leith were never under fire, and did not lose a man.

Picton’s left brigade (Lightburne) was never engaged, save that

the light companies of the 5th and 83rd, far down the slope, lost

eight and four men respectively. The Thomar militia bolted before

coming under fire.

The other half of the battle of Bussaco was an even shorter business

than Reynier’s struggle with Picton and Leith, but no less bloody

and decisive. Ney exactly obeyed Masséna’s orders to attack, with

two divisions, the ground on each side of the Coimbra \_chaussée\_,

when he should see the 2nd Corps lodged on the crest beside the pass

of San Antonio de Cantaro. The many reproaches heaped upon him,

by critics who have not read his orders, for attacking too late,

and not at the same moment as Reynier, are groundless: he was told

to go forward only when his colleague ‘sera maître des hauteurs.’

He moved precisely when the dispersing mists showed Merle’s great

column massed on the edge of the plateau. Of his three divisions he

had, again in exact obedience to orders, placed Loison on the right,

Marchand on the left, while Mermet was in reserve, behind Moura.

The two fighting divisions were completely separated by the deep

and steep ravine of which we have had occasion to speak. The ground

in front of them was very different: Marchand had to advance, by

rather gentle slopes, along the \_chaussée\_, which curves up towards

the convent of Bussaco. Loison had to go up a hillside of a very

different sort, whose lower stretch, as far as the village of Sula,

is gentle, and much cut up by woods and orchards, but whose upper

half, beyond Sula, is extremely steep and absolutely destitute of

cover. There was no road here, only a rough mule-track.

Loison started a few minutes before Marchand: he had his two brigades

side by side, Simon’s (six battalions) on the right, Ferey’s (also

six battalions) on the left. Both started from the low ground in

front of Sula, each with a strong chain of \_tirailleurs\_ covering

an advance in serried battalion columns; the 26th regiment was the

leading regiment in Simon’s, the 66th in Ferey’s brigade. On leaving

the bottom, and advancing among the trees on the lower slope, both

brigades found their \_tirailleurs\_ at once checked by a very strong

skirmishing line. Pack had spread out the whole of the 4th Caçadores

on the hillside in front of his line battalions. Craufurd had thrown

out the 95th--more than 700 rifles--and the 3rd Caçadores--600 rifles

more--into the enclosures in front of Sula. The 43rd and 52nd, with

the 1st Caçadores, were lying down in the hollow road at the head of

the steep slope above that village, completely concealed from sight.

Of formed troops, Loison could only see the 1st Division far above

him on the left on the highest plateau of the Serra, and Cole far

away to his right on the lower hillsides towards Paradas. In order

to press in the obstinate light troops in front of him, Loison was

compelled to push forward whole battalions from his fighting-line: by

a strenuous use of these, the Caçadores and Rifles were evicted first

from the lower slopes, then from the village of Sula. But when the

latter had been captured, the French found themselves under a heavy

fire of artillery: Ross’s guns on the knoll above, between their

embrasures of rock, being carefully trained upon the exits of the

village, while Cleeves’ German battery joined in from its position at

the head of the ravine, and took Ferey in flank. It was impossible

to halt in Sula, and Loison ordered his brigadiers to push forward

the attack once more, taking Ross’s guns and the windmill near them

as their objective. The slope was now much steeper, the British

and Portuguese skirmishers had rallied once more above Sula, and

Craufurd had sent down the 1st Caçadores to feed the fighting-line.

It was only with a severe effort, and with much loss, that the French

battalions won their way up the culminating slope. Simon’s front

regiment, the 26th of the Line, stuck to the mule-path up the hill

from Sula, in one dense and deep column, with the front of a company

only, and a depth of three battalions. Ferey’s brigade, having no

track to follow, seems to have moved in a somewhat less vicious

formation along the slope further to the left, bordering on the

northern edge of the funnel-like ravine which formed the boundary of

Craufurd’s position. Both were in a very disordered condition, owing

to the fierce conflict which they had waged with the screen of Rifles

and Caçadores all up the hillside.

Lying in the hollow road parallel with the head of the ravine were

the two Line regiments of the Light Division, the 43rd on the right,

the 52nd on the left. They were very strong battalions, despite their

losses at the Coa, the one having 800 the other 950 bayonets. In

front of them, on the sky-line by the little windmill, to the right

of Ross’s guns, Craufurd had been standing all through the earlier

stages of the engagement, watching the gradual progress of the French

up the hillside. He waited patiently till the enemy’s two columns, a

few hundred yards apart, had reached the last steep of the hillside

below him. His recoiling skirmishers were at last thrust in upon

him--they passed, some to the flanks, some through the intervals

between the battalions and the guns, and the front was clear.

[Illustration: NEY’S ATTACK at BUSSACO.]

[Illustration: REYNIER’S ATTACK at BUSSACO.]

Then came the opportunity: the French, pulling themselves together,

were preparing to rush up the last twenty yards of the ascent and to

run in upon the guns, when Craufurd waved his hat to the battalions

lying in the road behind him, the appointed signal for action, and

(it is said) called to the men behind him ‘Now 52nd, revenge the

death of Sir John Moore.’ The crest was at once covered by the

long red line, and the fronts of the French brigades received such

a volley at ten paces as has been seldom endured by any troops in

war. The whole of the heads of their columns crumbled away in a

mass of dead and dying. The centre and rear stood appalled for

one moment; then Major Arbuthnot wheeled in three companies of the

52nd upon the right flank of Simon’s leading regiment, while Lloyd

of the 43rd did the same upon the extreme left, so as to produce a

semicircle of fire[435]. It was impossible to stand under it, and

the French broke and went hurtling down the hill, the wrecks of the

front battalions carrying the rear ones away with them. So steep was

the slope on their left that some are said to have lost their footing

and to have rolled down to the bottom of the ravine before they

could stop. The Light Division followed as far as Sula, and beyond,

not stopping till Loison’s people had taken refuge in the wooded

ground beyond that village, and the French guns by Moura had begun

to play upon their pursuers. The rush had carried away the whole

of the enemy, save one battalion upon Ferey’s extreme left, which

had moved so far down in the slope of the ravine that it had become

separated from the rest. This solitary column, pressing forward, came

to the sky-line not in front of Craufurd, but at the very head of the

ravine, below Cleeves’ battery. Here it was dealt with by the leading

unit of Coleman’s Portuguese brigade, which was standing in line

near the \_chaussée\_. The 1st battalion of the 19th regiment, under

Major McBean, charged it and rolled it back into the cleft, down

whose bottom it hastily recoiled, and joined the rest of the flying

division.

[435] A passage of Napier’s account of the movements of the Light

Division (iii. 27) has puzzled many readers. ‘Eighteen hundred

British bayonets went sparkling over the brow of the hill. Yet

so hardy were the leading French that every man of the first

section raised his musket, and two officers and ten soldiers

(of the 52nd) fell before them. Not a Frenchman had missed his

mark!’ This passage looks as if the whole French division had

been conceived by Napier as moving in a single column with a

front of only twelve men. An eye-witness, Sir John Bell, of the

52nd, who owned the copy of the book which I now have before

me, has written Bosh! in the margin against the words. Of

course the enemy was advancing with each battalion in column of

companies, with a front of thirty at least. What Napier seems

to have had in his head was an anecdote told by his brother

George (\_Autobiography\_, p. 143). ‘My company met the very head

of the French column, and immediately calling to my men to form

column of sections, in order to give more force to our rush, we

dashed forward. I was in front of my men a yard or two, when a

Frenchman made a plunge at me with his bayonet, and at the same

time received the contents of his musket under my hip and fell.

At the same instant they fired upon my front section, consisting

of about nine men in the front rank, all of whom fell, four dead,

the rest wounded.’ But this does not imply that the French column

was only twelve broad.

This made an end of Loison’s two brigades as a serious attacking

force. They reeled back to their original position, under cover of

the 25th Léger, which Mermet sent out to relieve them. But later in

the day they pushed some skirmishers up the hill again, and bickered

with Craufurd’s outposts. Wellington, seeing that the Light Division

was fatigued, sent the light companies of Löwe’s German brigade

and A. Campbell’s 6th Caçadores, from the reserves, to take up the

skirmishing. It stood still about Sula, but the French got a few men

into the village, whom Craufurd had to evict with a company of the

43rd.

Loison lost, out of 6,500 men used in the attack, twenty-one officers

killed and forty-seven wounded, with some 1,200 men. His senior

brigadier, Simon, was wounded in the face, and taken prisoner by a

private of the 52nd. The loss of the Light Division was marvellously

small--the 3rd Caçadores and the 95th, who had fought through the

long skirmish up the hill, had seventy-eight and forty-one casualties

respectively, but the 43rd and 52nd had the astounding record of only

three men killed, and two officers and eighteen men wounded. McBean’s

Portuguese battalion lost one officer and twenty-five men: the German

light companies had nearly fifty casualties, but this was later in

the day. Altogether, Loison’s attack was repelled with a loss of only

200 men to the allies.

It only remains to tell of one more section of the Battle of Bussaco;

it was entirely independent of the rest. When Ney started Loison to

his right of the deep ravine, he had sent forward Marchand’s division

to his left of it, along the great \_chaussée\_. On turning the sweep

of the road beyond Moura, the leading brigade of this column (6th

Léger and 69th Line, five battalions) came under a terrible artillery

fire from the three batteries which Wellington had placed at the

head of the ravine, those of Cleeves, Parros, and Lawson. They,

nevertheless, pushed along the road till they came level with a small

pine wood on their left, which was full of the skirmishers of Pack’s

Portuguese brigade--the whole of the 4th Caçadores had been sent

down into it from the height above. The flanking fire of these light

troops was so galling that the French brigade--apparently without

orders and by an instinctive movement--swerved to its left, and went

up the hillside to turn the Caçadores out of their cover. After a

sharp bickering they did so, and then emerging from the wood on to

the smooth slope of the height below the convent wall, got into a

desperate musketry duel with Pack’s four Line-battalions, who stood

in front of them. They were now in disorder, and their brigadier,

Maucune, had been wounded. But they made several attempts to storm

the hillside, which were all beaten back by the Portuguese musketry

and the fire of Lawson’s artillery on the right. The second brigade

of Marchand (that of Marcognet) pushed as far along the road as the

preceding brigade had gone, but stopped when it came under the fire

of Cleeves’ and Parros’s guns, to which that of Ross’s (from across

the ravine) was also added, when Loison’s attack had been beaten

off. Seeing that Marchand was making no headway, that Loison had

been routed, and that Reynier’s corps was out of action, Ney called

back his column, which fell back behind Moura. Maucune’s brigade had

suffered severely--it had lost its brigadier, the colonel of the 6th

Léger, and thirty-three other officers with some 850 men. The rear

brigade (Marcognet’s) had suffered less--its casualty list, however,

was fully 300 killed and wounded. There had been a little skirmishing

meanwhile opposite Wellington’s centre, for during the main attack

Ney had sent forward some voltigeur companies from his reserves to

occupy the line of skirmishers at the foot of the heights, which

Spencer’s 1st Division had thrown out. These two thin screens of

light troops paired off against each other, and contended all the

morning with some loss, but no appreciable advantage on either

side[436].

[436] Sprünglin, Ney’s aide-de-camp, gives an account of his

being detached with these voltigeurs, on p. 450 of his diary.

He lost 142 men. It must have been in contending with these

companies that the 1st Division (excluding the German brigade,

occupied elsewhere) got the 89 casualties returned by Wellington,

as also the 5/60 their 24 casualties. The only one of the British

battalions in this quarter which had an appreciable number of

men hurt was the 1/79th. Its regimental history says that its

light company was almost cut off at the commencement of the day.

The captain was taken prisoner--being the only British officer

captured that day--with six men, and there were over 40 other

casualties. Stopford’s brigade lost two men--Lord Blantyre’s

seven.

Masséna still had it in his power to attack again, for Mermet’s

division of the 6th Corps, and the whole of Junot’s 13,000 infantry

had not yet advanced and had hardly lost a man. But the result of

Ney’s and Reynier’s efforts had been so disheartening that the

Marshal refused to waste more lives on what was clearly a hopeless

enterprise. He could now see Wellington’s army concentrated on the

two points that had been attacked. Hill’s heavy column of 10,000

men had now lined the heights on Leith’s right: Cole had edged

the 4th Division close in to Craufurd’s left, and Coleman and the

Germans were visible in the rear. If Masséna had still 20,000 fresh

infantry, the English general had 33,000 who had not yet come up

into the fighting-line. It was useless to persist. Accordingly,

the skirmishing along Ney’s front was allowed to die down in the

afternoon, and the French divisions retired to their camps.

The total loss of Wellington’s army had been 1,252 officers and

men, of whom 200 were killed, 1,001 wounded, and fifty-one missing.

No officer over the rank of a major had been killed: and the only

senior officers wounded were the Portuguese brigadier Champlemond and

Colonel Barclay of the 52nd. Of the casualties, 626 were in the ranks

of the British, 626 in those of the Portuguese regiments--a strange

coincidence in the losses of the two allied armies. The Portuguese

line, indeed, had done their fair half of the fighting, as the return

showed--in no instance with discredit, in some with high merit. If

the 8th and 9th Portuguese had broken before Foy’s attack, it was

under severe stress, and when attacked by superior numbers. On the

other hand, Pack’s brigade, Coleman’s 19th, and the Caçadores of the

Light Division won the highest praises from their commanders, and had

taken a most distinguished part in the victory. Wellington now knew

exactly how far they could be trusted, and could estimate at last the

real fighting value of his army--at least, for a defensive battle in

chosen and favourable ground. It would be another matter to calculate

how far the allied host was capable of taking the offensive.

The total loss of the French, as shown by the return--which was not

quite complete--presented to Masséna on October 1, was 4,498, of whom

522 were killed, 3,612 wounded, and 364 missing (i.e. prisoners).

After his usual fashion he represented it to the Emperor as being

‘about 3,000[437].’ One general (Graindorge), two colonels, and

fifty-two other officers had been killed, four generals (Maucune,

Foy, Merle, Simon) were wounded--the last was also a prisoner; five

colonels and 189 other officers were wounded. The 2nd Corps in all

had lost at least 2,043 officers and men, the 6th Corps at least

2,455[438]. It may be remembered that of all the battles in the

Peninsular War this was the one in which the proportion of officers

to men hit on the French side was highest, one to sixteen--the

average being one to twenty-two in ordinary engagements. The

excessive proportion of casualties in the commissioned ranks bears

witness to a desperate attempt to lead on the men to an impossible

task, in which the officers sacrificed themselves in the most

splendid style.

[437] This too in a dispatch to Berthier dated Coimbra, Oct. 4,

three days after the returns had been placed before him.

[438] For these returns, see Appendix, no. xiii. They are

certainly incomplete, omitting (1) losses of the cavalry of the

2nd Corps (where Martinien’s invaluable tables show that three

officers were wounded), (2) losses of the 8th Corps, which

caught a few shells as it stood on the heights by Moura and had

(as again shown by Martinien’s tables) six officers hit, which

must imply some hundred men. (3) Some casualties in the infantry

omitted in the returns, for while the report accounts for 253

killed and wounded officers, Martinien names 275. Deducting the

cavalry and 8th Corps losses mentioned above, there are still

fifteen officers (and therefore presumably 250 men) too few given

in the reports sent in to Masséna; e.g. for the 2nd Léger the

report has eighteen officers hit, Martinien gives the names of

twenty-two.

Masséna must not be too much blamed for his experiment. He had still

to ascertain the fighting value of Wellington’s army--and estimated

it too low, because of the extreme prudence which his adversary

had hitherto displayed. He was handicapped by the impossibility of

using his artillery effectively, and the position in front of him

was strong--even stronger than he guessed, because of the road of

communication along the rear of the plateau--but not too strong

to be forced, if the defenders did not fight well. Moreover, it

was immensely long--nine miles from end to end, so that two blows

delivered with a corps each in the centre might have pierced the

line before the enemy’s distant reserves could get up. Favoured by

the fog--as we have seen--Reynier actually won the heights for a

moment, though Ney never got near the crest. The mistake lay not so

much in making the trial as in under-rating the warlike efficiency of

the enemy. Strokes like Wallace’s charge with the 45th and 88th, or

Craufurd’s masterly advance with the 43rd and 52nd, are beyond the

common experiences of war. Masséna put forty-five battalions[439]

into his fighting-line--they were repulsed by twenty-four, for that

was the number of Anglo-Portuguese battalions which engaged more than

their light-companies[440]. This could not have been foreseen. But

the lesson was learnt. Before the lines of Torres Vedras, a fortnight

later, Masséna refused to take any more risks of the kind, and the

campaign assumed a very different character, because the invader had

learnt to respect his enemy.

[439] Viz. all Reynier’s Corps, save the 47th, twenty-two

battalions; Marchand eleven battalions, Loison twelve

battalions--total 26,000 men. See Tables in Appendix.

[440] Viz. the brigades of Mackinnon and Champlemond of the 3rd

Division: the 1st, 9th, 38th, British, and the 8th Portuguese of

Leith, Craufurd’s five battalions, Pack’s five battalions, three

battalions of Coleman--total 14,000 men. See Tables in Appendix.

(1) NOTE ON THE TOPOGRAPHY OF BUSSACO

I spent two days in April 1904 and two days in April 1906 in going

very carefully over the field--save that of its nine-mile length I

did not investigate closely either Cole’s position on the extreme

north, or Hill’s on the extreme south, no fighting having come near

either of them. The ground is so minutely described in the preceding

chapter that only a few additional points require notice.

(1) The ravine which lay between Pack and Craufurd, and between

Marchand and Loison, is a feature which no map can properly express,

and which no one who has not gone very carefully over the hillside

can fully picture to himself. It produces an absolute want of

continuity between the two fights which went on to its right and left.

(2) The Mondego is not visible from any point of the line of heights

till Hill’s position is reached. It is sunk far below the level of

the upland.

(3) The San Antonio-Palheiros road is a mere country track, barely

deserving the name of road, though practicable for artillery and

vehicles. The \_chaussée\_ Moura-Bussaco is a high-road of the first

class, admirably engineered. The paths across the Serra at Hill’s end

of it are wretched mule-tracks, not suitable for wheeled traffic. So

is the track from Sula up the slope to Craufurd’s standing-place.

(4) The view from the summit of the Serra is very extensive,

embracing on the one side all the slopes of the Estrella as far as

Guarda, and on the other the whole coast-plain of Coimbra as far

as the sea. But in each direction there is so much wood and hill

that many roads and villages are masked. The French army, both in

advance and retreat, was only intermittently visible. But enough

could be made out to determine its general movements with fair

precision. When it reached the foot-hills before the Serra every

detail of its disposition could be followed by an observer on any

part of the crest, save that below Sula woods in the bottom hide the

starting-point of Loison’s division.

(5) In the chapel by the side of the \_chaussée\_, just behind the

sky-line of the English position, the traveller will find a little

museum, including a very fine topographical map, with the position of

the allied troops, and more especially of the Portuguese regiments,

well marked. There are a few errors in the placing of the British

battalions, but nothing of consequence. The French army is only

vaguely indicated. But the map is a credit to the Portuguese engineer

officers who compiled it.

(6) As I have observed in the next chapter, the ground to the north,

along the Serras de Alcoba and de Caramula, is not so uniformly

lofty, or so forbidding in its aspect, as to cause the observer

to doubt whether there can be any pass across the watershed in

that direction. Indeed, the first idea that strikes the mind on

reaching the summit of the Serra, and casting a glance round the

wide landscape, is that it is surprising that any officer in the

French army can have believed that the Caramula was absolutely

impracticable. Moreover it is far less easily defensible than the

Bussaco ridge, because it is much more broken and full of cover. The

beauty of the Bussaco position is that, save on the Moura-Sula spurs,

it is entirely bare of cover on the side facing eastward. The smooth,

steep slope, with its furze and heather and its occasional outcrops

of rock, makes a splendid glacis. The reverse space would be a far

worse position to defend, against an enemy coming from Coimbra and

the coast-plain, because it is thickly interspersed with woods.

(7) With the possible exception of some of the Pyrenean

fighting-grounds, Bussaco gives the most beautiful landscape of

any of the British battlefields of the Peninsula. Albuera is tame,

Talavera is only picturesque at its northern end, Salamanca is

rolling ground with uninteresting ploughed fields, save where the two

Arapiles crop up in their isolated ruggedness. Fuentes d’Oñoro is

a pretty hillside, such as one may see in any English county, with

meadow below and rough pasture above. Vimiero is dappled ground, with

many trees but no commanding feature. But the loftiness, the open

breezy air, the far-reaching view over plain, wood, mountain, and

distant sea, from the summit of the Bussaco Serra is unique in its

beauty. It is small wonder that the modern Portuguese have turned it

into a health-resort, or that the British colony at Oporto have fixed

on the culminating plateau as the best golf-course in the Peninsula.

(2) NOTE ON THE CRISIS OF THE BATTLE OF BUSSACO

While there is no point of dispute concerning that part of the

Battle of Bussaco in which Craufurd, Pack, and Coleman were engaged

against the 6th Corps, there was bitter controversy on the exact

details of the repulse of Reynier’s corps by Picton and Leith.

Picton, and following him his subordinates of the 3rd Division,

thought that Leith’s part in the action was insignificant, that he

merely repulsed a minor attack after the main struggle was over.

Leith and his officers considered that they gave the decisive blow,

that Picton’s line would have been broken and the battle perhaps

lost, if Barnes’s brigade had not arrived at the critical moment

and saved the situation. All that Picton would allow was that Leith

‘aided the wing of the 45th and the 8th Portuguese in repulsing the

enemy’s last attempt.’ Grattan, who wrote an admirable narrative

of the defeat of Merle’s division by the 88th and the neighbouring

troops, denied that the 3rd Division was ever pressed, says that he

never saw Leith’s men till the action was over, and points out that

Barnes’s brigade, out of 1,800 bayonets, lost but 47 men altogether,

while the 45th regiment alone lost thrice, and the 88th more than

twice, as many killed and wounded out of their scanty numbers (150

and 134 out of 560 and 679 respectively). Other 3rd Division officers

suggest (see the letters in the Appendix to Napier’s sixth volume)

that Leith fought only with a belated body of French skirmishers,

or with men who had been cut off from the main attacking column by

the successful advance of Wallace. On the other hand Leith (see his

letter in Wellington, \_Supplementary Dispatches\_, vol. vi, p. 678)

speaks of coming on the ground to find a large French column crossing

the Serra, and the Portuguese 8th and 9th broken, and about to recoil

down the rear slope. His aide-de-camp, Leith-Hay, and Cameron of the

9th bear him out.

Napier has failed to make the situation clear, from not seeing that

there were two completely separate attacks of the French, divided by

an appreciable interval. He thinks that Foy was on the Serra as soon

as Merle, and calls his column (iii. p. 25) ‘the French battalions

which had first gained the crest,’ while as a matter of fact they had

only started after Wallace’s repulse of Merle was long over.

The real situation is made clear when Reynier’s and Heudelet’s

dispatches in the French Archives and Foy’s diary are studied. From

these it is clear that there were \_two\_ occasions on which the French

got to the top of the Serra, the first during Merle’s attack, the

second during Foy’s. I have quoted Foy’s narrative on p. 377 above;

but it may be well to give also his note showing the starting-time of

his column. ‘La première division (Merle) a gravi la montagne en se

jettant à droite. Mais à peine les têtes arrivaient sur le plateau,

qu’attaquées tout à coup par des troupes immensement supérieures en

nombre, fraîches et vigoureuses, elles ont été culbutées en bas de

la montagne dans le plus grand désordre. Ma brigade s’était portée

au pied de la montagne, devant soutenir le 31e Léger. Au moment de

l’échec de la 1re division j’ai fait halte un moment pour ne pas

être entraîné par les fuyards.’ It was only at this instant, when

the fugitives from Merle’s attack were pouring past him, that he got

his orders from Reynier to attack, and started to climb the slope.

There must, therefore, have been an interval of more than half an

hour--possibly of an hour--between the moment when Wallace thrust

Merle off the plateau, and that at which Foy crowned it, only to be

attacked and beaten by the newly arrived Leith. For it took a very

long time for the French 17th and 70th to climb the slope, and they

only reached the top with difficulty, the skirmishers of the 8th and

9th Portuguese and of Meade’s wing of the 45th having fought hard to

keep them back.

Reynier’s dispatch is equally clear as to his corps having made two

separate attacks. He adds that some of Sarrut’s men were rallied in

time to support Foy, a statement for which I find no corroboration

elsewhere.

Napier then has failed to grasp the situation, when he makes the

French crown the crest above the pass of San Antonio and the crest

opposite Wallace, 900 yards further north, at the same moment. And

the statement that Leith’s charge was directed against the other

flank of the same mass that was beaten by the 88th and 45th is

altogether erroneous.

Leith’s narrative of the business, in short, fits in with the French

story, and must be considered correct. Picton cannot be acquitted

of deliberate belittling of the part taken by his colleague in the

action. Foy’s attack, though made by only seven battalions, while

Merle had eleven, was the more dangerous of the two, and was defeated

by Leith alone, after the small fraction of Picton’s force in front

of it had been broken and thrust back.

SECTION XXI: CHAPTER III

WELLINGTON’S RETREAT TO THE LINES OF TORRES VEDRAS (OCTOBER 1810)

The dawn of September 28 brought small comfort to Masséna. His

desperate attacks of the preceding day had been repulsed with such

ease and such heavy loss, that neither he nor any of his subordinates

dreamed of renewing the attempt to force the line of the Serra. Only

three courses were open to him--to retreat on Almeida, giving up

the campaign as one too ambitious for the strength of his army, or

to change his objective and strike backwards at Oporto,--if Lisbon

were beyond his grasp,--or to endeavour to move Wellington out of

his position by turning his flank, since a frontal attack had proved

disastrous. The first course was advocated by more than one adviser,

but presented no attractions to the Marshal: he was both obstinate

and angry, and did not dream for a moment of spoiling his military

reputation by retreating tamely after a lost battle. The blow at

Oporto was equally unattractive: he had been told to drive the

English out of Portugal, and to capture Lisbon, not to make a mere

lodgement on the Douro. Moreover, as he had remarked to Ney before

the battle, if he marched on Oporto by the bad road via Vizeu, he

might find the British army once more in his front, when he drew

nearer to the city, since the Coimbra-Oporto \_chaussée\_ is both

shorter and better than the by-roads which he would have to follow.

There remained the third possibility--that of turning Wellington out

of the Bussaco position by flanking operations. The country-side did

not look very promising, but the attempt must be made.

Early on the 28th the French cavalry was sent out in both directions

to explore the whole neighbourhood--a task which Masséna should have

prescribed to it on the 25th and 26th, instead of keeping it massed

in his rear. The reconnaissances sent southward by Reynier’s light

cavalry brought no encouraging report: if the French army crossed the

Mondego, it would only run against Wellington’s carefully prepared

position behind the Alva. Fane’s cavalry were out in this direction,

and would give ample time of warning to allow the allied army to pass

the fords of Peña Cova and man the long series of earthworks. Only a

repetition of the Bussaco disaster could follow from an attempt to

take the offensive on this side. From the north, however, Montbrun,

who had ridden out with some of Sainte-Croix’s dragoons, brought far

more cheering news. This indeed was the flank where, on the first

principles of topography, some hope of success might have been looked

for. To any one standing either on the Bussaco heights or on the

lower ridge in front of them, and casting an eye over the dappled

and uneven country-side to the north, it seems incredible that there

should be no route whatever across the Serra de Caramula. Both the

seacoast-plain of Beira and the valley of the Oerins, the little

river which drains the plain of Mortagoa, were thickly populated. Was

it likely that there would be no means of getting from the one to the

other save by the \_chaussée\_ through Bussaco, or the circuitous road

far to the north, from Vizeu to Aveiro via Feramena and Bemfeita?

The maps, it is true, showed no other route: but every day that he

remained in Portugal was proving more clearly to the Marshal that his

maps, Lopez and the rest, were hopelessly inaccurate. The Serra de

Caramula, though rugged, is not one continuous line of precipices,

nor is it of any great altitude. On first principles it was probable

that there might be one or more passages in this stretch of thirty

miles, though it was conceivable that there might be no road over

which artillery could travel[441].

[441] As a matter of fact, the modern railway from Coimbra and

Pampilhosa to the upper Mondego does not use the pass of Bussaco,

but goes north of it, round the left flank of Wellington’s

position, by Luso, far south of the Boialvo road to Mortagoa.

There was, therefore, nothing astonishing in the fact that Montbrun

discovered that such a track existed, nine miles north of Bussaco,

running from Mortagoa, by Aveleira and Boialvo, to Sardão in the

valley of the Agueda, one of the affluents of the Vouga. There was

nothing particularly startling in the discovery, nor did it imply

any special perspicacity in the discoverers, as many of the French

narratives seek to imply. A peasant captured in one of the deserted

villages high up the Oerins, and cross-questioned by Masséna’s

Portuguese aide-de-camp Mascarenhas, who accompanied Sainte-Croix on

his reconnaissance, revealed the fact that this country-road existed.

He even, it is said, expressed to his compatriot his surprise that

the French had not taken it when first they arrived at Mortagoa,

since it was unguarded, while the whole allied army was lying

across the Bussaco \_chaussée\_. It was, he said, habitually used by

the ox-waggons of the peasantry: it was not a good road, but was a

perfectly practicable one.

With this all-important news Montbrun and Sainte-Croix returned to

Masséna about midday. The Marshal at once resolved to make an attempt

to utilize the Boialvo road. There was some danger in doing so,

since it was possible that Wellington might wait till the greater

part of the French army had retired from his front, and then descend

upon the rearguard and overwhelm it. Or, on the other hand, he might

have made preparations to hold the further end of the pass, so that

when the vanguard of the invaders was nearing Boialvo or Sardão they

might find 20,000 men, withdrawn from the Bussaco position in haste,

lying across their path at some dangerous turn of the road. Indeed,

we may confidently assert that if in 1810 the British general had

possessed the army that he owned in 1813, Masséna would have had

the same unpleasant experience that befell Soult at Sorauren, when

he attempted a precisely similar manœuvre--a flank march round the

allied army on the day after a lost battle.

But Masséna was prepared to take risks, and the risk which he was now

accepting was a considerably less perilous one than that which he

had incurred when he chose to make a frontal attack on the Bussaco

position on the preceding day. For though flank marches across an

enemy’s front are justly deprecated by every military authority, this

was one executed at a distance of nine or ten miles from the British

line, and not in a level country, on to which Wellington might

easily descend from his fastness, but in a broken wooded upland,

full of ridges on which the French might have formed up to fight if

assailed. If this fact did not remove the danger, it at any rate made

it infinitely less. If one of the two possible contretemps should

happen--if Wellington should come down with a sudden rush upon the

rearguard--that force would have to fight a defensive action on the

ridges below Bussaco, till the main body could turn back to help it.

In that case there would follow a pitched battle upon rolling and

uneven ground, which did not favour one side more than the other;

and this, at any rate, would be a more favourable situation for

the French than that in which they had fought on Sept. 27. If, on

the other hand, Wellington should send a strong detachment to hold

the western debouch of the Boialvo road, nothing would be lost--if

nothing would be gained. It was improbable that there would be any

position in that quarter quite so strong as the tremendous slope of

the Serra de Bussaco. The result of an attempt to force the defile

might be successful.

At any rate Masséna thought the experiment worthy of a trial.

Accordingly, on the afternoon of the 28th, ostentatious

demonstrations were made against the front of the Bussaco position,

which led to a good deal of objectless skirmishing[442]. Wellington

was not for a moment deceived. Indeed, the idea that another assault

was impending was negatived by the fact that both Reynier’s and Ney’s

men were seen to be throwing up \_abattis\_ and digging trenches on the

flanks of the two roads on which they lay. These could only be meant

for defensive use, and presumably must be intended to help the French

rearguard to hold the ridges, if the Anglo-Portuguese army should

descend upon them. Late in the afternoon officers furnished with good

telescopes, and stationed on the highest point of the Bussaco Serra,

reported that they could detect columns in movement from the French

rear in the direction of the north-west. These were Sainte-Croix’s

cavalry and the baggage-trains of Ney and Junot making their way to

the rear, in order to get into the Mortagoa-Boialvo road. At six

o’clock, dusk having still not come on, it was reported that Ney’s

infantry reserves were certainly moving in the same direction. Only

Loison’s division was still immovable on its old position opposite

Sula. At nightfall, therefore, the movement of the French was well

ascertained. It might mean merely a general retreat on Mortagoa and

an abandonment of the campaign[443], but this was most unlikely. Far

more probable was some march to turn the allied flank by the passes

of the Serra de Caramula. Wellington himself had no doubt whatever

that this was the enemy’s intention. As the dusk fell he stood for

some time on the summit of the Serra, watching the French columns

receding in the distance. He then rode back to his head quarters at

the convent of Bussaco, and dictated without delay a series of orders

which set his whole army in retreat for Coimbra and Lisbon. Before

daylight the position was deserted, only a rearguard being left on

it. He does not seem to have thought for a moment of attacking, on

the following morning, the 2nd Corps and Loison’s division, which

had been left in his front, nor of directing his right wing to

march on Sardão, which it could have reached long before the French

arrived there. Each of these courses was so obvious that critics have

lavished blame upon him for not adopting the one or the other[444].

[442] The firing commenced soon after 12 noon. See Tomkinson, p.

44.

[443] This was imagined to be the case by some observers, who

overrated Masséna’s loss, and thought he had 10,000 casualties on

the 27th.

[444] See, for example, Fririon, pp. 55-6, Toreno, ii. 164.

Thiers, and even Napier, iii. 32-3.

The explanation of his conduct is neither that he failed to see the

two alternatives which were in his power, nor that he showed (as

several French writers maintain) an excessive timidity. Still less is

it possible to urge, as some have done, that he was ruined by his own

neglect to occupy the Boialvo road. He knew of that pass, had taken

it into consideration, and in one of his dispatches speaks vaguely

of a means which he was hoping to discover to render it useless to

the enemy[445]. This remedy cannot mean, as some have supposed, the

moving thither of Trant’s corps of Portuguese militia. It is true

that Wellington had ordered this force to occupy Sardão some days

before. But it was neither large enough, nor composed of troops solid

enough, to resist, even in a strong position, the attack of a single

French brigade. Some other device must have been meant, though we

cannot determine what it may have been. The true key to Wellington’s

action is to remember the immense pains that he had taken in building

the Lines of Torres Vedras, and the elaborate arrangements that

had been made during the last few weeks to complete the system for

devastating Portugal in front of the enemy. It was by these means,

and not by fights in the open, that he had from the first designed

to defeat the invader. Bussaco had been an ‘uncovenanted mercy’: if

Masséna chose to run his head against that stone wall, it was worth

while to man it, and to permit him to break himself against its

granite boulders. But such an operation as descending into the plain

to attack the 2nd Corps on the 29th, or offering battle in front of

Sardão on that same day, was not within the scope of Wellington’s

intentions. If he had wished to engage in that sort of fighting,

he had already had ample opportunities to attack sections of the

French army during the last two months. But to get engaged with one

corps in a rolling upland, and then to have the other two converging

on him while the fight was in progress, he had never intended--nor

would he do so now. He gave his orders for the retreat of the army

on Coimbra actually before the French had possession of their own

end of the Boialvo pass, and at a moment when a single night march

would have sufficed to place Cole, Craufurd, and Spencer across the

western end of it, with ample time to choose a position before the

enemy could arrive in front. He explains his refusal to do so in his

‘Memorandum of Operations in 1810’ in the following terms: ‘It would

have been impossible to detach a corps from the army to occupy the

Serra de Caramula after the action of the 27th. That corps might have

been hard pressed and obliged to retreat, in which case it must have

retreated upon Sardão and the north of Portugal. It could not have

rejoined the army, and its services would have been wanting in the

fortified position in front of Lisbon. It was therefore determined

to rely upon Colonel Trant alone to occupy the Serra de Caramula,

as his line of operations and retreat was to the northward. Nothing

could have been done, except by detaching a large corps, to prevent

the French from throwing a large force across the Caramula. When,

therefore, they took that road, there was nothing for it but to

withdraw from Bussaco. And, after quitting Bussaco, there was no

position that we could take up with advantage, in which we could

be certain that we could prevent the enemy from getting to Lisbon

before us, till we reached the fortified positions in front of that

place[446].’ As to the other possibility, that of attacking the

French rearguard below Bussaco instead of endeavouring to stop its

vanguard at Sardão, Wellington only observes that ‘they had at least

12,000 or 14,000 more men than we had, and good as our position was,

theirs was equally good.’ If he had fallen upon Reynier, the latter

(he thought) could have detained him long enough to allow Ney and

Junot to return, and so he would have found himself committed to an

offensive action against superior numbers on unfavourable ground.

[445] \_Dispatches\_, vi. 460. Had he proposed to blast away

sections, so as to make it impassable for wheel traffic, as he

did with the Estrada Nova?

[446] \_Dispatches\_, vii. pp. 306-7.

These arguments are unanswerable when we consider Wellington’s

position. He \_might\_ have succeeded in checking Masséna at Boialvo

or Sardão; but, if he did not, ruin would ensue, since he might be

cut off from the detached corps, and then would not have men enough

to hold the Lines of Torres Vedras. He \_might\_ have crushed Reynier

before he was succoured, but if he failed to do so, and became

involved in a general action, a disastrous defeat was possible. In

short, considering what failure would mean--the loss of Lisbon,

the re-embarkation of the army, probably the end of the Peninsular

War--he rightly hesitated to take any risk whatever. At the same

time, we may suspect that if the allied army of 1810 had been the

army of 1813, Wellington might very possibly have played a more

enterprising game. But the Portuguese still formed the larger half of

his force, and though he had ascertained by their behaviour on the

27th that they were now capable of fighting steadily in a defensive

action on favourable ground, it was nevertheless very doubtful

whether he could dare to risk them in a battle fought under different

conditions. One cheering example of the courage and discipline of

these newly organized regiments did not justify him in taking it for

granted that they could be trusted under all possible conditions, as

if they were veteran British troops.

On the dawn of Sept. 29, therefore, the two armies were marching

away from each other. On the Bussaco position there remained only

Craufurd’s Light Division, strengthened by Anson’s cavalry brigade,

which was brought up behind the Serra, to form the mounted section

of the force which was for the next ten days to act as the rearguard

of the allied army. Opposite them only Reynier remained, and he had

drawn far back on to the Mortagoa road, where he stood in a defensive

position in the morning, but retired, brigade after brigade, in the

afternoon. The main body of Wellington’s army was retiring in two

columns: Hill, and Hamilton’s Portuguese division crossed the fords

of Peña Cova and marched for Espinhal and Thomar. The force which

had been left far out on the right behind the Alva--Fane’s cavalry

and Lecor’s Portuguese militia--joined Hill and accompanied him to

Lisbon. This column was absolutely unmolested by the enemy during

the whole twelve days of the retreat to the Lines. The French did

not so much as follow it with a cavalry patrol. The other and larger

column, formed of Spencer, Cole, Leith, and Picton, with Pack’s,

Coleman’s, and Alex. Campbell’s Portuguese, marched for Mealhada and

Coimbra. Craufurd and Anson started twelve hours later to bring up

the rear. During the hours while the Light Division was waiting its

orders to start, some of its officers explored the evacuated French

position, and found parked in an enclosure 400 desperately wounded

soldiers, whom Masséna had abandoned to the mercy of the Portuguese

peasantry. He had used up all available carts and mules to carry his

wounded, but had been forced to leave the worst cases behind. They

were picked up and moved into the convent of Bussaco[447]; on what

became of them afterwards it is well not to speculate. No friendly

column came that way again[448], and the Ordenança were daily growing

more exasperated at the conduct of the invading army. The French were

not only carrying out in an intermittent fashion Masséna’s edict of

Sept. 4, directing that all men with arms but without uniforms were

to be shot at sight, but burning every village that they passed, and

murdering nearly every peasant that they could hunt down, whether he

was bearing arms or no[449].

[447] See Tomkinson, p. 44, and von Linsingen’s Diary, in

Beamish, i. 292. Fririon and the other French narratives speak of

the difficulties of transporting the wounded, but do not mention

that any were abandoned.

[448] Unless some of Reynier’s rearguard cavalry may have looked

in at Bussaco on the 30th, when Craufurd had gone. This is

possible. Trant’s Portuguese were back in the place on Oct. 4.

[449] This seems proved by the ‘Table of Damages committed by the

French Army in 1810-11,’ published by the Coimbra authorities

in 1812, which gives the number of houses burnt and persons

killed in each rural-deanery (arcyprestado) of the bishopric

of Coimbra. Omitting the rural-deaneries south of the Mondego,

where the damages were mainly done during the retreat of the

French in March 1811, and taking only those north of the river,

where no hostile column appeared after October 1810--the district

having been protected by Trant and Wilson during Masséna’s return

march,--we find the following statistics:--

Deanery of Mortagoa 108 murders 19 villages and 47 isolated

houses burnt.

” Oliveirinha 102 ” 100 houses burnt.

” Arazede 99 ” 124 ”

” Coimbra city 14 ” 7 ”

The figures for the deaneries south of Mondego (Soure, Arganil,

Redinha, Miranda do Corvo, Sinde, Cea) are enormously higher. See

Soriano da Luz, iii. 203.

Meanwhile, on the 29th and 30th of September, the French army

was executing its flank march, practically unopposed, though not

unobserved. Sainte-Croix’s division of dragoons was at the head of

the line of march: then came the infantry of the 8th Corps, which

had been put in the vanguard because it had not suffered at Bussaco.

Next came the reserve cavalry of Montbrun, followed by the Grand

Park and the massed baggage of the 6th and 8th Corps, mixed with a

convoy of over 3,000 wounded. Ney’s troops brought up the rear of

the main column. Reynier was a day’s march to the rear; having spent

the 29th opposite the Bussaco heights, he only reached Mortagoa that

evening. Sainte-Croix’s cavalry on this same day had passed the

watershed and reached Avellans de Cima, where they met a patrol of

De Grey’s dragoons, who had sent parties out in all directions, from

their head quarters at Mealhada in the coast-plain. From this time

onward the French advanced guard was watched by the four regiments

of Slade and De Grey, who were directed to hold back its exploring

cavalry, and not to permit it to reach Coimbra an hour sooner than

could be helped. There was also a clash on the afternoon of the 30th

between part of Sainte-Croix’s dragoons and the Portuguese militia

of Trant in front of Sardão. Trant had been ordered to be at that

place on September 27: he only arrived there on the afternoon of

the 28th, not by his own fault, but because his superior officer

Baccelar, commanding the whole militia of the North, had ordered him

to move from Lamego to Sardão by the circuitous road along the Douro,

and then from Feira southward, instead of taking the straight road

across, the mountains north of Vizeu, where he might possibly have

been stopped by some outlying French detachment. Trant had at the

moment only a squadron of dragoons and four militia regiments with

him (Porto, Penafiel, Coimbra, and a battalion of light companies),

and these, from hard marching, and from desertion, were in all less

than 3,000 strong. Knowing that he was expected to hold the debouch

of the Boialvo road against anything short of a strong force, Trant

made an attempt to stand his ground. But his vanguard bolted at

the first shot fired, and with the rest he had to make a hurried

retreat beyond the Vouga, leaving the road free to the French[450].

Sainte-Croix had already pushed in between him and the British

cavalry, who now began to make a slow retreat towards Mealhada. At

that place, early on the 30th, Slade and De Grey were joined by

Anson’s eight squadrons, who had come in at the tail of Craufurd’s

division after the rearguard evacuated the Bussaco position. On

this day the main column of the British infantry marched through

Coimbra, leaving the Light Division alone in the city. Wellington’s

head quarters that night were at Condeixa six miles south of the

Mondego. The three cavalry brigades retired, bickering with the

French advanced guard all day, as far as Fornos, eight miles north of

Coimbra. Masséna’s infantry, after emerging from the Boialvo pass,

were now pushing south, and bivouacked on the night of the 30th,

Ney and Junot’s corps at Mealhada, Reynier’s at Barreiro, ten miles

behind the others. The biscuit which the French army had taken with

it from Almeida was now almost exhausted, and it was a great relief

to the troops to find, in the deserted villages of the plain of

Coimbra, considerable quantities of maize and rice, with which they

could eke out or replace the carefully hoarded rations.

[450] I cannot resist quoting here Trant’s account of the

engagement. He was a man of quaint humour, and the all too few

letters from him to General J. Wilson, which have come into my

hands by the courtesy of Wilson’s representative, Captain Bertram

Chambers, R.N., inspire me with regret that I have not his whole

correspondence. ‘I have once more been putting my fellows to a

trial--my Caçadore battalion did not do as it ought, and had

about thirty killed, wounded, and prisoners, without making

scarcely any resistance--a pleasant business. On the 30th I was

still at Agueda (Sardão and Agueda are one village, properly

speaking, but divided by a bridge), though I was aware that

the French principal force of cavalry was at Boyalva, only a

league from Agueda, and I was completely cut off from the army.

On that morning I had withdrawn the infantry to the Vouga, but

placed my dragoons close to Agueda to observe the French, with

the Caçadores at a half-way distance to support them. I put

them in the most advantageous possible position, protected by a

close pine wood, through which the French cavalry must pass. I

had been from three in the morning till one o’clock, making my

arrangements, and had just sat down to eat something, in a small

village on the left of the Vouga, when a dragoon came flying to

inform me that the French were coming on with two columns of

cavalry in full speed. My coffee was not ready, and remained for

the French to amuse themselves with. I had only time to get the

Penafiel regiment over the bridge when the French arrived--five

minutes sooner and I had been nabbed! I drew up in a good

position, but the French did not cross the Vouga, and I returned

to Oliveira without molestation--but not without a damned false

alarm and panic on the part of the dragoons who were covering my

rear. They galloped through the infantry, and carried confusion

and all the comforts of hell to Oporto! Lieutenant-Colonel

‘Bravoure Bombasto,’ who commanded the Caçadores, ordered his men

to fire, but thought that enough for his honour, as he instantly

left them to shift for themselves, and never looked behind till

he reached Oporto. I put this fellow, with four of the leading

dragoons, into the common dungeon of this place, and am about

to inflict some divisional punishment, for I daren’t report

such conduct to the Marshal (Beresford), who does not punish by

halves! My regiments of infantry--this is the brighter side of

the picture--showed no agitation, notwithstanding the attack

on their nerves. The enemy’s force, I now ascertain, was 800

cavalry, two pieces, and two infantry regiments. The cavalry

alone would have done my business if they had crossed the Vouga!

But they contented themselves with driving in the dragoons and

the Caçadore battalion from Agueda. God bless you. N.T.’

Meanwhile the city of Coimbra was full of distressing scenes. Though

Wellington had ordered the whole population of Western Beira to

leave their abodes as soon as the French reached Vizeu, yet only

the richest of the inhabitants of Coimbra had departed. The bulk

had still held to their houses, and the news of the victory of

Bussaco had encouraged them to hope that no evacuation would be

necessary. The Portuguese government, though it had consented to

carry out Wellington’s scheme of devastation, and had duly published

proclamations commanding its execution, had taken no great pains to

secure obedience to it. The sacrifice, indeed, that was demanded

of the citizens of a wealthy town such as Coimbra was a very great

one--far more bitter than that imposed on the peasantry, who were

told at the same moment to evacuate their flimsy cottages. It was

bitterly resented, and, despite of the proclamation, four-fifths

of the 40,000 inhabitants of Coimbra were still in their houses

when, on the night of the 28th-29th, arrived Wellington’s dispatch

stating that he was abandoning Bussaco, that the French would be in

the city by the 30th or on the 1st of October, and that force would

be used, if necessary, to expel people who still clung to their

dwellings. During the next two days the whole of the population of

Coimbra was streaming out of the place by the roads to the south, or

dropping down the Mondego in boats, to ship themselves for Lisbon

at the little port of Figueira. Even on the 1st of October, the day

when the French were reputed to be facing Fornos, only eight miles

away, all had not yet departed. Many of the poor, the infirm, and

the reckless remained behind to the last possible moment, and only

started when the distant cannonade on the northern side showed that

the British outposts were being driven in. Twenty miles of road were

covered by the dense column of fugitives, headed by those who had

started on the 29th and brought up behind by those who had waited

till the last moment. There was a great want of wheeled conveyances:

the richer folks had gone off with most of them, and others had been

requisitioned for the allied wounded. Hence, many could take off

nothing but what they could carry on their persons. An eye-witness

writes that he saw the whole \_chaussée\_ covered with respectable

families walking on foot with bundles on their heads, while in the

abandoned houses he noticed food of all sorts, table-linen, shirts,

and all manner of other property, which was left behind in disorder

because it was too heavy to be carried[451]. Another tells how ‘the

old and the infirm, no less than the young and robust, carrying with

them all their more valuable effects, covered the fields as well

as the road in every direction, and from time to time the weary

fugitives, unable to carry further the heavier articles that they

had endeavoured to save, dropped them by the wayside and struggled

onward, bereft of the remnant of their little property[452].’

Fortunately the weather for the first eight days after the evacuation

of Coimbra was warm and dry, so that the unhappy multitude had almost

reached Lisbon before they began to suffer any inconvenience from the

October rains.

[451] Tomkinson, p. 47.

[452] Lord Londonderry, ii. p. 12.

While this exodus was going on, Craufurd’s Light Division stood

under arms on the northern side of the city, while the six regiments

of British horse, in the extreme rearguard, were bickering with

Masséna’s squadrons in the plain toward Fornos. On this day the

Marshal had strengthened his van with almost the whole of his

cavalry, having added to Sainte-Croix’s division, which had hitherto

formed the advance, most of Montbrun’s reserve of dragoons, and

Lamotte’s light brigade from the 6th Corps. This body of thirty-four

squadrons was altogether too strong for Stapleton Cotton’s three

brigades, who had to give way whenever they were seriously pressed.

Two miles outside Coimbra the British horse was divided into two

columns: De Grey’s heavy dragoons crossed the Mondego at a ford

opposite Pereira, Slade and Anson’s light dragoons and hussars by

another at Alciada, nearer to the city. At the same moment the Light

Division, when the enemy’s horse came in sight, retired through

Coimbra, crossed the bridge, and pressed up the ascent towards

Condeixa, thrusting before them the rearguard of belated fugitives

who had only made up their minds to depart at the last possible

moment. It is said that the block in front of them was so great that

Craufurd’s regiments would have been in a situation of some danger,

if they had been closely followed by French infantry, and forced to

turn back to defend themselves. But nothing more than a troop of

dragoons watched their passage of the bridge and their retreat to

Condeixa, and not a shot had to be fired.

It was otherwise with the cavalry column composed of Slade’s and

Anson’s brigades: they were closely followed by the bulk of the

French cavalry, and had to turn at the ford to hold back their eager

pursuers. Two squadrons of the German Hussars and one of the 16th

Light Dragoons charged in succession to check the French vanguard,

while a fire was kept up by a line of dismounted skirmishers all

along the river bank. The hussars lost four men killed, and two

officers and thirteen men wounded, besides six prisoners; the

16th, two wounded and one missing in this skirmish. It could have

been avoided, according to critics on the spot, if the brigade had

retreated a little faster in the previous stage of its movement. But

Stapleton Cotton, forgetting the dangers of crossing such a defile

as a narrow ford, had been rather too leisurely in covering the

last three miles, considering that the French were so close behind

him[453]. The enemy’s loss was insignificant[454].

[453] See Beamish’s \_History of the King’s German Legion\_, i.

293-4, and Tomkinson, p. 46.

[454] De Grey’s brigade, though it had no regular fighting, lost

five prisoners and one trooper wounded in this same retreat. The

total loss of the cavalry that day was thirty-four men.

That night the British rearguard lay at Soure and Condeixa, while

head quarters and the rear of the main army were at Redinha. The

French did not cross the Mondego with more than a few cavalry

patrols, and made no attempt to incommode the retreating column.

Indeed they were otherwise employed. The entry of an army into a

deserted town is always accompanied by disorders: that of the army of

Masséna into Coimbra was an exaggerated example of the rule--and for

good reasons. The men had been living on bare rations for a month,

and suddenly they found themselves in a town of 40,000 souls, where

every door was open, every larder garnished, and every cellar full.

The very quays were littered with sacks of flour torn open, and

puncheons of rum stove in, for Wellington’s commissariat officers

had been to the last moment engaged in breaking up and casting into

the river the remains of the magazine which had been feeding the

army at Bussaco. The houses on every side were full of valuable

goods, for most of the inhabitants had only been able to carry off

their money and plate, and had left all else behind them. The first

division of the 8th Corps, the earliest French troops to enter the

place, consisted almost entirely of newly-formed fourth battalions,

composed of conscripts, and ill disciplined. They broke their ranks

and fell to plunder, only half-restrained by their officers, many

of whom joined in the sport. A late comer from the artillery says

that he saw one officer breaking open a door with a pickaxe, and

another placing a sentry at the door of a shop which he wished to

reserve for his own personal pillage[455]. There was wide-spread

drunkenness, some arson, and an enormous amount of mischievous and

wanton waste. It was afterwards said that Junot’s corps destroyed in

twelve hours an amount of food that would have sufficed to supply the

whole army for three weeks. It is at any rate certain that Coimbra

was full of provisions when the French arrived, and that, when order

was tardily restored, only a few days’ consumption could be scraped

together to fill the empty waggons before the host marched on.

Masséna raged against Junot for not having kept his men in hand, yet,

if Portuguese narratives are to be trusted, he set as bad an example

as any disorderly conscript, since he requisitioned for himself out

of the University buildings all the telescopes and mathematical

instruments, and distributed them among his staff[456]. The pillage

was as wanton and objectless as it was thorough; the tombs of the

kings in the church of Santa Cruz were broken open, the University

Museum and laboratories wrecked, and all the churches wantonly

damaged and desecrated. There was no attempt to restore order, or to

utilize the captured property for the general good of the army, till

the 6th Corps marched in on the next day. Even these later comers,

however, could not be restrained from joining in the plunder. The mob

of soldiers threatened to shoot the commissary-generals Lambert and

Laneuville, when they began to put guards over the nearly-emptied

storehouses.

[455] Colonel Noël’s \_Souvenirs Militaires\_, pp. 120-1.

[456] The authority for this statement is the Portuguese renegade

General Pamplona, who served on the Marshal’s staff. See p. 155

of his \_Aperçu sur les campagnes des Français en Portugal\_.

Pamplona adds that Ney refused to take the present of a large

telescope, which Masséna sent him as a propitiatory gift. A less

certain authority says that the Marshal caught in the street a

plunderer with a barrel of butter, and another with a chest of

wax candles, and let them off punishment on condition that they

took them to his own quarters! Soriano da Luz, iii. p. 198.

The state of his army on the 1st and 2nd October sufficiently

explains the conduct of Masséna in refraining from the pursuit of

Wellington’s rearguard. But he was also somewhat puzzled to determine

the policy which he must now adopt. Down to the last moment he

had thought that Wellington would have fought at Fornos, or some

other such position, to defend Coimbra. And even when Coimbra was

evacuated, he had imagined that he might find the enemy drawn up

to dispute the passage of the Mondego. But it was now clear that

Wellington was in full retreat for Lisbon. Since the Marshal was

still ignorant of the existence of the lines of Torres Vedras, which

was only revealed to him four days later, he was somewhat uncertain

how to interpret the conduct of his adversary. After the vigorous

stand that Wellington had made at Bussaco, it seemed dangerous to

argue that he must now be in headlong flight for his ships, and

about to evacuate Portugal. Yet the rapidity of his retreat seemed

to argue some such purpose. Ought he, therefore, to be pursued

without a moment’s delay, in order that his embarkation might be

made difficult? This course, it is said, was advocated by Reynier,

Montbrun, Fririon, and the Portuguese renegade d’Alorna. On the other

hand, Ney and Junot both advised a stay at Coimbra, to rest the army,

collect provisions, and, what was most important of all, to reopen

communications with Almeida, Ciudad Rodrigo, and the 9th Corps, which

was now due on the Spanish frontier. They pointed to the diminished

strength of the army, which, having lost 4,600 men at Bussaco, and

4,000 more by the hard marching and poor feeding of the last month,

was now reduced to some 57,000 men. The fighting-power of Wellington

was formidable, as he had shown at Bussaco, where many of the French

officers persisted in believing that he had shown numbers superior

to their own--in which they erred. A hasty advance, it was urged,

might bring the invaders in face of a second Bussaco, where there

was no chance of a turning movement. Would the commander-in-chief

wish to accept another battle of the same sort? It would be better to

establish a new base at Coimbra, to bring up the 9th Corps from the

rear, and only to move on when the army was thoroughly reorganized.

Meanwhile a detachment might demonstrate against Oporto, to distract

Wellington’s attention[457]. This was the policy that Napoleon,

two months after, declared that Masséna should have adopted. ‘Why,’

he asked, ‘did the Prince of Essling, after his failure at Bussaco,

pursue the march on Lisbon, instead of taking up a position on the

Mondego, and restoring his communications with Almeida? I had not

burdened him with orders or instructions, and he could see that the

English were not easy to beat.’ Masséna’s advocate, Foy, replied that

‘if the Army of Portugal had been halted on the Mondego, your Majesty

would have said to the Prince, Why did you not march on? The English

would have re-embarked, if they had been pressed.’ To which Napoleon,

with a broad smile, answered, ‘Very true; I probably should have said

so[458].’

[457] Fririon, in his account of these debates (pp. 72-3),

forgets that the existence of the Lines of Torres Vedras was

still unknown both to Masséna and his subordinates. So does

Delagrave (pp. 93-4). But Pelet, Masséna’s confidant, is positive

that they were first heard of from prisoners taken at Pombal on

Oct. 5, two days after the advance had recommenced.

[458] Foy’s minutes of his conversation with the Emperor on Nov.

22, sent by him to Masséna, in his letter of Dec. 4. See Appendix

to Foy’s \_Vie Militaire\_ by Girod de L’Ain, p. 348.

The problem presented to the Marshal, indeed, was not an easy one. If

he remained at Coimbra, his enemies would delate him to the Emperor

for timidity; if he advanced, he might find that he had undertaken a

task too great for his strength. The personal equation settled the

difficulty: Masséna was obstinate and enterprising to the verge of

temerity. He resolved to go on, at the earliest possible moment, in

the hope of forcing Wellington to a battle on ground less favourable

than Bussaco, or of compelling him to embark without any general

engagement at all. Two days only were spent at Coimbra. On October 3,

Montbrun’s cavalry, after making a reconnaissance as far as the sea

and the port of Figueira, crossed the Mondego to Villa Nova de Ancos,

while the 8th Corps, headed by Sainte-Croix’s dragoons, occupied

Condeixa: one division of Ney’s corps followed them. The rest of the

6th Corps and Reynier made ready to resume their advance.

A minor problem remained to be resolved. Should a large garrison

be left in Coimbra, and a new base for the army established there?

The Marshal had shot into the convent of Santa Clara 3,000 Bussaco

wounded, and 1,000 sick men. There was an accumulation of waggons of

the corps-trains and the Grand Park, which could push on no further,

for want of draught beasts, and all manner of other impedimenta.

If the army went on at full speed, in the hope of overtaking the

English, all this must be left behind. But if left unguarded, wounded

and all might become the victims of Trant’s militia, which was known

to have retired no further than the Vouga, or even of the Ordenança

of the hills. A strong garrison must be placed in Coimbra to make it

safe: rumour had it on October 2 that Taupin’s brigade and a regiment

of dragoons were to be set to guard the city[459]. But rumour was

wrong: Masséna, after some doubting, made up his mind that he could

not spare even 3,000 men. Every bayonet would be wanted if Wellington

once more turned to bay. Accordingly he took the extraordinary

step of telling off only a single company, 156 men, of the 44th

\_Équipage de la Marine\_--a naval unit which had been given him in

order that he might have a nucleus of sea-going people, in case he

succeeded in seizing the Portuguese arsenal at Lisbon. One would

have thought that such men would have been so valuable, if only the

enterprise had succeeded, that he would have chosen rather a company

of ordinary infantry. These sailors, with two or three hundred

footsore or convalescent men, organized into a couple of provisional

companies, were all that the Marshal placed at the disposition of

Major Flandrin, to whom he gave the high-sounding title of Governor

of Coimbra. That officer was told that every day would increase

his force, as more convalescents came out of hospital, and 3,500

muskets, belonging to the sick and wounded, were left with him. The

whole mass of disabled men was concentrated in the convent of Santa

Clara, a vast building outside the trans-pontine suburb of Coimbra,

on the south side of the Mondego. The garrison was so weak that it

could do no more than keep a guard at each of the exits of the town,

which was destitute of walls, with a post of thirty men, all that

could be spared, at Fornos, on the great north road facing Oporto.

To abandon his wounded to almost certain destruction was a reckless

act on the Marshal’s part: probably he said to himself that if he

could but catch and beat the Anglo-Portuguese army, a small disaster

in his rear would be forgiven him. Unlike Wellington, he was ‘taking

risks’[460].

[459] So Guingret, of the 6th Corps, who mentions that his

own regiment received notice that no garrison was to be left,

only just in time to enable it to pick up its slightly wounded

and footsore men, who would otherwise have remained behind.

(\_Memoirs\_, p. 79.)

[460] The best summing up of the Marshal’s resolve may be found

in Foy’s minute presented to Napoleon on Nov. 22: ‘Le prince n’a

pas pu se résoudre à faire un fort détachement lorsqu’il devait

livrer sous peu de jours une bataille décisive à une armée déjà

victorieuse et deux fois plus nombreuse[!] que la notre. Les

dangers que couraient ses malades ont affligé son cœur, mais il a

pensé que la crainte de perdre l’hôpital ne devait pas arrêter la

campagne.’ (Foy’s \_Vie Militaire\_, Appendix, p. 348.)

On October 4 the French army made its regular start from Coimbra;

the 6th Corps came out to Villa Pouca and Condeixa on the Pombal

road, the 2nd Corps to Venda do Cego on the Ancião road, which runs

parallel with the other, ten miles to the east, and joins it at

Leiria. Montbrun’s cavalry pushed in from Soure, to place itself in

front of the 8th Corps, which now moved on from Condeixa as the head

of the main infantry column. Its scouts that evening bickered in

front of Pombal with Anson’s light cavalry, which was covering the

retreat of the allied army. The two days which the French had spent

in plundering Coimbra had allowed the Anglo-Portuguese infantry to

get a start which they never lost: they never saw the enemy again

during the rest of the retreat. That night Wellington’s head quarters

were at Leiria, while Hill, unpursued by any hostile force, was at

Thomar. For the next six days the British pursued a leisurely course

towards the Lines, along the three roads Thomar-Santarem-Villafranca,

which was taken by Hill; Alcobaça-Caldas-Torres Vedras, which was

taken by Picton; and Leiria-Batalha-Alemquer, which was taken

by Spencer, Leith, and Cole. It was along the last-named, the

central, road, that Craufurd’s infantry and the three cavalry

brigades followed the main body, at the distance of a day’s march.

Anson’s light cavalry brought up the extreme rear, and was almost

the only unit which saw the enemy between the 4th and the 10th of

October[461]. The rest of the allied army had completely outmarched

Masséna. Its retreat was marked by some disorders: the sight of rich

monasteries like Alcobaça and Batalha, and large towns, like Thomar

and Leiria, standing empty, yet left full of all such property as

the inmates could not easily carry off, proved as tempting to the

British as the sight of Coimbra had been to the French. There was

much drunkenness, much looting, and some wanton mischief. Wellington

set himself to repress it by the strong hand. He hung at Leiria

two troopers of the 4th Dragoon Guards, who were caught plundering

a chapel, and a man of the 11th Portuguese infantry. Some of the

regiments which were found specially addicted to pillage were ordered

to bivouac in the open fields every night, and never to be quartered

in a village[462].

[461] Though Slade’s brigade had the rearguard on the 7th, and

was engaged on the 8th also, Anson’s only was in touch with the

French on the 4th-6th, and again on the 9th-10th.

[462] This was the case with Picton’s division, despite its

splendid services and heavy loss at Bussaco, only ten days back.

Leith’s British brigade and the Lusitanian Legion are also

specially upbraided for straggling. See \_General Orders\_ for

1810, pp. 173-4.

Anson’s brigade, alone among the allied troops, had an adventurous

career during the retreat to the Lines. It was always in touch with

a pursuing force of immense strength, for Masséna had constituted a

flying vanguard under Montbrun, whose orders were to push the enemy

at all costs, and to try to come up with his infantry. This force

consisted of Sainte-Croix’s dragoons, Pierre Soult’s cavalry from

the 2nd Corps, Lamotte’s from the 6th Corps, one brigade (Ornano’s)

of the Reserve Cavalry, and Taupin’s infantry from the 8th Corps.

Lamotte’s light horse had the place of honour, and endured most of

the hard knocks. They had lively skirmishing with Anson’s 1st German

Hussars and 16th Light Dragoons between Pombal and Leiria on the

5th October. The British brigade turned back twice, and drove their

pursuers back on to Taupin’s infantry, but always suffered when it

had to resume its inevitable retreat. The French lost eight killed,

seventeen wounded (including five officers) and twenty prisoners--the

British fifty in all, including two officers wounded, and one taken.

This combat would not have been worth mentioning, but for the fact

that it was from prisoners captured in it that Masséna got his first

news of the existence of the Lines of Torres Vedras. Some of the

troopers spoke freely of ‘the Lines’ as their point of destination,

not guessing that this was the first time that their captors had

heard of them. Hence the French generals learned that there were

now fortifications in front of Lisbon: but they had, of course, no

knowledge of their extent or character, and only expected to find

some field-works on which Wellington would turn to bay. In fact,

Masséna was encouraged by the news, thinking that he was now certain

of the battle which he desired.

On the 7th October the French infantry was all concentrated at

Leiria, Reynier’s corps having now rejoined the other two. Montbrun’s

cavalry spread out so far as Alcobaça--whose monastery it sacked--on

the coast-road, and Muliano on the central road. Vedettes were sent

out on the cross-road to Thomar also, but could find no trace of an

enemy in that direction. On the night that followed Masséna received

the disquieting intelligence that his deliberate taking of risks with

regard to Coimbra had already been punished. A mounted officer, who

had escaped, brought him news that his hospitals and their guard had

been captured at a single blow by Trant’s militia that same afternoon.

That enterprising partisan, it will be remembered, had been driven

behind the Vouga by Sainte-Croix’s dragoons on September 30th. Since,

however, none of the French turned aside to molest him, and all

marched across his front on the Coimbra road, he was not forced to

retire any further. And having his orders from Wellington to follow

the enemy with caution, and pick up his stragglers and marauders, he

came southward again when Masséna’s rearguard entered Coimbra. He

had advanced to Mealhada when it was reported to him, on the 6th,

that the rearguard of the French had left the city on the preceding

day. A few people who had returned from the mountains to their homes,

despite Wellington’s proclamation, sent him assurances that the

numbers of the garrison were absolutely insignificant, and that of

the wounded enormous. Judging rightly that it would have a splendid

moral effect to capture Masséna’s hospitals, and the commencement of

a base-magazine which was being formed at Coimbra, Trant resolved to

strike at once. If he had waited a little he could have got help from

J. Wilson and from Miller, who had descended into the Celorico-Vizeu

country, each with his brigade. They had been directed by Wellington

to cut the French communications with Almeida, and had already

carried out their orders.

But Trant dreaded delay, thinking that Masséna might send back troops

to Coimbra, when he found that Wellington was retiring as far as

Lisbon. Without waiting for his colleagues, he marched at midday from

Mealhada to Fornos on the 7th, and had the good fortune to surprise

and capture the insignificant French post at that village: not a man

escaped. He was now only eight miles from Coimbra, and was able to

rush down into the city in the early afternoon before his arrival

was known. He had with him one weak squadron of regular dragoons,

and six militia battalions, having been joined since September 29th

by all his stragglers and some outlying units. The whole made about

4,000 men[463]. Formed in two columns, they charged into Coimbra by

its two northern entrances, sweeping away the small French guards at

the gates. The squadron of cavalry then galloped along the street

parallel with the river, and seized the bridge, thus cutting off the

communication between the French in the town and those at the convent

of Santa Clara, where the wounded lay. The small grand-guard, which

the enemy kept inside the place, took refuge in the bishop’s palace,

but was forced to lay down its arms at the end of an hour. The men

at the convent, joined by many of the convalescents, kept up a fire

for a short time, but surrendered at discretion, on Trant’s promise

to protect them from the fury of his troops. He was, unfortunately,

not entirely able to redeem his promise: the Coimbra local regiment

was so enraged at the state in which it found its native town that

it mishandled some of the prisoners--eight are said to have been

slain[464]. The total loss of the Portuguese division was three

killed and one officer and twenty-five men wounded.

[463] The brigade was not complete, the Feira battalion

having--somehow or other--got to Lisbon. But Porto, Penafiel,

Coimbra, Aveiro, Maia, and a combined battalion of light

companies were apparently present.

[464] See Trant’s dispatch to Beresford in Soriano da Luz, vii,

Appendix, p. 221.

Wilson and Miller came up next day, and sweeping the roads towards

Condeixa and Pombal, picked up 300 more stragglers and marauders from

the tail of Masséna’s marching column. Trant handed over Coimbra to

them, and escorted his prisoners to Oporto with his own division:

there were 3,507 sick and wounded, of whom half could march, while

the rest were taken off in carts. Of able-bodied men not more than

400 soldiers were taken: but some hundreds of commissariat and

hospital employés and men of the train brought up the total figures

of the prisoners to 4,500 men. Trant has been accused by some French

writers[465] of deliberately exposing his captives to the fury of the

peasantry, and parading the wounded in an indecent fashion through

the streets of Oporto. But the handsome testimonial to his humanity

signed by a committee of French officers, which Napier prints in the

Appendix no. 5 to his third volume, is enough to prove that Trant

did his best for his prisoners, and that the unfortunate incident

which occurred just after the surrender must not be laid to his

account[466].

[465] As for example Delagrave, p. 197, and Fririon, p. 75.

[466] Trant delivered nearly 400 British and Portuguese wounded,

whom Wellington had been obliged to leave behind at Coimbra, as

non-transportable.

Masséna’s army received the news of the fall of Coimbra with

indignation. It produced a painful impression on every mind; and

while the rank and file murmured at the Marshal’s cruelty in

abandoning their comrades to death--for it was falsely reported that

the Portuguese had massacred them all--the officers blamed his blind

improvidence, and observed that a brigade might well have been spared

to protect not only the hospitals but the invaluable base-dépôt

behind them[467].

[467] Sprünglin writes, under Oct. 7, in his Diary: ‘Lorsque le

sort des malheureux abandonnés à Coimbre fut connu dans l’armée,

on murmura hautement contre le Prince d’Essling. On qualifia

de coupable entêtement et de barbarie sa conduite à Busaco et

l’abandon des blessés à Coimbre. Il faut avouer que le maréchal

Ney, le général Reynier et le duc d’Abrantes ne firent rien pour

faire cesser ces murmures. Dès lors l’armée perdit de sa force,

parce que le général-en-chef n’avait plus la confiance de ses

soldats.’ Cf. Guingret, p. 79.

There was heavy skirmishing between the British rearguard cavalry and

Montbrun’s advance, both on the 8th and 9th of October. On the first

of these days the horse-artillery troop attached to Anson’s brigade

was, by some extraordinary mistake, left encamped out in front of

the squadrons which were told off as its escort, and was nearly

surprised in Alcoentre by an irruption of Sainte-Croix’s dragoons

in a storm of rain[468]. Somers Cocks’s squadron of the 16th Light

Dragoons charged just in time to save the guns, and to jam the head

of the enemy’s column, as it was crossing the bridge which leads into

the village. Alcoentre was held till dusk, when Taupin’s infantry

came up, and Anson’s brigade retired, having lost only one trooper

wounded, while the French had sixteen disabled or taken.

[468] ‘Rather a new style of war, to place guns in a village and

the troops protecting them a mile in the rear.’--Tomkinson, p. 51.

From this day onward, the weather, which had been fine and dry since

the army left Coimbra, broke up for the autumn rains, and the last

three days of the retreat to the Lines were spent in torrential

downpour. This had the advantage of delaying the French; for while

the British infantry, who were two days ahead of them, reached

their destined position on the 9th (with the exception of the Light

Division and Pack’s Portuguese), the enemy was marching on flooded

roads from the 8th to the 11th.

On the 9th there was continual bickering in the rain, from Quinta da

Torre as far as Alemquer, between Lamotte’s light cavalry brigade,

which had again replaced Sainte-Croix’s dragoons at the head of the

pursuing column, and Anson’s two much-enduring regiments. On this

day the 1st Hussars of the King’s German Legion had the thick of the

work: Linsingen’s squadron of that admirable regiment, which formed

the rear detachment of the whole army, turned back to charge no less

than four times in five miles, and always with success. At dusk the

French infantry got up, and the allied cavalry retired on to Alemquer

after a fatiguing day of fighting, in which the hussars had lost two

killed, two officers and nine men wounded, and seventeen missing; the

supporting regiment, the 16th Light Dragoons, had one killed, three

wounded, and four missing, and the Royals of Slade’s brigade, who

only got engaged in the late evening, one wounded and four missing.

Lamotte’s loss was a little more--six killed, twenty-two wounded, and

twenty-one prisoners[469]. Three of his officers were hurt, one taken.

[469] Readers interested in cavalry work should read Beamish, i.

298-301, and Tomkinson, 52-3, who have admirable accounts of this

rearguard fighting.

On the next day (Oct. 10) the whole of the British cavalry marched

from Alemquer to within the Lines, distributing themselves to the

cantonments which had been arranged for them. But Craufurd’s and

Pack’s infantry, which had hitherto been completely covered by

the horsemen, did not follow their example with quite sufficient

promptitude, and got engaged in an unnecessary skirmish. The Light

Division should have withdrawn at noon, but Craufurd, believing the

French infantry to be still far away, and despising the cavalry

which hovered around him, remained in Alemquer, intending to spend

another night in a dry cantonment, for the torrential rain which

was falling promised a fatiguing march to his men. At four o’clock

Taupin’s infantry came up, and engaged the pickets of the Light

Division in a skirmish. Having been strictly forbidden by Wellington

to get entangled in a rearguard action, and remembering perhaps

his experience at the Coa, Craufurd tardily and unwillingly moved

off. But dusk coming on, his column missed its road, and instead

of retiring into the section of the Lines which it was destined

to occupy, between the Monte Agraça and the valley of Calandriz,

went too far to the west, and came in upon the position of the 1st

Division in front of Sobral. This would have been dangerous if the

French had had any infantry to the front, to take advantage of the

unoccupied gap in the lines. But Montbrun’s advanced guard had

pressed more than thirty miles in front of the main body of Masséna’s

army, and this force contained nothing but cavalry, save the single

brigade of Taupin--less than 3,000 men[470]. This force, such as it

was, did not pass Alemquer that night--Craufurd, in his retreat on

Sobral, was followed by cavalry alone. It was not till next morning,

when Montbrun sent out reconnaissances in all directions, that he

found himself in front of fortifications drawn across every road,

and gradually realized that he was in front of the famous ‘Lines of

Torres Vedras.’

[470] For this reason the dismal picture of the situation drawn

by Napier (iii. 38-9) must be considered exaggerated. The French

main army was further off than he imagines; it had not passed

Alcoentre. The cavalry could have done nothing against the

heights, and Taupin’s brigade would have been crushed if it had

endeavoured to enter the gap. But it never came within ten miles

of the exposed point on the 10th and 11th, not having passed

Alemquer. The Light Division diarists do not treat seriously the

position which Napier paints in such gloomy colours. See Leach,

p. 172, and Simmons, p. 111. The Light Division countermarched

from Sobral to Arruda and reached their proper post long before

midnight. There they picked up a detachment of 150 convalescents

and recruits from Lisbon, who, had been waiting for them. Among

these were Harry Smith and Simmons, who have accounts of the

arrival of the division ‘after dark,’ and of its relief at

finding large fires already lighted and provisions prepared by

the draft.

It must not be supposed that Wellington’s final arrangements for

the reception of the army of Masséna in front of Lisbon were made

at leisure, or at a moment when he had nothing to distract him.

Though the actual retreat of his army from the position of Bussaco

to the position of Torres Vedras was conducted at an easy pace,

and practically unmolested by the enemy, yet the days during which

it was being carried out were a time of political, though not of

military, storm and stress. Ever since the French had started from

Almeida, and made their first advance into the mountains of Beira,

Wellington had been engaged in an endless and tiresome controversy

with the Portuguese Regency. Though they had assented, long before,

to the scheme for devastating the country-side and bringing Masséna

to a check only in front of Lisbon, yet when the actual invasion

began, and the first hordes of fugitives were reported to be leaving

their homes, and burning their crops, and taking to the mountains,

several of the members of the Regency became appalled at the awful

sacrifices which they were calling upon the nation to endure. The

Principal Sousa put himself at the head of the movement, and was

supported by the Patriarch, the Bishop of Oporto, so famous in 1808.

Sousa brought before the Regency proposals that Wellington should

be formally requested to try the chances of a pitched battle on

the frontier, before retiring on Coimbra or Lisbon. In addition,

he was always maintaining in private company that the people

should not be required to take in hand the scheme of devastation

and wholesale emigration, till it was certain the allied army was

unable to stop Masséna somewhere east of the Serra da Estrella.

He also laid before the Regency documents intended to prove that

the system of devastation was physically impossible, and that it

would prove incapable of stopping the advance of the French, owing

to the difficulty that would be found in persuading the peasantry

to destroy instead of hiding their stores of food[471]. There was

a certain modicum of truth in this last argument, and the French

did succeed in living for a longer time in the evacuated districts

than Wellington had considered possible. On the other hand, the

Principal was hopelessly wrong in his contention that the French

would suffer little inconvenience. They were starved out of Portugal

by Wellington’s device, even though it took longer to work out

its results than he had calculated. There is no reason to suppose

that Sousa was in any way treacherously inclined: he and his whole

family stood or fell with the English alliance, and the victory

of the French would mean ruin to them. But his private and public

utterances and those of his satellites had a deplorable effect. In

the mouth of the common people it took the form of a widely-spread

rumour that Wellington had refused to fight at all, and intended to

re-embark the British army. This did not lead to any wish to submit

to Napoleon, but to a desperate determination to resist even if

deserted. Wellington’s dispatches are full of a riot which took place

in Lisbon on September 7th, when the militia proposed to seize on St.

Julian’s, the Citadel, and the Bugio fort because they were informed

that the English garrisons were about to evacuate them and put to

sea[472]. When Masséna had already passed Coimbra, Sousa was mad

enough to propose, at the Regency board, that the Portuguese troops

should not retire within the Lines, but remain outside and offer

battle in the open, even if the British refused to stand by them. The

nervous activity of the government had been shown some three weeks

before by the sudden arrest and deportation of some fifty persons in

Lisbon, who were suspected, rightly or wrongly, of ‘Jacobinism,’ and

had been accused of having secret communication with d’Alorna and

the other renegades in Masséna’s army. They included a few officers,

and a good many lawyers, doctors, merchants, and minor officials,

as well as some dependants and relatives of the exiles. The case

against most of them was so weak that Wellington protested against

their banishment, holding that the alarm caused by the arrests would

make the people of Lisbon unreasonably suspicious, and give rise to

a belief in wide-spread plots. But despite his letter to the Regency

all were shipped off to the Azores[473]. Some were ultimately allowed

to go to England, others to Brazil, but the majority were not allowed

to return to Portugal till 1816.

[471] For Sousa’s arguments, see Soriano da Luz, iii. pp. 130-44.

That author thinks the Principal’s arguments weighty, and sees no

harm in the fact that he set them forth in public and private.

Cf. Wellington, \_Dispatches\_, vi. 430.

[472] See Wellington to Charles Stuart, Sept. 9, and to Lord

Liverpool, Sept. 13, 1810, \_Dispatches\_, vol. vi. pp. 420-30.

[473] See Soriano da Luz, iii. 90-9, for a list of them, and

Wellington’s \_Dispatches\_, vi. 433, for the protest against the

deportation; also ibid. 528-9.

‘All I ask from the Government,’ wrote Wellington, on October 6th, in

the midst of the retreat, ‘is tranquillity in the town of Lisbon, and

provisions for their own troops[474].’ These two simple requirements

were precisely those which he did not obtain. The capital of Portugal

was kept disturbed by arbitrary arrests, by proclamations which

often contained false news, and sometimes pledged the Regency to

measures which the Commander-in-Chief disapproved, and by senseless

embargoes laid on vehicles and commodities, which were never turned

to use[475]. At the same time the Portuguese troops were not fed, and

the tents which had been ordered forward to the positions behind the

lines never started from the magazines of Lisbon[476].

[474] \_Dispatches\_, vi. p. 493.

[475] \_Dispatches\_, vi. 521. ‘When they have got mules and

carriages, by injudicious seizure, they do not employ them, but

the animals and people are kept starving and shivering, while we

still want provisions.’

[476] Ibid., vi. p. 506.

Wellington’s temper, tried to the uttermost by these distractions,

when his mind was entirely engrossed by military problems, grew

sharp and irritable at this time. He went so far as to write to

the Prince Regent at Rio de Janeiro, to declare that either he or

Principal Sousa must leave the country. He suggested that some post

as ambassador or special envoy should be found for the man who

troubled him so. The Patriarch, as ‘a necessary evil,’ he did not

wish to displace, but only to scare. Unfortunately, an appeal to

Brazil was hopeless, since the Regent was entirely in the hands of

the Principal’s brother, the Conde de Linhares. Much acrimonious

correspondence, delayed by the vast time which was consumed in

getting letters to and from Rio, only led in the end to a proposal

from Linhares that his brother should leave the Regency, if Charles

Stuart, the British Ambassador, was also withdrawn from it, and if

the War-Minister, General Miguel Forjaz, whom Wellington considered

a necessary person and the ablest man in Portugal, should also be

removed from his post[477]. To this proposal neither Wellington

nor the British government would consent, and as it only came in

when Masséna’s invasion had already been foiled, and the French had

retired into Spain, the crisis was over. The Principal remained at

the Council Board, to talk much impracticable and mischievous stuff,

but to do little positive harm. When the invasion was past Wellington

could afford to disregard him.

[477] See Soriano da Luz, iii. p. 142. For text of it his

\_Appendix\_, vii. 178-9. The answer was only written on Feb. 11,

1811, and only got to Wellington in April when the crisis was

over.

SECTION XXI: CHAPTER IV

THE LINES OF TORRES VEDRAS

We have hitherto, when speaking of Wellington’s immense scheme for

fortifying the position on which he intended to bring his enemy to a

standstill, refrained from entering into the details of his plan. It

is now time to describe it in full, and to explain its design.

The character of the peninsula on which Lisbon stands lends

itself sufficiently well to defence. At a first inspection the

country-side offers a rather chaotic expanse of mountain and valley,

whose general features are hard to seize from any one point. On

further examination, it appears that the whole square mass of land

between the Atlantic and the Tagus estuary is nothing more than a

continuation of the ridge of the Serra de Monte Junta, the main

mountain-chain of Estremadura. But from the backbone or central mass

of the highland so many large spurs are thrown out to each side, and

these are themselves so high and steep, that the whole peninsula

seems more like a ganglion of mountains than a well-marked chain.

The two chief joints or vertebrae in the backbone are the Monte

Agraça above Sobral, and the Cabeça de Montechique six miles south

of it, and these form the central points respectively of the first

and second lines of defence which were finally laid out. Besides

the outer defences there was in Wellington’s scheme, from the very

start, an inner ring of works, covering only a small area on the

sea-shore, at the southernmost point of the peninsula, to the west of

Lisbon. This was merely intended to cover an embarkation, if by any

unforeseen disaster the Lines themselves should be pierced.

It remains to speak of the system of defences in detail. In October

1809, Wellington’s plan had embraced no more than one continuous

line of works from Alhandra on the Tagus to the mouth of the Rio

São Lourenço on the Atlantic, with certain redoubts and fortified

camps thrown out in front, at Torres Vedras, Monte Agraça, and other

points. These latter fortifications were not intended to be held in

permanence; but it was hoped that they might defer and hinder the

enemy’s attack on the main line in the rear. It was only the long

delay in Masséna’s advance, which gave Wellington five or six months

on which he had not counted, that led to the ultimate strengthening

of the scattered outer works, and their conversion into a continuous

whole, capable of turning back, instead of merely detaining for a

time, the invading army. Indeed, all across the peninsula, designs

that were slight, isolated, and provisional when first drawn up, were

in the end enlarged, and perfected into wholly different structures.

For the engineers, having unlimited labour at their disposal,

and much more time than had been promised them, could turn their

attention, after the essential works had been completed, to devising

all manner of additional improvements and securities for the chosen

position.

The construction of the Lines was entrusted to Colonel Fletcher,

Wellington’s commanding engineer, who had as his chief assistant

Major John Jones, the historian of the works, and in addition eleven

British officers of the Royal Engineers, two from the King’s German

Legion, and three from the Portuguese regular army. Wellington

himself, after making one all-embracing survey of-the positions in

Fletcher’s company in October 1809, and another in February 1810,

left all the rest to his subordinate, and refrained from worrying him

with matters of detail, being satisfied that his own intentions had

been thoroughly well grasped. The labour available was, firstly, that

of the Lisbon militia regiments, who were brought up by alternate

pairs, and paid an extra 4\_d.\_ a day for their services[478];

secondly, that of hired volunteers from the peasantry of the

district, of whom from 5,000 to 7,000 were generally in hand; they

received 1\_s.\_, afterwards 1\_s.\_ 8\_d.\_ a day[479]; and lastly of a

conscription from the whole of southern Estremadura, for a circuit

of forty miles around. The forced labour was paid at the same rate

as that freely hired. On the whole, only about £100,000 was paid

out between November 1809 and September 1810--so that the Lines of

Torres Vedras may be considered one of the cheapest investments in

history. The militiamen and peasantry were worked in gangs of some

1,000 or 1,500 men, each in charge of an engineer officer, who had

a few English and Portuguese military artificers as his assistants:

only 150 such were available, so short were both armies of trained

men. ‘In some districts a subaltern officer of engineers with a few

English soldiers, utterly ignorant of the language, directed and

controlled the labour of 1,500 peasantry, many of them compelled

to work at a distance of forty miles from their homes, while their

lands lay neglected. Nevertheless, during a year of this forced

labour not a single instance of insubordination or riot occurred.

The great quantity of work performed should, in justice to the

Portuguese, be ascribed more to the regular habit of persevering

labour in those employed than to the efficiency of the control

exercised over them[480].... Indeed, it is but a tribute of justice

to the Portuguese of Estremadura to state that, during many months of

constant personal intercourse, both private and public, the labouring

classes ever showed themselves respectful, industrious, docile, and

obedient, while the governing classes in every public transaction

evinced much intelligence, patriotism, good sense, and probity.

Secrecy with respect to the extent and nature of the works was

enjoined, and it is highly creditable to all concerned that hardly a

vague paragraph concerning the Lines found its way into the public

prints. The French invaders remained ignorant of the nature of the

barrier rising against them, till they found our army arrayed on it

so as to stop their further advance[481].’

[478] Or two \_vintems\_ Portuguese money.

[479] Or six, and afterwards ten, \_vintems\_. See Jones, \_Lines of

Torres Vedras\_, p. 77.

[480] Jones, p. 79.

[481] Id., p. 107.

The total frontage of the southern and stronger series of lines,

those which Wellington originally planned as his line of defence, was

twenty-two miles from sea to sea. The outer and northern series of

works, which was originally only a supplement and outer bulwark to

the other, was longer, extending to twenty-nine miles, for it crosses

the peninsula in a diagonal fashion and not on the shortest possible

line that could be drawn. Lastly, the small interior line round St.

Julian’s and Oyeras, which was prepared as the embarking-place of the

army in the event of defeat, has a circumference of about two miles.

In all, therefore, fifty-three miles of defences were planned--a

stupendous work, far exceeding, when its elaborate details are

studied, anything that had been constructed in modern times in the

way of field-fortification.

It must be remembered that the character of the Lines in no way

resembles that of our own great Roman wall from Tyne to Solway,

of the wall of China, or of any other long continuous stretch of

masonry. It is only on a few points that works of any great length

are to be found. The Lines are in essence a series of closed

earthworks, dotted along the commanding points of the two ranges

of hills which Wellington chose as his first and second fronts

of resistance. Some few of the earthworks rose to the dignity of

fortified camps, armed with many scores of guns. The majority of

them were small redoubts, constructed to hold three to six guns and

garrisons of two or three hundred men only. But even the smallest of

them were individually formidable from their structure: the normal

ditch was 16 feet wide and 12 feet deep, the parapets 8 to 14 feet

thick, and all were properly fitted with banquettes. When it is

remembered that they were well palisaded, and had outer hindrances

of abattis, \_chevaux de frise\_, and \_trous-de-loup\_ scattered in

front, it is clear that they were forts requiring a regular attack,

not mere lines of trench and mound. The strength of the whole series

was that they were placed in scientific fashion, so as to cross

fires over all the ground on which an attacking force was likely to

present itself. No practicable point of assault could be found on

which advancing columns would not be cut up by flanking fire for

a very long distance, before they drew near to their objective.

Immense pains had been taken to make the more exposed sections of

the country-side into one vast glacis. Mounds which might have given

cover had been removed to the last stone, hollow roads filled up,

houses pulled down, olive-groves and vineyards stubbed up to the

roots, so as to give a perfectly smooth and featureless ascent up

to the line of redoubts. Greatly to Wellington’s credit (as may be

incidentally remarked) compensation was paid on a liberal scale to

all owners of dwellings, mills, fruit-trees, &c., for the havoc made

by these necessary pieces of demolition. The result was a complete

clearance of cover. ‘We have spared neither house, garden, vineyard,

olive-trees, woods, or private property of any description,’ wrote

the officer in charge of the works to his chief at the end of the

preparations: ‘the only blind to the fire of the works now standing

anywhere is that beautiful avenue of old trees in the pass of Torres

Vedras. The Juiz da Fora and the inhabitants pleaded with me so hard

for the latest moment, lest they might be cut down unnecessarily,

that I have consented to defer it till the day before the troops

march in. As I have trustworthy men with axes in readiness on the

spot, there is no doubt of their being felled in time. The pine woods

on the Torres heights are already down, and formed into abattis[482].’

[482] Major Jones to Col. Fletcher, the chief engineer, then

absent on a visit to Wellingtons head quarters. See Jones, \_Lines

of Torres Vedras\_, p. 187.

It was not necessary, or indeed possible, to slope into a glacis the

whole of the ground in front of each of the lines of defences. In

many places other methods of making it impassable were used. At the

north-western front of the first line, between Torres Vedras and the

sea, for nearly six miles, a long marsh had been created: the river

Zizandre had been dammed up, and had filled the whole of the narrow

bottom in which it flows. ‘It has overflowed its banks, and in a

short time more than half the valley has become so complete a bog

that no reward can induce any of the peasantry to pass over it[483],’

wrote the officer who had carried out the experiment. Nor was it

possible for the enemy to attempt to drain the bog, for four[484]

redoubts furnished with heavy guns, and placed on dominating

points of the hillside, commanded the bottom so completely that it

was impossible for any party to approach it with safety. Yet the

redoubts were out of the range of field-guns on the slopes beyond the

Zizandre: only guns of position could have touched them, and Masséna

had none such with him. Two similar inundations on a smaller scale

had been caused at the other end of the Lines, by damming up the

Alhandra and Alverca streams, each of which spread out in a marsh a

mile broad, reaching to the foot of the heights above the Tagus, and

could only be passed on the narrow paved high-road from Santarem to

Lisbon.

[483] Jones, \_Lines\_, p. 26.

[484] Afterwards, when Masséna had arrived, increased to sixteen

redoubts with seventy-five guns. See Jones, p. 113.

In other places a very different method of making the Lines

unapproachable had been adopted. Where the heights were very steep,

but not absolutely inaccessible--a dangerous thing to the defence,

for here ‘dead ground,’ unsearchable by the cannon of the redoubts

above, must almost necessarily occur,--the slope had been cut or

blasted away in bands, so as to make absolute precipices on a small

scale. At one point above Alhandra[485] this was done on a front

of full 2,000 yards. Even this was not the last precaution taken:

at several places ravines ran deep into the line, and up them

columns, more or less under cover, might possibly have penetrated.

Such ravines, therefore, were stuffed, at chosen points, by a broad

abattis or entanglement, mainly composed of olive-trees with all

their chief boughs remaining, dragged together and interlaced for a

depth of many yards. Such a structure could not be crawled through,

nor could it be hewn down without an infinite waste of time and

labour; nor, on the other hand, did it afford any cover, since grape

or musketry could play perfectly well through it. The chief of these

traps was that laid across the long ravine above the village of

Arruda, down the bottom of which flows one of the winter torrents

which fall eastward into the Tagus.

[485] Jones, \_Lines\_, p. 173. ‘An extent of upwards of 2,000

yards on the left has been so cut and blasted along its summit

as to give a continuous scarp, everywhere exceeding 10 feet in

height, and covered for its whole length by both musketry and

cannon.’

It was fortunate that Portugal was a well-wooded country: there are

regions where it would be impossible to procure the immense amount

of timber that was lavished on the accessories of the redoubts. All,

as has been already mentioned, were palisaded; many had in addition

abattis or entanglements thrown up in front of them, some way down

the hillside, so as to detain the advancing enemy under fire as long

as possible.

The works were divided into eight sections, the first line composed

of four, the second line of three, while the eighth consisted of

the inner retrenchment for purposes of embarkation, at the extreme

southern point of the peninsula. Of the outer or secondary line the

three sections were:

(1) A front of five miles from the Tagus at Alhandra along the crest

of a steep but not very lofty ridge, as far as the great ravine

that overlooks the village of Arruda. This front was elaborately

fortified, as it blocks the great road, in the flat by the waterside,

which forms the easiest approach to Lisbon from the north. In the

five miles there were ultimately constructed no less than 23 redoubts

with 96 guns. Two thousand yards of hillside in one place had been

scarped into a precipice; a mile by the side of the Tagus had been

inundated. The one considerable gap in the line, the ravine at the

head of the valley of Calandriz, had been choked by one of the great

\_abattis\_ above described. The redoubts required a garrison of 6,000

men.

(2) The second section, from the ravine above Arruda to the left of

the steep Monte Agraça, formed somewhat of a salient angle: it had

a front in all of some four and a half miles, which included the

most lofty and defensible part of the backbone range of the Lisbon

peninsula. One of the four great paved roads entering the capital

from the north, however, passes over the shoulder of these heights,

and they were therefore very heavily fortified from the first, the

large redoubt for 1,600 men, on the top of Monte Agraça being one of

the original outer works ordered for construction in Wellington’s

earliest notes of October 1809. There were in all seven redoubts

mounting 55 guns and requiring a garrison of 3,000 men on this

fraction of the lines.

(3) Quite different in character was the front of eight miles from

the left of Monte Agraça to the pass of Runa, overlooking the upper

valley of the Zizandre and the village of Sobral. The fortification

of this line had not entered into Wellington’s original plan, and

there were only two redoubts upon it when Masséna appeared before it

in October 1810. Such defence as there was consisted in the fact that

the dominating Monte Agraça redoubts overlooked it on the right, and

that the two small works just mentioned commanded the main high-road

from Sobral to Cabeça de Montechique, which goes through its centre.

But there was a clear possibility that the enemy might make a push up

the valley and the high-road, by the village of Zibreira, and this

was indeed the most probable point of attack in the whole 29 miles of

front for the enemy to select. When, at the last moment, the British

Commander-in-Chief determined to hold the outer lines, and not merely

to fall back after having used them for a temporary defence, he had

to cram this point with troops, and to construct new works upon it

as quickly as possible. Four divisions, therefore, more than 20,000

men, were concentrated here. Wellington’s own head quarters were

established at the hamlet of Pero Negro, on the slope above the

high-road, and a very large redoubt was thrown up on the Portello

hill, above Zibreira, with several smaller ones further to the right,

to connect it with the Monte Agraça works. Sobral, the village at

the foot of the heights, was held as an outpost, but abandoned when

Masséna pushed forward to the front, as it was too far advanced to

the north to be treated as an integral part of the position. But the

French, when they had carried Sobral with difficulty, looked at the

main line behind it, and refused to attempt any further advance. The

hillside was as formidable as the Bussaco heights from which they had

only recently been repulsed: it was full of troops and growing in

strength every moment as the earthworks continued to arise.

(4) The fourth section of the outer or northern front was that from

the gorge of the Zizandre (or the pass of Runa, as it is sometimes

called) to the sea. It was about twelve miles long, but of this space

six miles and more was covered by the impassable bog formed by the

obstructed Zizandre, and another mile was formed by the formidable

entrenched camp of San Vincente, above the town of Torres Vedras, the

most complete and self-sufficing of all the works in the peninsula.

This stronghold lay outside the main line, beyond the river, covering

the bridge and the paved \_chaussée\_ from Leiria to Lisbon, the only

carriage-road on the western side of the Lines[486]. It was one

of the earliest of the fortifications commenced by Wellington’s

engineers, having been started on November 8, 1809, and was placed in

such a conspicuous point, and planned on such a large scale, that it

attracted public attention more than any other part of the works, and

gave its name to the whole in popular parlance[487]. The whole front

on both sides of Torres Vedras and its great fort was so strong and

inaccessible as to offer little temptation to the invader to select

it as a point of serious attack, all the more so because troops

brought opposite to it would be completely cut off from any left in

front of the eastern and central part of the lines. For the geography

of the peninsula at this point is peculiar: north of the gorge of

the Zizandre the great backbone range, the Serra de Barregudo and

the Serra de Monte Junta, extends for a distance of fifteen miles,

without being crossed by a single road practicable for horses, much

less for wheeled vehicles. There are nothing but goat-tracks across

the heights. If, therefore, any considerable body of troops had been

sent to observe or contain the western section of the lines, it

would have been separated by two days’ march from the rest of the

army, and liable to be crushed, ere succoured, by the defenders of

Lisbon, who had good cross-roads across the peninsula, by which they

could transfer themselves from point to point under the protection

of their works. As a matter of fact, nothing but flying parties of

French horse ever appeared in this direction. Masséna had not troops

to spare for any secondary attack, more especially for one on such an

unpromising part of the Lines. Wellington had foreseen this when he

distributed his field army behind the various sections of the front:

to support the garrisons of the twelve miles of redoubts about Torres

Vedras he only placed one division, while there were three behind

the eastern section, and more than four in the partially entrenched

central part[488].

[486] By an astonishing blunder the camp of Torres Vedras is

placed by Napier in his map (and apparently in his text also)

\_south\_ of the river Zizandre, on the main line of heights,

while in reality it was a great \_tête-du-pont\_ covering the only

passage from north to south over the stream and its bogs.

[487] See note to that effect in Jones, p. 21.

[488] The third division (Picton) only, behind Torres Vedras.

Behind the Alhandra-Arruda section were the 2nd (Hill),

Hamilton’s Portuguese, and the Light Division; in the central

part the 1st, 4th, 5th, 6th Divisions and three unattached

Portuguese brigades (Pack, Coleman, and Al. Campbell).

Passing on to the second line of defence, from Quintella on the Tagus

to the mouth of the Rio São Lourenço on the Atlantic, we find three

sections of defence, which, unlike those of the outer line, were all

completed by September 1810, and had no central gap.

(1) There was over a mile of impassable inundation at the eastern

end, between Quintella and Alverca. Above the first-named village

was an isolated hill, which was all fortress, for no less than six

redoubts had been placed upon it, to enfilade the high-road across

the inundated lower ground. Then came the Serra de Serves, three

miles of lofty and difficult hills, which had been scarped into

almost perfect inaccessibility. In a sudden dip west of this range

was the pass of Bucellas, through which runs one of the three great

high-roads that enter Lisbon. It was easily defensible, as it lies

between two high and steep mountain-sides, and is only a couple of

hundred yards broad. Redoubts were placed so as to rake it from end

to end, and to flank it on both sides. The \_chaussée\_ itself was

blocked with successive abattis, and the viaduct leading up to it was

mined.

(2) The second section of the inner line extended from the pass

of Bucellas to the Park of Mafra, a front of over six miles. The

eastern part of this was formed by the towering heights of the

Cabeça de Montechique, the most dominating mountain-summit in the

whole peninsula, almost steep enough to defend itself without

fortification; but three redoubts nevertheless had been reared upon

its summit. But from the pass of Montechique, at the left side of

the summit, down to Mafra the ground was less well marked, and here

the \_chaussée\_ from Sobral and Zibreira crossed the range. Much

fortification, therefore, was lavished on these four miles, along

which there were nine strong redoubts, connected with each other in

the rear by a military road passing along the southern crest of the

heights. There was a second and formidable ridge behind this line,

where further defence could be offered in the unlikely event of the

enemy forcing his way up the high-road.

(3) From Mafra to the sea, nearly ten miles, there was for the most

part a well-marked line of heights protected in front by the ravine

of the river of São Lourenço, a deep, rugged, and in many cases

inaccessible cleft, only crossed by a single road, that from Torres

Vedras to Mafra. Nevertheless, six redoubts were reared, to cover

this, and the few other points where the ravine was passable. The

eastern part of this section, that along the wall of the Royal Park

(Tapada) of Mafra, was its weakest portion, and for two miles at

this point the British engineers set all their ingenuity to work.

The outlying heights called the Serra de Chypre, in front of the

park, were covered by four redoubts, and turned into a first defence.

The wall of the Tapada itself was loopholed and furnished with a

banquette. The important road which passes its foot was obstructed

with cuts, enfiladed by the artillery of several works, and stockaded

at more than one point. There was another group of redoubts along the

south end of the Torres Vedras road, at the village of Morugueira;

and finally Mafra town, in the rear of all, was turned into a

defensive post by means of trenches and barricades. Altogether, what

was by nature the weakest point in the southern lines was made by

art one of the strongest. This too, in spite of the fact that, being

approachable only from Torres Vedras, it was on the whole not a

probable front on which to expect an attack.

A mere mention must suffice for the eighth section of the defensive

works, the semicircle at St. Julian’s and Oyeras which was intended

to protect the embarkation of the army if the worst should come. It

was strongly entrenched, and could be held by a very few battalions,

while the rest were utilizing the numerous and solid piers alongside

of which the fleet of transports was to be moored.

Having described the Lines, it remains that we should describe the

garrison set to guard them, detailing separately each element,

regular and irregular. The forces at the disposition of Wellington

were materially increased at the moment of his arrival within

the Lines. On October 8 he found at his disposition a brigade of

three battalions newly arrived at Lisbon, the 1/50th, 1/71st, and

1/92nd, all old Corunna regiments which had served in the Walcheren

expedition, and were still none too healthy from their long sojourn

in the deadly marshes of Zeeland. There had also landed about the

same time the 94th regiment, and the Brunswick Oels Light Infantry,

a foreign battalion raised from the refugees who had fought under

the Duke of Brunswick in the abortive North German insurrection of

1809. Moreover, two battalions--the 2/30th and 2/44th--had just been

sent to Lisbon from Cadiz, where General Graham now thought that

the British contingent was larger than was absolutely necessary.

The 1/4th and 1/23rd came out a little later, and do not appear in

the fortnighty ‘general state’ of the army till November 15. Thus

the army was swelled by nine battalions, or some 6,500 men[489]. No

cavalry, however, had arrived.

[489] About 5,800 rank and file, with 250 officers and 350

sergeants and drummers, by mid-winter return.

Wellington used these new arrivals to form a new 6th Division of

infantry, and to complete to full strength the 5th Division, which

had hitherto possessed only one British brigade. He did not, however,

keep the lately landed units together: acting on the principle which

he always followed, of mixing veteran acclimatized battalions with new

arrivals, he formed the new 6th Division by adding Campbell’s brigade,

taken from Cole’s 4th Division, to two Portuguese regiments the 8th

and the Lusitanian Legion, both of which had been hitherto attached

to the 5th Division, and had served with Leith at Bussaco. In the 4th

Division, Campbell’s brigade was replaced by that of Pakenham, taken

from Spencer’s 1st Division, while compensation was made to Spencer,

by giving him the newly landed 1/50th, 1/71st, and 1/92nd, as a new

brigade under Erskine. The 5th Division under Leith got three more

of the fresh arrivals, the 1/4th, 2/30th, and 2/44th as its second

brigade. The 94th was given to Picton’s second brigade,--which had

hitherto consisted of only 2⅓ battalions,--to raise it to average

brigade-strength. The Brunswick Oels Jägers, being a light corps, were

partly divided up into separate companies and told off to different

brigades (as the 5/60th, a similar unit, had already been), though the

head quarters and six companies joined Pakenham’s brigade in the 4th

Division. But when the 1/23rd, the last of the reinforcements, came

out, it also joined Pakenham, while the Brunswickers were transferred

to the Light Division--where they did not long abide[490].

[490] For all these changes see Atkinson’s admirable ‘Composition

of the British Army in the Peninsula,’ printed in the \_English

Historical Review\_.

Even after allowing for the trifling losses at Bussaco, the British

field army in Portugal was now far larger than it had ever been

before, the gross total of troops in the Lines amounting to 42,000

men, of whom about 7,000 were sick or detached, and 35,000 were

present under arms. This figure does not include the two battalions

of marines who guarded St. Julian’s and the lines around it at the

mouth of the Tagus.

Of Portuguese regulars, Wellington had now under his hand the 24,000

men who had fought at Bussaco, plus the 1,400 cavalry under Fane and

the brigade under Bradford (now consisting of five battalions)[491]

which had been guarding the position behind the Alva on the day of

the battle, together with the reserve artillery of Lisbon. The total

made 27,500 men, of whom 24,500 were with the colours and 3,000 sick

in hospital.

[491] The 12th and 13th line regiments and the 5th Caçadores, not

much over 2,500 bayonets in all.

Of militia there were three brigades and four isolated units more

within the Lines--the Southern Beira brigade of Lecor, three

regiments[492], the Northern Estremaduran brigade of Miranda,

also three regiments[493], and the Lisbon local brigade of five

regiments[494] with two stray units from the north[495], and two from

the south[496]. The numbers of all the regiments ran very low, owing

to the way in which they had been neglected and under-fed by their

government, since they were called out nine months before; many had

died, and far more had deserted. The thirteen corps did not between

them supply more than 8,200 men present under arms, with 1,000 sick

in hospital. In addition there were 3,200 artillerymen improvised

from the ranks of the infantry militia or the Ordenança, making

altogether 12,400 troops of the ‘second line.’

[492] Idanha, Castello Branco, Covilhão.

[493] Thomar, Leiria, Santarem; the fourth battalion (Tondella)

was in garrison at Peniche, as was also a considerable body of

dépôt troops from the line, half-trained recruits, &c.

[494] 1, 2, 3, and 4 of Lisbon, and Torres Vedras.

[495] Feira and Vizeu, properly belonging to Trant’s corps, but

somehow separated from it.

[496] Setubal and Alcaçer do Sul.

As to the Ordenança who had taken refuge in and about Lisbon with

their families, when the whole population of southwestern Beira and

northern Estremadura retired within the Lines, it is impossible to

obtain any figures, save that they supplied the bulk of the 3,000

volunteer artillerymen just mentioned above, and that the picked men

of the Ordenança of the capital itself had been organized into two

battalions of ‘Atiradores Nacionales’ of about 450 men each. The

whole may have amounted to any number from 20,000 up to 40,000 men,

of whom about two-thirds were armed with muskets, the rest, those

from the remoter districts, having still nothing better than pikes.

As most of them were scattered with their families in the villages

where they had taken refuge, or the camps of huts which they had

formed in sheltered situations, they could hardly be considered to be

in a state of mobilization, and certainly were of no use either for

garrisoning forts or for employment in the line of battle.

[Illustration: LINES OF TORRES VEDRAS]

Lastly, in calculating the forces which Wellington accumulated within

the Lines, we must mention the two Spanish divisions from the Army

of Estremadura. Hearing that all was quiet for the moment on the

frontier of Andalusia, the British Commander had asked the Marquis

of La Romana, whether, in accordance with a promise made so long ago

as July, he could spare any troops to assist in the holding back of

the main French army of invasion. The Marquis, with a liberality of

which the Cadiz Regency would have disapproved, if its leave had been

asked, replied that he would bring up his two reserve divisions.

Leaving Ballasteros on the Andalusian border, and another division

under Imaz at Badajoz, in addition to the garrison and Madden’s

Portuguese cavalry, he marched for Aldea Gallega and Lisbon with the

troops of La Carrera[497] and Charles O’Donnell[498], about 8,000

men. On October 25th he had arrived at the cantonments behind Mafra,

on the second line of defence, which his ally had requested him to

occupy. Wellington defended the bringing up of these troops by the

plea ‘that he did not think himself justified in not bringing into

his positions all the force which was at his disposal’[499]. But it

is doubtful whether the advantage of getting 8,000 Spanish troops

within the Lines justified the danger incurred in Estremadura, when

it was possible that Soult might send out Mortier at any moment

to attack the depleted army that covered the approach to Badajoz.

Napoleon thought that he should have done so, and when he heard of

the arrival of La Romana at Lisbon, wrote to censure the Duke of

Dalmatia in the fiercest strain[500]. ‘It was a shame and a scandal

that he had retired to Seville: the 5th Corps had orders to be always

at La Romana’s heels, and to prevent him from moving into Portugal,

so that the news of its return to Seville roused the Emperor’s

surprise and anger.’ There can be no doubt that Napoleon did well to

be angry. The balance of affairs in Andalusia tended to stand at an

equipoise precisely because La Romana’s army was strong enough to

keep the 5th Corps employed. When 8,000 men had been withdrawn by the

Marquis to the Lisbon lines, Mortier was in a position to sweep all

before him as far as the gates of Badajoz, or to execute a raid into

the Alemtejo if that course seemed preferable. But Soult did not send

his lieutenant on this errand on his own initiative, but waited till

he received direct orders to do so from Paris. By that time it was

too late, and neither the disaster of the Gebora nor even the fall

of Badajoz had any influence on the course of events in Portugal.

Masséna was forced to retreat before a single patrol from the Army

of Andalusia had got into touch with his outposts. What might have

happened if Soult had launched his blow at Badajoz in October, and

had appeared on the left bank of the Lower Tagus in December, it is

impossible to say. Probably Wellington would have found some means of

averting disaster, but it is unquestionable that his task of defence

would have been made far more difficult.

[497] Who had now resigned the command of the cavalry, and gone

back to his old infantry division.

[498] The ‘Vanguard’ and 2nd Division of his army.

[499] \_Dispatches\_, vi. p. 544.

[500] \_Correspondance\_, xxi. pp. 273, 295.

For the full realization of the meaning of the Lines of Torres Vedras

there are two general facts which must be remembered. Firstly, they

were garrisoned by troops which formed no part of the field army.

Wellington’s sixty thousand regulars were not frittered away in the

garrisoning of redoubts, but were held in masses behind the lines,

ready to reinforce any threatened point, and to deliver a pitched

battle in the open, if the head of the French army were thrust

through the defences at some weak section. The generals of the

seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who so often built lines, and

were so easily evicted from them, suffered disaster because they drew

out their armies in one attenuated thread, and were therefore weak

at every point, and always inferior to the assailant at the place

where he made his assault. Wellington’s army was (with the exception

of the 3rd Division at Torres Vedras) gathered in two solid masses,

one facing Sobral, on the heights between Monte Agraça and Runa, the

second and smaller behind Alhandra. The one could reach the other in

half a day’s march, for the roads behind and parallel to the lines

had been put in good repair.

The whole of this vast system of redoubts was to be held by the

troops of the second line, and by them only. There were altogether

some 20,000 men of the second line in the fortifications, composed of

(1) the 8,000 (afterwards raised to 11,000) militia infantry. (2) Of

about 800 Portuguese regular artillery, aided by over 2,000 gunners

picked from the militia and Ordenança, trained by the regulars and

incorporated with them. (3) Of some 250 British artillerymen from

the batteries which had been lying in reserve at Lisbon. (4) Of

picked companies of the Lisbon Ordenança (atiradores) drilled into a

state of discipline not much worse than that of the militia. (5) Of

the landing force of 2,000 British marines, partly from the fleet,

partly brought specially from England to garrison the proposed lines

of embarkation at St. Julian’s. (6) Of the dépôts, convalescents and

recruits of the eight Line regiments of infantry raised from Lisbon

and Southern Estremadura--about 4,000 strong.

In all, therefore, there were about 20,000 men, mostly troops of

secondary quality, or 28,000 if the Spanish auxiliaries are counted,

ready to man the Lines, without a man being withdrawn from the ranks

of the field army. The outer lines were calculated to require about

18,000 men for the redoubts, the inner ones 14,000, but clearly both

did not require to be manned at once. If the outer line were broken,

the garrison-troops from the intact parts of it could fall back on

the second. Meanwhile the field army would be engaging any French

columns that might have broken through, and there would be ample

time to arrange for the manning of the second and stronger front.

But it must be repeated once more that it was not on the passive

defence of the redoubts by their garrisons that Wellington reckoned

for success, but on the fighting of the field army, who would tackle

the columns of attack that had committed themselves to the assault

of the section--whichever it might be--that Masséna might select as

his objective. All criticism based on general principles concerning

the weakness of long extended lines falls to the ground, when it is

remembered that Wellington had his army massed for a pitched battle

in and behind his defences, not strung out on an interminable front.

The last point on which stress must be laid is that the most careful

arrangements for the transmission of orders and intelligence from end

to end of the Lines had been made. There were five signal-stations,

with semaphores worked by seamen on (1) the redoubt No. 30 near the

Atlantic, (2) the great redoubt of Torres Vedras, (3) the Monte de

Socorro above Wellington’s head quarters at Pero Negro, (4) the

summit of the Monte Agraça, (5) the hill behind Alhandra on the

Tagus. After some practice it was found that a message could be sent

from one end to the other of the 29 miles in \_seven\_ minutes, and

from No. 3, the head quarters semaphore, to either end of the Lines

in \_four\_ minutes. There was a similar line of four semaphores on

the second, or main, series of defences. Military roads had been

opened behind both the fronts, so that troops could be moved along

the shortest possible line. On the other hand, it was fortunate that

there existed no cross-road from sea to sea \_outside\_ the Lines,

which could be of any practical use to the invader. The only route of

this sort, that from Alemquer by Sobral to Runa, was commanded for

the whole length from Sobral to Runa by the British heights, whose

foot it hugs, while from Sobral to Alemquer it is separated from

the Lines by the steep and pathless ridge of Galaria, across which

nothing on wheels could pass. Nevertheless, here lay the invaders’

best chance--corps placed on this road, and screened by the ridge,

could be moved for some distance to left or right unseen from the

Lines. The road, however, was bad, rocky, and narrow: it is marked as

the ‘Calçada Arruinada’ or ‘ruined road’ in contemporary maps. The

other paved road in this direction, that from Sobral to Arruda and

Alhandra, passed through the line of ground occupied by the British

at two points, and was under fire from the redoubts at short range

for the rest of its course: it was absolutely impracticable.

It only remains to be added that the navy had been utilized for

auxiliary service: not only were its marines under orders to man the

St. Julian’s lines, but its seamen had fitted out all the gunboats

in the Lisbon arsenal. A flotilla of great strength infested the

Tagus estuary, and by the fire of its heavy guns prevented the French

from approaching the shore, or endeavouring to build boats at the

mouths of its creeks. If any attacks had been made upon either of the

extreme ends of the Lines, the columns delivering them would have

been under fire from the sea throughout their operations. But, as we

shall see, the French never contemplated this: the one temptation

which Masséna felt was to assault, far inland, the gap in front of

Sobral between the Monte Agraça and the Serra de Socorro. And there,

as we shall see, at the critical moment, prudence got the better of

ambition, and the invader turned back foiled. The high-water mark of

French conquest in Europe was reached on the knoll by Sobral on the

wet and gusty 14th of October, 1810.

SECTION XXI: CHAPTER V

MASSÉNA BEFORE THE LINES OF TORRES VEDRAS: HIS RETREAT TO SANTAREM

(OCTOBER-NOVEMBER 1810)

On the night of October 10, when Craufurd made his hasty retreat to

Sobral, and went within the Lines, Montbrun had his head quarters at

Alemquer, where he kept Taupin’s infantry brigade, and Lamotte’s and

Sainte-Croix’s cavalry. Pierre Soult’s light horse felt towards their

left, in the direction of the Tagus, and occupied Carregado, where

they failed to find any British outposts, Hill’s corps having been

withdrawn behind the brook which enters the Tagus near Castanheira.

The main body of the army was far to the rear, in one vast column:

Ney’s and Reynier’s corps lay that night in and about Alcoentre:

Junot’s bivouacked around the convent of Nossa Senhora de Maxeira,

a short distance to the south of Alcoentre. All the troops were

terribly fatigued by three days’ movement in torrential rain, and had

no more marching-power left in them.

It was only on the following morning (October 11) that Montbrun

discovered the Lines. His cavalry had been ordered to move forward on

the two roads across which they lay. Pierre Soult therefore pushed

for Villafranca, on the high road which skirts the Tagus; he found

Hill’s outlying pickets at Villafranca, drove them out of the town,

and on passing it came in sight of the line of redoubts and scarped

hillside above Alhandra, which was manned by the Portuguese militia

and backed by Hill’s British infantry. It was impossible to advance

further, so the brigadier, leaving an advanced post in Villafranca,

drew back his three regiments to Castanheira, and sent his report to

Montbrun.

That general himself, with the main body of his cavalry, had

followed the rough road from Alemquer to Lisbon. He drove in some

British dragoon pickets, and then arrived in front of the village

of Sobral, which he found occupied by the infantry outposts of

Spencer’s division. He did not attempt to push further that day,

as his flanking reconnaissance had come in sight of the sections

of the Lines behind Arruda and behind Zibreira, where redoubts and

solid lines of infantry were visible. Sobral itself was clearly

not held in force, nor did it form an integral part of the British

position. But Montbrun feared to attack it, when he had only a single

brigade of infantry to the front, while many thousands of British

troops might issue from the Lines to overwhelm him if he committed

himself to a serious attack. The village on its knoll was left alone

for the present, though it was tempting to contemplate the seizure

of a point which lay so far forward--less than two miles from the

front of Wellington’s chosen position. But Montbrun contented

himself with sending back word to Masséna that he had come upon a

continuous line of fortifications stretching from the Tagus bank to

some point westward, which was not yet discovered. For his furthest

reconnaissances towards Runa and the Upper Zizandre had found the

enemy in front of them, however far they pushed.

Meanwhile Masséna’s tired infantry of the main body had made hardly

any movement: the 2nd and 6th Corps still lay about Alcoentre. Junot

alone with the 8th Corps advanced as far as Moinho de Cubo, half way

between Alcoentre and Alemquer. Thus Wellington was given a whole

day more to arrange his troops in their positions along the Lines.

On this morning he was rather under the impression that the French

attack would be directed upon Alhandra and Hill’s corps, which, he

observed, would be a ‘tough job, defended as all the entrances of the

valleys are by redoubts, and the villages by abattis[501].’ Moreover,

the French ‘positively could not’ get guns up to attack the line west

of Hill, since, in the existing state of the weather, no cannon could

leave the paved roads, and the only path of that description leading

from the Sobral direction to the Tagus bank ran through Arruda, where

Craufurd and the Light Division were now comfortably installed.

Considering it likely, therefore, that Masséna would bring a heavy

attacking force, by circuitous roads from the rear, to Villafranca,

in order to make a frontal attack on Hill along the high-road by the

Tagus, Wellington warned Craufurd and Spencer to be ready to move in

eastward to the assistance of the extreme right wing of the Lines.

In the afternoon, however, he discovered that the force in front of

Sobral (Montbrun) seemed much larger than that in front of Alhandra

(Pierre Soult), and showed more signs of making wide-spreading

reconnaissances. He therefore drew up an alternative scheme, by

which, in the event of an attack on Spencer’s front at Zibreira,

Cole’s and Campbell’s (the new 6th) divisions were to support the

threatened point, and even Picton was to come in from the distant

Torres Vedras[502]. No French troops were reported from this last

direction, and De Grey’s cavalry pickets from Ramalhal (far outside

the Lines) reported that not the smallest party of the enemy’s horse

had been seen west of the Serra de Barregudo or the Monte Junta[503].

[501] \_Dispatches\_, vi. 502, to Craufurd.

[502] Wellington to Spencer, afternoon of Oct. 11, \_Dispatches\_,

vi. 505.

[503] Wellington to Craufurd, same day, \_Dispatches\_, vi. 504.

On the 12th Montbrun made a movement which seemed to justify

Wellington’s first idea, that Hill was to receive the French attack.

He moved Taupin’s brigade, the only hostile infantry which had yet

been seen, southward from Alemquer to Villafranca on the Tagus. This

was done, however, only because the whole 8th Corps was coming up on

this day from Moinho de Cubo by Alemquer to Sobral, which it reached

in the afternoon, replacing Taupin’s small force. Its arrival was

at once reported to Wellington, who saw that his second theory of

the intention of the enemy, not his first, had been correct, and

transferred his main attention to the side of Sobral. That village,

by some extraordinary blunder on the part of Sir Brent Spencer, had

been evacuated by the pickets of the 1st Division during the night of

the 11th-12th[504]. They were put back into it, by the special orders

of the Commander-in-Chief, in the early morning, for Wellington

wished to hold it as long as was safe, on account of the fine view

obtainable from its knoll over the routes from Alemquer by which

the enemy must approach. Hence, when Junot’s advanced guard came up

in the afternoon, there was a collision at Sobral. The troops of

Clausel finally succeeded in expelling the British outposts, which

belonged to Erskine’s and Löwe’s brigade, from the village. The

casualties were few on both sides--nineteen men only were lost by the

British[505]. The retiring pickets did not fall back into the Lines,

but clung to the other side of the ravine which separates Sobral from

the lower slopes of Monte Agraça. They were only 300 yards from the

village.

[504] Wellington to Chas. Stuart, \_Dispatches\_, vi. 506.

D’Urban’s invaluable diary has the note. ‘Oct. 11: ’Tis

difficult to account for all this, which must be vexatious to

the Commander-in-Chief, who, aware of the importance of the

heights in front of Sobral, must have wished to keep them for the

present.... Oct. 12: In the morning the enemy was no more to be

seen, and what we should never have given up, we were fortunately

permitted to re-occupy. But at nightfall the French, with about

six battalions, retook the height and town of Sobral.’

[505] Of the nineteen casualties, nine belonged to the

newly-landed 71st, four to the German Legion, six to the company

of the 5/60th attached to Erskine. See Return in Record Office.

While this skirmish was in progress the main body of the French were

at last set in motion from Alcoentre. The 6th Corps advanced this

day (October 12) to Moinho de Cubo and Otta; the 2nd Corps, taking

a road more to the east, so as to lean towards the Tagus, arrived

at Carregado. Junot’s corps was encamped behind Sobral, Clausel’s

division having its advanced posts (Brigade Ménard) in the village,

while Solignac lay two miles to the rear. The weather was still

abominable, and all the movements were accomplished with great

fatigue and delay.

On this afternoon the French army suffered the loss of its most

brilliant and energetic cavalry officer. General Sainte-Croix, while

exploring the Tagus bank, north of Villafranca, in search of deserted

boats, was cut in two by a cannon shot from a British gunboat which

was watching his cavalry from the estuary. He was held to be the only

officer, except Colonel Pelet, who had any personal influence with

Masséna[506], and as that influence was always exerted on the side

of daring action, it is probable that the many French diarists who

deplore his death are right in considering that it may have had some

positive effect on the conduct of the campaign[507].

[506] Sainte-Croix had been the Marshal’s chief-of-the-staff

during the Wagram campaign, and was generally reputed to have

been responsible for some of the boldest moves made by Masséna’s

army during that period.

[507] That Fririon is correct in dating Sainte-Croix’s death

on the 12th, and Delagrave and others wrong in placing it on

the 16th, is proved by an entry in D’Urban’s diary of Oct. 15,

stating that it had just been discovered that the general killed

in front of Alhandra was called Sainte-Croix. Clearly then he was

dead before the 16th.

On the night of the 12th-13th Wellington had become convinced, and

rightly, that the great mass of Junot’s corps, visible behind Sobral,

constituted the main danger to his position. He therefore drew in

troops from his right, even calling down from Torres Vedras Picton,

in whose front no enemy was yet visible. From Monte Agraça to the

Portello redoubts he put in line four British divisions--Spencer,

Cole, Picton, and Campbell, along with Pack’s independent Portuguese

brigade; this last was placed in the great redoubt on Monte Agraça,

which dominated Sobral and all the lower hills. In reserve were two

more divisions--the 5th under Leith, and a temporary Portuguese

division consisting of the brigades of Coleman and Alex. Campbell.

Altogether 30,000 men were concentrated on this comparatively short

front of about four miles, besides the militia and artillery who

garrisoned the minor forts[508]. Junot, whose corps did not now

muster more than 12,000 men, did wisely to refrain from making any

serious attack. He was not, however, wholly quiescent: attempting to

extend his troops more to the right, to the west of Sobral, along

the undulating ground in the direction of the Upper Zizandre, he

got into touch with the outlying pickets of Cole’s division, which

stood beyond those of Spencer and Picton in the British line. The

first attack fell on the light companies of the 7th Fusiliers and the

newly-arrived Brunswick Oels battalion. When they were driven in,

Cole fed his fighting-line with the light companies of Hervey’s [late

Collins’s] Portuguese brigade. Finding his voltigeurs outnumbered,

Junot, in a similar fashion, sent up Gratien’s brigade from his

second division to reinforce his advance. Hence there ensued some

sharp skirmishing, which lasted several hours, till Cole drew back

his outpost line from the lower plateaux north of Sobral to the foot

of his fighting-position, on the heights below the Portello redoubts.

Junot had thus gained a mile of ground, but not ground that was of

any service to him for a regular attack on the Lines, since it was

merely part of the rolling upland that was dominated by Wellington’s

main position. The 4th Division lost twenty-five British and a

much larger number of Portuguese in this long bicker. Hervey the

Portuguese brigadier was wounded. The French casualties were probably

a little the larger[509].

[508] For his dispositions for resisting the suspected attack see

\_Dispatches\_, vi. pp. 507-9 of Oct. 13. The line running from

right to left was (1) Pack’s Portuguese in the great redoubt

facing Sobral, (2) 1st Division between the redoubt and Zibreira,

(3) Picton touching Spencer’s left, (4) Cole touching Picton’s

left, (5) Campbell (new 6th Division) on Cole’s left, reaching to

the Portello redoubts. Each of these divisions had one brigade in

reserve. A separate general reserve was formed by Leith behind

the right, and Coleman’s and Alex. Campbell’s Portuguese behind

the left.

[509] I find in the note to Gachot’s excellent editions of

Delagrave’s \_Campagne de Portugal\_ that the losses of the

French on this day were 157 men, those of the allies 139.

The last statement, one sufficiently probable in itself,

cannot be verified from any British source that I have found:

Wellington, annexed to the document on page 511 of vol. vi of

the \_Dispatches\_, gives the loss of Cole’s British brigades in

detail--they amount to twenty-five men only. But he does not

give details of Hervey’s Portuguese, though he mentions that the

brigadier was wounded, and that the two regiments (Nos. 11 and

23 of the Line) distinguished themselves. They may well have

lost the 124 men mentioned by Gachot, but I have no proof of

it. Vere’s usually accurate ‘Marches of the 4th Division’ gives

no figures for this day, nor does D’Urban’s \_Diary\_. Wellington

remarks that ‘the attack of this day on General Cole’s pickets

near Sobral was without much effect.’ It is certain, however,

that the British lost a little ground in front of the heights.

Martinien’s \_Liste des officiers tués et blessés\_, which I so

often find of use, shows that Junot’s corps lost two officers

killed and seven wounded. This, at the usual average, would imply

150-180 casualties.

On the same afternoon Reynier, with somewhat over a battalion of

infantry, made a detailed reconnaissance of Hill’s position in front

of Alhandra. He pressed in close enough to draw the fire of the

nearer redoubts, but halted when he had realized the strength of the

line opposite him, and reported to Masséna that he considered the

right wing of the allied position hopelessly impracticable for an

attack.

Next morning (October 14) the French Commander-in-Chief came up in

person from the rear. It is astonishing that he had made no earlier

attempt to judge with his own eye of the strength of Wellington’s

line of defence. He arrived at Sobral in time to witness a bitter

skirmish, the most important of all the engagements that took place

during the crucial days of the campaign of 1810. Spencer’s outposts,

as has been already mentioned, had on the 12th retired only some 200

or 300 yards from Sobral, and had taken up their position on the

other side of the ravine that divides that village from the lower

slopes of the Monte Agraça. Across the high-road the main picket,

furnished by the 71st regiment, had thrown up a barricade. Junot

considered this lodgement, so close to his line, as a thing that

ought not to be permitted. Accordingly he brought up his artillery,

which had only arrived from the rear on the previous night, to the

front of Sobral, and, after cannonading the barricade for a short

time, sent against it the \_compagnies d’élite\_ of the 19th of the

Line, supported by other troops of Ménard’s brigade. The first rush

of the attack carried the barricade and the line of stone walls on

each side of it. But the whole of the 71st was ready to sustain the

pickets, and with a fierce rush swept the assailants back across

the barricade, down the slope, and into the outer houses of Sobral.

From thence, of course, they had to retire, as a whole division was

fronting them; but they resumed their old position without being

pursued.

Junot refused to renew his attack, and Masséna, who had arrived

while the skirmish was in progress, did not direct him to go forward

again. It was clear that there was a very strong force in front of

the 8th Corps, and that the redoubts visible along the Monte Agraça

on the one hand and the Portello heights on the other were of the

most formidable description. Masséna’s senior aide-de-camp and chief

confidant, Pelet[510], thus describes the psychological situation:

‘On arriving at Sobral, instead of the “undulating accessible

plateaux” that we had been told to expect, we saw steeply scarped

mountains and deep ravines, a road-passage only a few paces broad,

and on each side walls of rock crowned with everything that could

be accomplished in the way of field fortifications garnished with

artillery; then at last it was plainly demonstrated to us that we

could not attack the Lines of Montechique with the 35,000 or 36,000

men[511] that still remained of the army. For, even if we had

forced some point of the Lines, we should not have had enough men

left to seize and occupy Lisbon.... It was clear that we must wait

for reinforcements[512].’ Another eye-witness, Junot’s aide-de-camp

Delagrave, in his \_Memoir on the Campaign of 1810-11\_, expresses

the same view in his single sentence, explaining that ‘the prince,

seeing that the enemy was better prepared and stronger than had been

believed, put an end to the combat, and on each side the troops

took up once more their original positions[513].’ The loss in this

combat--insignificant enough in itself, but decisive in that it

revealed to Masséna the uselessness of a further advance--was 67 on

the British side, about 120 on that of the French[514].

[510] For his position and character, see p. 209 of this volume.

[511] This figure is, of course, a ludicrous exaggeration.

Masséna had still more than 50,000 men. Even on Jan. 1, 1811,

after suffering two months more of untold privation, the Army of

Portugal was still 44,000 strong, plus sick and men detached.

[512] Pelet’s \_Appendice sur la Guerre d’Espagne\_, p. 323 of vol.

xxi of \_Victoires et Conquêtes\_.

[513] Delagrave, p. 100.

[514] Of the sixty-seven British casualties, thirty-eight were

in the 71st, the rest in the neighbouring brigades of the

1st Division. Noël--who had charge of the battery at Sobral,

estimates the French loss at 120--very probably the correct one,

as Martinien’s lists show one officer killed and six wounded,

all in Ménard’s brigade. This should mean 120-150 casualties.

Delagrave gives the higher figure of 200 killed and wounded,

probably an overstatement.

After putting a stop to the combat of Sobral, Masséna rode away

eastward, along the slopes of the upland that faces the Monte Agraça,

and as far as the knoll facing Arruda in the front of the Light

Division. Here he pressed so near the British front that a single

shot was fired at his escort from the redoubt No. 120 to warn him to

trespass no further. He saluted the battery by lifting his hat to it,

and went up the hill out of range[515]. Some of his aides-de-camp

continued the exploration till they touched Reynier’s vedettes near

Villafranca, but the Marshal himself returned to his head quarters at

Alemquer to think over the situation. There some sort of a council of

war was held that same night: Junot, it is said, urged the Chief to

try the effect of a bold dash at the English army arrayed in front

of Sobral. But he was talked down by Ney and Reynier, who argued

that such an attack would be insane, considering the weakness of

their corps and the strength of Wellington’s fortifications. Without

doubt they were right: even if Masséna had brought his whole three

corps to bear on Sobral, he had 10,000 men less than at Bussaco,

and Wellington 10,000 men more, leaving the garrisons of the forts

out of the question. The allies had 30,000 bayonets concentrated on

the threatened point, and could have brought up Hill, Craufurd, and

Hamilton’s and Le Cor’s Portuguese--20,000 men more--from the east

end of the Lines, the moment that it was clear that Reynier was no

longer in front of them. The position, owing to the forts, was far

stronger than Bussaco, and the French cavalry would have been as

useless on October 15 as it had been on September 27. The report

which Foy drew up for Masséna and presented to the Emperor gives the

whole gist of the matter: ‘The Marshal Prince of Essling has come to

the conclusion that he would compromise the army of His Majesty if

he were to attack in force lines so formidable, defended by 30,000

English and 30,000 Portuguese, aided by 50,000 armed peasants[516].’

[515] Masséna was clearly seen from the British Lines. Leith Hay,

a staff-officer of the 5th Division, noted ‘a crowd of officers

on horseback, dragoons with led horses, and all the cortége of

a general-in-chief’ (\_Narrative\_, p. 249), and saw the Marshal

dismount by the windmill above Sobral. He was watching from

Pack’s redoubt, on the hill just opposite, through his telescope,

about 2,000 yards from the French front. It is Jones who, on p.

40 of his \_Lines of Torres Vedras\_, gives the anecdote about the

Marshal’s salute.

[516] See Foy’s \_Vie Militaire\_, Appendix, p. 343.

An open assault on the Sobral position was now, indeed, the thing

that the British most desired. Wellington wrote, with his usual

ironical moderation, to his trusted lieutenant, Craufurd, that

‘he thought his arrangements had now made the position tolerably

secure[517].’ Among these last arrangements, it may be remarked,

was the drawing back of the 71st and the light companies of the

1st Division from the barricades on the near side of the ravine of

Sobral. They were moved a few hundred yards to the rear, nearer

to Zibreira. This was probably intended to encourage the French

to sally out from Sobral up the road, where everything was now in

order to receive them. Their advance was hourly expected; D’Urban,

Beresford’s Chief of the Staff, wrote gleefully on October 15, ‘Each

individual division has now more than sufficient troops to occupy the

space allotted to it, and the overplus forms a first reserve for each

respectively. If the force thus posted beats the attacking enemy, of

which there can be little doubt, our telegraphic communications will

bring down Craufurd from Arruda and Hill from Alhandra on to their

flank--and the affair will be complete. There is much appearance that

the enemy \_will\_ attack this position with his whole force--Alhandra

is far too strong for him. He cannot well retire, and it is hoped

that his distress for provisions will compel him to bring matters to

a speedy decision[518].’

[517] Wellington to Craufurd, \_Dispatches\_, vi. p. 517.

[518] D’Urban’s \_Journal\_, under Oct. 15.

But both the cautious Commander-in-Chief and the eager head of the

Portuguese Staff were mistaken in estimating the position. They

had judged wrongly the character of Masséna, and his psychological

position of the moment. He would not attack; indeed, after October

14 he seems never to have had the least intention of doing so. The

lesson of Bussaco had not been lost, and he was no longer prepared

to assail, with a light heart, the Anglo-Portuguese Army posted

ready to receive him in a strong position. Probably the energetic

statement of Ney and Reynier that they dared not risk their men--that

the troops would be demoralized if ordered to advance for a second

slaughter--also had its effect on the Marshal. But Masséna was proud

and obstinate, and if he could not go forward, he shrank, for the

moment, from going back. On October 15 began the one phase of the

campaign which the British, from general down to subaltern, had least

expected. The French army began to show signs of intending to settle

down in front of the Lines, as if for a blockade. After a few more

attempts to feel the front of the Lines about Arruda and the valley

of Calandriz, which were so feeble that they did not even drive in

Craufurd’s outposts, the enemy began to fortify the front of his

position with field-works, and sent away the whole of his cavalry to

the rear--a sufficient sign that his offensive power was spent.

Masséna’s first dream of masking the Lines by a close blockade was

absolutely impracticable, considering the present state of his

supplies. The troops were already living on the gleanings of the

hastily-evacuated villages of the Lisbon Peninsula, which could not

last them for long, and would not even have sufficed for a week’s

consumption if Wellington’s decrees had been properly carried out. If

he was to feed his army from the thin resources left behind by the

Portuguese, Masséna would soon find it necessary to spread it far

and wide; since, if he kept it concentrated in front of Wellington,

it would soon go to pieces, exposed in bivouacs to the November

rains, and forced to draw its nourishment by marauding from afar. It

seems from the instructions which he gave to Foy at the end of the

second week of his stay in front of Lisbon, that the Marshal actually

contemplated clinging to his present advanced position till he should

receive reinforcements. He hoped that the 9th Corps would come up to

his aid from Old Castile, and that Mortier and the 5th Corps would

join him from Andalusia. But these were mere hypotheses: he was not

in touch with either Drouet or Mortier. Indeed, he had been cut off

from all communication with his colleagues since the day that he

crossed the Mondego. The 9th Corps, as a matter of fact, was only at

Valladolid, and showed no signs of moving on. Mortier had retired to

the mountains in front of Seville, after his successes over the army

of La Romana in September. Almeida was in a state of close blockade

by Silveira’s detachments from beyond the Douro. Ciudad Rodrigo was

in hardly better case, being strictly watched by Julian Sanchez and

his mounted guerrilleros, so that no one could get to or from it

without a very strong escort. Gardanne’s regiment of dragoons, left

behind by Masséna, was worn out in the effort to keep open the road

between Rodrigo and Salamanca[519]. From the Army neither Almeida nor

Rodrigo received a word of news from the 18th of September to the

15th of November. So effectually was the road closed, that rumours

were current of such divers characters as that Masséna had forced

the English to embark, and that he had been completely foiled, and

was marching back to Spain via Castello Branco. Paris was hardly

better informed: the only news that the Emperor got was that dribbled

out, four or five weeks later, by the English papers[520]. Hence

came ludicrous notices in the \_Moniteur\_, of which the worst was

one published on November 28, which stated that Coimbra had been

occupied by Masséna without a battle, that the army on October 1

had only 200 sick and 500 wounded since it had left Almeida, and

that no general or colonel had been killed or even hurt since the

invasion began! And this after twelve such officers had fallen at

Bussaco. That battle, we may remark, was presented ultimately to

French readers as ‘a demonstration executed by the brigades of Simon

and Graindorge in order to mask the great flank-march of the Prince

of Essling. But they had gone beyond their instructions, and brought

on a combat in which 200 men had been killed and 1,200 wounded.’

Fririon, the historian of the campaign, cannot restrain himself from

adding, ‘This is how history was written at that time; it was by

reports of this lying description that an attempt was made to calm

anxious families. Did no one reflect that, by deceiving them in this

way, the government made enemies of all those who trusted for a time

in the exactitude of the \_Bulletins\_, and lost their illusion soon

after, when they learnt the melancholy ends of their sons and their

brothers[521]?’

[519] For the miseries and dangers of life in Rodrigo, see the

\_Memoirs\_ of the Duchesse d’Abrantes. Her letter to Junot,

intercepted by Wellington, tells the same tale: it is to be found

in D’Urban’s collection of documents.

[520] See \_Correspondance\_, vol. xxi. pp. 262, 280, 338, &c.

[521] See Fririon, pp. 57-8.

The dearth of news from the front was not Masséna’s own fault. He

had sent back several aides-de-camp to find their way to Almeida,

but all had either been captured by the Ordenança or forced to turn

back. The best known of these was the young Mascarenhas, one of the

Portuguese traitors on the Marshal’s staff. He started from Coimbra

on October 3, with the Bussaco dispatch, disguised as a shepherd, but

was detected by a band of Ordenança, and sent as prisoner to Lisbon.

The Regency had him tried by court-martial, and as he was caught

without a uniform, he was condemned as a spy as well as a traitor,

and executed by the garotte in December[522].

[522] See above, p. 277.

There was a perfect cordon of Portuguese militia and irregulars

round Masséna’s rear in October and November. J. Wilson had come

down to Espinhal, and had his outposts in Leiria; Trant had returned

to Coimbra. They were in touch, by means of the Estrada Nova and

the garrison of Abrantes, with the Ordenança of Castello Branco,

and a Spanish detachment of three battalions under Carlos d’España,

which La Romana had sent to Villa Velha, at the same time that he

took his two divisions under La Carrera and Charles O’Donnell within

the Lines. On the side of the Atlantic the garrison of Peniche had

sent out a force of 300 men to Obidos, under Captain Fenwick, and

these joined hands with De Gray’s cavalry at Ramalhal, in front of

Torres Vedras. A few French parties which crossed the Monte Junta

to raid towards the sea coast were cut off either by Fenwick or by

the dragoons. But Masséna never sent any serious detachment in this

direction.

For just one month (October 14-November 14) Masséna maintained

his position in front of the Lines. The 8th Corps had thrown up

some earthworks on, and to the flanks of, the hill of Sobral, thus

assuming a defensive instead of an offensive position. The 2nd Corps

went back to Carregado, but left strong detachments in Villafranca.

By the dispositions of October 16 the 6th Corps remained with

its main body at Otta, far to the rear, and an advanced guard at

Alemquer. Ney was so placed that he could succour either of the other

corps if they were attacked. A brigade of Loison’s division was

pushed forward to the hill opposite Arruda[523]: in face of this last

Craufurd was adorning the front of his line with a luxury of abattis,

entanglements, and pitfalls, which would have made the hillside

inaccessible to even the most alert and vigorous person moving alone.

Formed troops could not have got past the first two or three traps.

[523] Ferey’s brigade, which had already faced Craufurd at

Bussaco.

But the most significant part of Masséna’s arrangements was to

be found in his rear: Montbrun’s cavalry reserve went back to

Santarem; thither also went the reserve artillery on the 17th, and

the hospitals on the 20th of October. At the same time each of the

corps was directed to send to Santarem all smiths, carpenters, and

other artificers that could be found in its ranks. They were told to

report to General Eblé, the officer commanding the artillery, who

had received from the Marshal a special mission--the construction of

boats and pontoons sufficient to bridge the Tagus or the Zezere. For,

if he were starved out in Estremadura, Masséna had it in his mind

that he might find it convenient either to cross into the Alemtejo,

or to force a way across the Zezere into the Castello Branco

district, in the hope of opening communication with Spain via Zarza

and Alcantara. Montbrun’s cavalry explored northward and eastward,

seeking for likely spots at which the Tagus might be bridged, and on

the other side reconnoitring the line of the Zezere, to see how it

was held. Not a boat could be found on the greater river; at Chamusca

a daring party of fifty men swam its broad current, for a dash at

some barks which were visible on the other side, but all were found

to have had their bottoms carefully knocked out and to be filled

with sand. Dejean, the officer who explored as far as Punhete on the

Zezere, found all the bridges broken, and the garrison of Abrantes

watching the fords, with strong detachments at Punhete and Martinchel.

Eblé found at Santarem that he had to create a pontoon equipage with

no materials at all to work from. There was raw iron in the bars and

balconies of houses, and raw timber in their floors and rafters, but

nothing else. His smiths had to start on the weary task of forging

saws and hammers, his carpenters had to turn housebreakers--in the

technical sense--to obtain planks and joists. His task was hard,

and would clearly take many weeks before it could be properly

accomplished.

Meanwhile time was all-important to Masséna, for every day the

country between Santarem and the Lines grew barer and yet more bare,

as the foragers of the three French corps worked their will upon it.

The men were already going into hospital by thousands, and dying

there. Junot’s conscript battalions, unsheltered from the rain in

their bleak bivouac above Sobral, suffered most--Ney’s and Reynier’s

men were (for the most part) housed if not fed. The Army, which had

65,000 men on leaving Almeida, and 55,000 after the loss of Coimbra,

had dwindled down to 50,000 effective sabres and bayonets by the

month of November[524].

[524] According to \_Fririon\_, p. 98, the morning state of Nov. 1

showed only 46,591 men effective. But the figures of that officer

are always a little lower than what I have found in the official

documents.

Wellington was already pondering on the possibility of taking the

offensive. He had received hundreds of deserters during the last

few weeks[525], and knew by their means of the miserable condition

of the enemy--of the fact that the cavalry had nearly all been sent

to the rear, and of the attempt that was being made to create a

bridge-equipage at Santarem[526]. His dispatches of October 27 and

November 3 to Lord Liverpool treat at length of the advantages and

disadvantages of assailing the French in their present position[527].

He sets forth the strength of his own army--29,000 British troops

present with the colours, after deducting sick and men detached,

24,000 Portuguese effective, and 5,000 of La Romana’s Spaniards,

making a total of 58,615. He refuses to contemplate the use of the

militia, infantry or artillery, in the field; considering their

behaviour at Bussaco and elsewhere, ‘I should deceive myself if I

could expect, or your Lordship if I should state, that any advantage

would be derived from their assistance in an offensive operation

against the enemy.’ On the other hand, he estimates Masséna’s

fighting force at 55,000 men--a slight miscalculation, for there

were only 50,000 effective at this moment, and of these 4,000

cavalry and one brigade of infantry were at Santarem and other

distant places, from which they could not have been withdrawn for a

battle suddenly forced upon their main corps. Masséna could really

have put no more than 44,000 men in line within twenty-four hours

of an alarm. Wellington then proceeds to argue that he must make a

frontal attack, for if he drew a very large force out of the Lines,

in order to assail the enemy’s flank by a wide encircling march,

‘the inevitable consequence of attempting such a manœuvre would be

to open some one or other of the great roads to Lisbon, and to our

shipping, of which the enemy would take immediate advantage to attain

his object.’ Accordingly ‘we must carry their positions by main

force, and in the course of the operation I must draw the army out

of their cantonments, and expose men and horses to the inclemencies

of the weather at this time of the year.’ Moreover, if Masséna were

defeated, it would cause Soult to evacuate Granada, raise the siege

of Cadiz, and come with 50,000 men to aid the army of Portugal.

‘So if I should succeed in forcing Masséna’s positions, it would

become a question whether I should be able to maintain my own, in

case the enemy should march another army into this country.’ Blake

and the garrison of Cadiz, when freed from Soult’s presence, would

certainly do nothing to help the general cause of the Allies. They

would neither come to Portugal, nor be able to make a serious advance

on Madrid, so as to draw off Soult in that direction. He therefore

concludes, that ‘When I observe how small the superiority of numbers

is in my favour, and know that the position will be in favour of the

enemy, I am of opinion that I act in conformity with the intentions

of His Majesty’s Government in waiting for the result of what is

going on, and in incurring no extraordinary risk.’ What he calls

‘the safe game’ is to keep on the strict defensive, hoping that the

enemy’s distress for provisions, and the operations of the militia

in his rear, may cause him either to make a desperate attack on the

Lines--in which he will be repulsed with awful loss--or else to make

such large detachments, to clear off the corps of Wilson, Trant, and

the rest, that it will become easy and safe to attack the remaining

army in its present position.

[525] The first morning note of D’Urban’s diary in November is

nearly always ‘more deserters arrived.’

[526] See Wellington to Lord Liverpool, \_Dispatches\_, vi. 554.

[527] See especially the longer dispatch of Nov. 3, on pp. 582-3

ibid.

Here, as when we considered the reasons which determined Wellington

to evacuate the Coimbra country at the end of September, we are

bound to recognize that he adopted an attitude of caution which he

would not have assumed in 1812 and 1813, when he had thoroughly

proved his army. The temptations to assail Junot’s isolated and

advanced position at Sobral were enormous. The 8th Corps had been

thrust forward into a re-entering angle of the British lines, in

which it could be attacked from the left flank as well as from

the front. It was wasting away daily from its privations, and had

apparently not more than 10,000 bayonets left--the cavalry of the

corps (Sainte-Croix’s old division) had been sent off to Santarem,

save one regiment. To sustain Junot the 6th Corps could eventually

be used, but only one brigade of it (that of Ferey) was in the first

line, and this depleted unit, which had been so thoroughly routed

at Bussaco, had its old enemy, Craufurd’s Light Division, in its

front. Of the rest of the 6th Corps, one division was at Alemquer,

eleven miles behind Sobral, the other at Otta, six miles behind

Alemquer[528]. It would have taken the one four or five hours, the

other nearly the whole of a short November day, to assemble and to

come up. Reynier could not quit Hill’s front without freeing the

latter’s two strong divisions for action. Meanwhile Wellington had

disposable, in Junot’s immediate front, the divisions of Spencer,

Cole, Leith, and Alex. Campbell [Picton had been sent back to Torres

Vedras], plus the Portuguese brigades of Pack, Coleman, and A.

Campbell, with La Romana’s Spaniards also, if he should choose to

employ them--this, too, after leaving Craufurd to look after Ferey,

and Hill to keep Reynier in check. It is impossible not to conclude

that a sudden frontal and flank attack on Sobral with 30,000 men

must have enveloped and crushed the 8th Corps. Though its position

was good, its supports were too far off; Ney could not have come up

to Junot’s aid, before he was overwhelmed. Masséna was uneasy about

this possibility of disaster, and had issued orders on October 29

that if Junot and Ferey were attacked, they were to fall back on

Alemquer, while Ney was to bring up his reserves to that same place,

and Reynier to abandon his position in front of Alhandra and march

on Alemquer also[529]. But the weak point of this arrangement was,

that if Junot had been attacked at dawn, both in front and flank, by

an overwhelming force, he could never have got back to Alemquer, and

must have been cut off and battered to pieces close in the rear of

Sobral. The English frontal attack--Spencer, Leith, and Pack--would

have started at a distance of less than a mile from his position:

Cole and Campbell on the flank had only two miles to cover. Both

columns had a down-hill march before them till the line of rising

ground about Sobral was reached. How could the 8th Corps have got

away? Even an orderly retreat, with a fighting rearguard, would have

been impossible.

[528] Loison, to whom Ferey’s brigade belonged, had gone to the

rear with his other brigade.

[529] The whole dispatch may be found in Fririon, pp. 96-7. That

officer quite saw the danger of the position: see his comments on

pp. 99-100.

But if Junot’s 10,000 men had been destroyed behind Sobral,

Wellington would then have been in the position to push in between

Ney and Reynier, whose columns would just have been beginning to

near Alemquer. He might easily have driven them apart, and have

forced them to retire on Santarem or some such distant point, in

order to complete their junction. Even had they succeeded in joining,

Masséna would have had a demoralized army of little over 30,000 men

remaining. It is certain that he must have refused to fight, and have

started on a disastrous retreat either by Castello Branco, or more

likely by Thomar. For the latter direction would have brought him

to his base at Almeida--the former would have taken him through an

almost uninhabited country, to a part of Spain, the mid-Tagus, where

no French army was ready to receive or succour him.

It is impossible, therefore, to doubt that Wellington had a great

opportunity before him. Yet it is easy to see why he refused to take

it. A mere victory of the second class--the thrusting of Junot out of

his positions, not followed by the complete annihilation of the 8th

Corps--would have done no more for him than he himself stated in the

above-quoted dispatch of November 3. If Junot got away with the main

body of his troops, and joined Ney and Reynier, and if their united

army took up a defensive position at Santarem or elsewhere, Masséna

might still hang on to Portugal, till Soult brought up to his aid

the whole Army of Andalusia, or great reinforcements arrived from

Castile. Any chance--a fog, heavy rain, the rashness or stupidity

of some subordinate--might prevent the complete and instantaneous

success of the attack on Sobral. These things being taken into

consideration, Wellington resolved to lie still in the Lines, and to

let the weapon of starvation play for some time longer on the French.

He expected them to retire within a few days from sheer necessity, or

else to deliver the much desired attack on his impregnable position.

Masséna had found that the preparation of his bridge equipage at

Santarem would be a long business. He knew that his numbers were

shrinking every day in the most appalling fashion, not only from

deaths and invaliding, but from desertion. Yet he stood still for

a fortnight longer than his adversary had expected, and meanwhile

made a last desperate appeal for help to the Emperor. He had guessed

that all his previous attempts to communicate with Spain had failed

because his messengers had been sent without a sufficient escort, and

had fallen by the way. Accordingly, he told off a body of more than

500 men to bear his next letter, and gave the command of them to an

officer of well-known intelligence and resource--Foy, who had served

in all the three Portuguese campaigns, Junot’s of 1808, Soult’s of

1809, and this last of his own. Moreover, it was known that Napoleon

had confidence in his ability, though he was an old Republican, and

had actually been one of the few who had refused to sign the address

which was drawn up to ask the First Consul to declare himself Emperor

in 1804. Foy was given a whole battalion of infantry--the 4th of the

47th of the Line--with 120 mounted men. He was told to avoid the main

roads, to cross the Zezere, pass north of Castello Branco, and to try

to reach Spain by way of Sabugal or Penamacor. This was obviously a

difficult task, since the Ordenança were known to be abroad, even

in this rugged and deserted region. To cover Foy’s start, Montbrun

marched, with a brigade of dragoons and a couple of battalions of

infantry, to make a demonstration against Abrantes, and draw the

attention of its garrison from the upper Zezere. Montbrun forced

the passage of the river at Punhete, after a sharp skirmish, and

established his vanguard on the further side. He thus attracted to

himself all the forces which Lobo, the governor of Abrantes, could

spare outside his walls. Meanwhile (October 31) Foy passed the Zezere

higher up, at an unguarded ford, and marched by Cardigos and Sobreira

Formosa along the Castello Branco road. But he abandoned it before

reaching that town, and turned north, crossing the Serra de Moradal

by Fundão and Belmonte. From thence he reached Sabugal, and finally

Ciudad Rodrigo on November 8. He had been unmolested save by a body

of Ordenança, who cut off some of his stragglers. The passage of

his column, whose strength was exaggerated by rumour, caused Carlos

d’España to burn the bridge of Villa Velha, under the impression that

Foy intended to seize it, and open up communication southward with

Soult. He and Lobo reported to Wellington that Foy and Montbrun were

the van of a great force, which was about to overrun and occupy the

Castello Branco country[530]. But Masséna’s messenger had no other

object than to reach Castile with as great rapidity as possible, and

without fighting.

[530] Wellington also, on Lobo’s report, thought (\_Dispatches\_,

vi. 604) that Foy’s and Montbrun’s object had been to seize the

bridge of Villa Velha.

Arrived at Rodrigo, Foy gave over his escort to General Gardanne,

with orders to him to collect all the convalescents of the Army of

Portugal, and to draw out the garrison of Rodrigo and Almeida, if

Drouet was now in condition to take charge of these fortresses. This

should give him a force of 6,000 men, with which he was ordered to

cut his way to join the main army, to whom he was to bring a convoy

of ammunition, which was running desperately low at the front. How

badly Gardanne executed his charge we shall presently see.

Foy meanwhile, with a fresh dragoon escort, rode for Salamanca and

Valladolid, at which last place he was disgusted to find Drouet

and the bulk of the 9th Corps, whom he had expected to meet at

Rodrigo[531]. He met the general, and passed on to him Masséna’s

request that he would collect the whole of his 16,000 men, and march

on Almeida, and from thence down the Mondego to Coimbra, after which

he was to open up communication with the main army by Leiria or

Thomar. Drouet, assuming some of the airs of a commander-in-chief,

did not show the eagerness to carry out these directions which Foy

had hoped to find.

[531] Only part of Claparéde’s division had as yet even reached

Salamanca. Foy to Masséna, Nov. 8, from Rodrigo.

From Valladolid Foy rode straight through by post, braving guerrilla

bands and swollen rivers, through Burgos and Bayonne to Paris,

which he reached on the night of November 21. On the next day he

delivered his dispatches to the Emperor, and was put through two

hours of sharp cross-questioning by his master. The notes of this

conversation, taken down the same afternoon by the general, are

one of the most interesting documents for the study of Napoleon’s

psychology. Striding up and down his study, pouring out strings of

queries, rapid judgements, rebukes and laudations, even anecdotes and

screeds of political philosophy, the Emperor presented a wonderful

picture of restless and far-reaching intellectual activity. Foy put

in his excuses and explanations in the gaps of the Emperor’s tirades.

‘Why the devil did Masséna thrust himself into that muddle[532]

at Bussaco? Even in a plain country columns do not break through

lines, unless they are supported by a superior artillery fire.’ ‘And

the disgrace at Coimbra, where he has let his hospitals be taken

by 1,500 ragged rascals! To lose your hospitals is as disgraceful

as to lose your flags! In a regularly organized country--England,

for example--Masséna would have gone to the scaffold for that job.

The English are full of courage and honour: they defend themselves

well. Masséna and Ney did not know them, but Reynier, whom they had

beaten twice or thrice [Alexandria and Maida], ought to know them!

Wellington has behaved like a clever man: his total desolation of the

kingdom of Portugal is the result of systematic measures splendidly

concerted. I could not do that myself, for all my power. Why did not

Masséna stop at Coimbra, after Bussaco?’ ‘Because,’ faltered Foy,

‘supposing he had done so, Your Majesty would have reproached him

by saying “If you had only pushed straight on Lisbon the English

would have embarked.”’ ‘Very possible, indeed,’ replied the Emperor,

breaking into a broad smile. ‘Well, I wanted to drive them into the

sea: I have failed. All right; then I will have a regular campaign

in Portugal, and use them up. I can wear them down in the nature of

things, because England cannot compete in mere numbers with me.’ Then

followed an excursus into the characters of French generals--Junot,

Ney, Soult especially. Then a curious confession that he had made a

miscalculation in taking up the Spanish war: ‘I thought the system

easier to change than it has proved in that country, with its corrupt

minister, its feeble king, and its shameless, dissolute queen. But

for all that, I don’t repent of what I did; I had to smash up that

nation: sooner or later they would have done me a bad turn.’

[532] échauffourée.

Then comes the Emperor’s conclusion upon the present state of

affairs. ‘Masséna must take Abrantes--Elvas would be of no good to

us. The only way to get Wellington to make a forward move will be to

force him to try to raise the siege of Abrantes. As long as Masséna

stays in position opposite Lisbon, nothing is lost; he is still a

terror to the English, and keeps the offensive. If he retreats, I

fear great disaster for him. But why did he not take up some regular

plan of operations? The very day after he reconnoitred the Lisbon

lines, it was clear that he would never attack them. I will send

immediate orders for the 5th Corps [Mortier] to invade the Alemtejo.

Will they be obeyed? At that distance only those who choose carry out

my directions. [A hint at Soult’s selfish policy.] I tremble lest

Masséna may call Drouet down to him, and then get his communications

cut again. By communications I mean sure points, at two or three

marches distance, properly garrisoned and provisioned, where convoys

can rest and be safe. An army without open communications loses heart

and gets demoralized.... All the hope of the English is in that army

of Wellington’s! If we could destroy it, it would be a terrible blow

to them.’

The Emperor, pleased with Foy’s intelligent explanations of the

situation, created him a general of division, and told him to

rest for a month, and then return to Portugal. He sent for him to

administer a second catechism on the 24th, and then condescended to

explain his view of the situation, and his orders for the future.

He quite approved of Masséna’s resolve to hold out in front of the

Lines, and had already given Drouet directions to assemble his corps

at Almeida, and open up communications with the Army of Portugal--in

fact, the order to do so had been sent off as early as November 3,

and its bearer must have crossed Foy somewhere on the road[533].

Soult had also been ordered, two days before Masséna’s appeal

came to hand, to create a diversion in the direction of Spanish

Estremadura[534]. He was now sent a sharp reproof for having done

nothing, and more especially for having allowed La Romana to slip

away with two divisions to Lisbon unmolested[535]. But it seems clear

that no orders to concentrate his whole army and invade the Alemtejo

were sent him, and these were the only measures that could have

helped Masséna. Napoleon’s \_obiter dictum\_ that it would be no use to

besiege and capture Elvas shows a misapprehension of the situation. A

mere demonstration in Spanish Estremadura might call back La Romana,

but would not help the Army of Portugal to any appreciable extent. It

was not La Romana’s 8,000 men who formed the strength of the defence

of Lisbon. Wellington could have spared them without harm, and,

indeed, sent them away long before Masséna quitted Portugal.

[533] This is the order in \_Correspondance\_, 17,097. It goes on

to give Drouet detailed orders as to what he should do ‘aussitôt

que les Anglais seront rembarqués.’

[534] This had been sent off the day before Foy arrived, Nov. 20,

it is \_Correspondance\_, 17,146.

[535] \_Correspondance\_, 17,172, dated Nov. 28.

It may be added that (as facts were to show ere long) the mere

sending up of Drouet to the front was not nearly sufficient to put

Masséna in a position to incommode Wellington, more especially when

the 9th Corps was told to drop detachments at short intervals at

every stage after Almeida. By following these orders, indeed, Drouet

brought to the main army a mere 6,000 men on December 26, having

left the rest of his corps beyond the Mondego. His arrival was of

absolutely no use to the Prince of Essling. The one thing which could

have saved Masséna was the arrival, not of a small field force such

as Drouet or Mortier commanded, but of a large army, on the Lower

Tagus, and on its southern side. Such an army, as the disposition of

the French troops in Spain then stood, could only have been produced

if Soult had consented to abandon Granada, raise the siege of Cadiz,

and march with the greater part of the Army of Andalusia into the

Alemtejo, masking Badajoz and Elvas, and leaving a division or two

in Seville to keep Blake and the Spanish troops from Cadiz in check.

But the Duke of Dalmatia could never be induced to abandon two-thirds

of his Andalusian viceroyalty, in order to execute a movement whose

results, if successful, would mainly redound to the glory of Masséna.

Nothing short of a definite and peremptory order from Paris would

have made him call in Victor and Sebastiani, and evacuate Eastern

and Southern Andalusia. Such an order the Emperor did not send. His

dispatch of Dec. 4 only ordered that a corps of 10,000 men should

advance to the Tagus in the direction of Villa Velha and Montalvão,

to communicate with Masséna[536]. Soult undertook instead a blow at

Badajoz, in January, with a force of 20,000 men, while leaving Cadiz

still blockaded and Granada still held. Napoleon, therefore, must

take the blame of the final failure of the invasion of Portugal.

As has been shown above, from his own words, he was conscious that

he was too far from the scene of operation, and that mere ordinary

directions to his lieutenants might not be carried out with zeal. ‘Je

donne l’ordre. L’exécutera-t-on? De si loin obéit qui veut[537].’

But if this were so, it was surely necessary either that he should go

to Spain in person, or else--the more obvious alternative--that he

should appoint a real Commander-in-Chief in the Peninsula, who should

have authority to order all the other marshals and generals to obey

his directions, without malingering or appeals to Paris. Napoleon had

deliberately created a divided authority beyond the Pyrenees when he

set up his military governments, and instructed Suchet, Kellermann,

and the other governors to report directly to himself, and to pay no

attention to commands emanating from Madrid[538]. King Joseph, as

a central source of orders, had been reduced to a nullity by this

ill-conceived decree. Even over the troops not included in the new

viceroyalties he had no practical authority. Not he and his chief of

the staff, but Masséna, ought to have been entrusted with a full and

autocratic power of command over all the armies of Spain, if a true

unity of purpose was to be achieved.

[536] Berthier to Soult, Dec. 4, 1810.

[537] See above, p. 458.

[538] See pp. 201 and 284 above.

This necessary arrangement the Emperor utterly refused to carry out:

he sent rebukes to Drouet for hesitating to obey the orders of the

Prince of Essling, and he jested at the absurd conduct of Ney and

Junot in conducting themselves like independent generals[539]. But

these officers were in command of troops definitely allotted to the

Army of Portugal. Over the other generals of Spain he refused to

allow Masséna any control, and he continued to send them his own

ever-tardy instructions, which had often ceased to be appropriate

long before the dispatch had reached its destination. If we seek the

reasons of this unwise persistence in his old methods, we find that

they were two. The first was his secret, but only half-disguised,

intention to annex all the Spanish provinces north of the Ebro to

France, an insane resolve which led him to keep Suchet and Macdonald

in Aragon and Catalonia, as well as the governors of Navarre and

Biscay, out of the control of any central authority that he might

set up in Spain. The second was his jealousy of entrusting the vast

army south of the Ebro, far more than 250,000 men at the moment,

to any single commander. He remembered Soult’s absurd strivings

after royalty in Portugal; he knew that Masséna, though the best of

soldiers, was false, selfish, and ambitious; and he refused to hand

over to either of them a full control over the whole of the forces in

the Peninsula. It was even better, in his estimation, to leave King

Joseph a shadow of power, than to take the risk of giving overmuch

authority to one of the two able, but not wholly trustworthy,

marshals to whom he must otherwise have entrusted it.

[539] See the above-quoted conversation with Foy, in the latter’s

\_Vie Militaire\_, p. 109.

The war in Portugal, therefore, went on as a mere section of the

great contest in the Peninsula; the other and less important episodes

were not made wholly subordinate to it. And if this system continued

Wellington was free from any real danger. He knew it himself; he

studied diligently both the political position and the details of the

emplacement of the imperial armies in the Peninsula. He was fortunate

enough to secure whole budgets of French dispatches captured by the

Ordenança[540], and all that he read confirmed him in his conclusion.

‘I calculate,’ he writes on October 27, ‘that a reinforcement of

15,000 men would not now give the enemy so good an army as they had

at Bussaco. He lost 2,000 killed or taken there: Trant took 5,000

at Coimbra: above 1,000 prisoners have gone through this army: many

have been killed by the peasantry. They cannot have less than 4,000

sick[541], after the march they have made, and the weather to which

they are exposed. The deserters tell us that almost every one is

sick. From this statement you may judge of the diminution of their

numbers; and you will see that I have not much reason to apprehend

anything from [Drouet’s] “\_quinze beaux bataillons\_ which fought

at Essling”[542], and which cannot be here before the middle of

November. I do not think I have much to apprehend even if Mortier is

added to them. However, we shall see how \_that\_ will be.... All the

accounts which I receive of the distresses of the enemy for want of

provisions would tend to a belief that their army cannot remain long

in the position in which it is placed, and it is astonishing that

they have been able to remain here so long as this[543].’ That they

have succeeded in staying even a fortnight in front of the Lines is,

he adds, entirely the fault of the Portuguese government, for not

carrying out thoroughly the work of devastation. But, for the reasons

stated on an earlier page, Wellington was resolved not to take the

offensive, even against a foe whose ranks were beginning to grow

thin. Famine should do the work, and no lives should be wasted.

[540] See for example those noted in \_Dispatches\_, vi. 545, and

a whole series copied out in D’Urban’s journal in October and

November, 1810.

[541] A most modest estimate, for the returns of sick for the

second half of October in a document at the \_Archives de la

Guerre\_ give a total of 10,897 men in hospital.

[542] An allusion to a phrase in one of the captured dispatches.

[543] Wellington to Liverpool, October 27, pp. 545 and 555 of

vol. vi.

There remained only one danger: it was just possible that Soult,

even though Masséna had not yet suffered any disaster great enough

to make the evacuation of Eastern Andalusia imperative, might

send Mortier and some additional divisions of his other corps to

Spanish Estremadura, and make a dash at the Lower Tagus. Masséna’s

boat-building at Santarem, of which every deserter spoke, might

be intended to give him the materials for a bridge by which he

might communicate across the Lower Tagus with Soult. Wellington

accordingly resolved to keep a strict watch beyond the Tagus, and

to have a flying force ready, which could hinder the construction

of a bridge or a bridge head. With this object on November 2 he

sent over the Tagus General Fane, with his 1,500 Portuguese horse,

a battalion of Caçadores, and a few guns. All the North Alemtejo

Ordenança were called out to watch the river banks, and to lend what

small assistance they could to the cavalry. Fane discovered the

French dockyard at Santarem, and tried to fire it with rockets on

November 13. He failed, but the mere appearance of his little force

on the further bank of the Tagus had some good effect, since it

warned Masséna that an attempt to pass the broad river would not be

unopposed, and therefore made him more chary of attempting it. Fane,

being in touch with Abrantes on his right hand and with Lisbon on

his left, now formed, as it were, a section of the blockading screen

which was thrown round the whole French army.

Wellington had miscalculated the time which the French could afford

to spend in front of the Lines, without suffering actual starvation,

by about a fortnight. On November 10 Masséna gave orders for the

evacuation of his whole position, and a general retreat on Santarem,

because it had become absolutely impossible to stay any longer on the

ground facing Zibreira and Alhandra, unless the whole army was to

perish. The report from the 8th Corps may suffice to give in a few

words the condition of affairs, ‘General Clausel wishes to observe

that during the daytime he cannot count on any other troops save

those actually guarding the outpost line. The majority of the men are

absent on raids to the rear, to seek for maize and cattle. The last

detachment which came back to camp had been nine days away. Generals

and soldiers agree in stating that for some time it has only been

possible to collect a little corn with extreme difficulty. For eight

days the troops have been living on polenta (boiled maize flour)

alone, and of this they have received only half a ration. During

the last four days the 1st Division has received only one ration of

meat, which amounted to six ounces of goat’s-flesh. If the corps had

to make a retreat, it would have to abandon its sick and wounded for

want of carts, which the intendant-generals will not furnish[544].’

The condition of the 2nd and 6th Corps was only so far better that

they had to send their foragers a less distance, when seeking for the

scanty store which could still be gleaned from the hidden granaries

of the Portuguese.

[544] Fririon’s confidential report to Masséna, night of 8th-9th

of November.

But Masséna had no intention of retiring on Spain when he began to

issue orders for a general movement to the rear. Profoundly sensible

of the difficulties of a November retreat through the mountains,

trusting that he might block the British army by maintaining a bold

attitude in its front, and still hoping that large reinforcements

might reach him ere long from Drouet and Mortier, he had resolved

only to evacuate the Lisbon peninsula, and to retire no further than

to the flat and fertile lands between Santarem and the Zezere. In

the Plain of Golegão, as it is sometimes called, he hoped to feed

his army for many weeks more, for the region was still comparatively

full of resources, since it had only been exploited as yet by the

garrison of Santarem and the flying columns which had marched to

the Zezere. It was now his cherished hope that Wellington might

follow him into the plain-land, abandoning his defensive system,

and consenting to give battle in the open. The English might even

be induced to attack the French army when it should have taken up a

new and a strong position. In somewhat rash confidence the Marshal

professed himself certain of the result, even with his depleted army

of under 50,000 men, if Wellington would consent to fight. At the

worst, if starved out again or beaten in the field, he would retreat

on Spain by Castello Branco, for which purpose he had sent up the

greater part of his boat-train from Santarem to build a bridge over

the Zezere. He had also pushed part of Loison’s brigade of infantry

across that river at Punhete, and was holding with it a point

suitable for a \_tête-du-pont\_. A regiment of dragoons was attached to

this force: it skirmished not unfrequently with parties sent out to

reconnoitre from Abrantes, but with no serious result. For General

Lobo, the governor, had no intention of coming out with a large

detachment, in order to push the French advanced guard back over the

river. He had been ordered to keep to the defensive, and only sent

out occasional reconnaissances to see whether the enemy were still in

position.

Loison’s troops were now no longer the only large force which had

quitted the army in front of the Lines. Not only was Montbrun, with

the main body of the cavalry, watching the roads from the north,

but six battalions of infantry had been sent up from the 6th Corps

on November 8 to occupy Torres Novas and Thomar. If Wellington had

attacked the enemy behind Sobral on any day after that date, he

would have found Ney short of fourteen battalions[545] out of the

thirty-four which formed his corps. There would have been only 10,000

infantry ready to support Junot in the direction of Alemquer. But

this fact, of course, was unknown to the English general, who had

already made up his mind not to take the offensive. If it had come

to his knowledge, he might have attacked, even at the last moment,

with an enormous probability of inflicting on the enemy not the mere

repulse that he disliked to contemplate--on account of its ulterior

effects--but a crushing defeat, which might have hurled them out of

Portugal.

[545] Viz. 39th (3 batts.) and 69th (3 batts.) of Marchand’s

division at Thomar and Torres Novas, with Loison’s 66th (3

batts.), 82nd (2 batts.), and 26th (3 batts.). It will be

remembered that Reynier was, at the same time, minus the 4/47th,

sent as escort with Foy to Ciudad Rodrigo.

On November 10 Masséna ordered the hospitals of the 6th and 8th Corps

at Alemquer, and of the 2nd Corps at Azambuja, to be sent off to

Santarem. At the same time the intendants of the commissariat were

ordered to direct to the rear the meagre store of provisions which

was in their possession, loaded on the much depleted transport train

which still survived. On the 13th the reserve parks and the artillery

train of each corps were ordered to follow. On the 14th, at eight

o’clock in the evening, the infantry, many of whom lay in contact

with the British lines, acted on their marching directions. Ney’s

main body, which was out of sight of Wellington, was to move first;

then Junot and Ferey’s brigade, whose movement was most perilous--for

if their departure were discovered while they were on the hither side

of the defile of Alemquer, they ran a great risk of being enveloped

and destroyed. Reynier was to maintain his position at Villafranca

and Carregado, until it was reported to him that Junot and his corps

had passed Alemquer and reached Moinho de Cubo. For if the 2nd Corps

had gone off at an early hour, and its departure had been discovered,

Hill might have marched from Alhandra on Alemquer quickly enough to

intercept Junot at that point; and if Junot were being pursued at the

moment by the troops from his immediate front, the whole 8th Corps

might have been cut off.

On the night of the 14th, when the movement was commencing, Masséna

was favoured with the greatest piece of luck which had come to him

since the explosion of Almeida. A fog began to rise in the small

hours, and had become dense by the early morning. It caused some

difficulty to the retiring troops, and dragoons had to be placed at

every cross road to point out the right direction to the infantry

columns[546]. But it had the all-important result of permitting the

British outposts to see nothing at dawn. The limit visible to them

was less than 100 yards. It was only at ten o’clock in the morning

of the 15th that the mists were suddenly rolled up by an east wind,

and that the nearer outposts could see that the French sentinels

in front of them had disappeared. The first alarm was given by

Campbell’s 6th Division[547]. The news spread along the whole line

from west to east, and reached the Commander-in-Chief, who ascended

the hill in front of Sobral a few minutes later[548]. The ingenuity

of the enemy in concealing his departure had been great. Ferey’s

brigade, in front of Arruda, had erected a well-designed line of

dummy sentinels before the Light Division, which were not discovered

to be men of straw, topped with old shakos and bound to poles, till

the fog rolled off on the 15th[549].

[546] Delagrave, p. 123 and note.

[547] Londonderry, ii. pp. 51-2.

[548] His first dispatch, that to Craufurd, is dated at 10.20.

[549] See Leach’s \_Diary\_, p. 178.

Meanwhile the French had accomplished the first stage of their

retreat absolutely unmolested. Ney had retreated as far as Alcoentre;

Junot had passed the defile of Alemquer, and passed through Moinho

de Cubo to Aveira de Cima. Reynier, who had waited till Junot was in

safety before he withdrew at eight in the morning, reached Cartaxo

before the day ended. The first and most difficult stage of the

retreat had been finished without a shot being fired. What would

have happened had the night of the 14th been clear and starry, and

the morning sun had shone out on the 15th, so that Junot would have

been detected as he was passing Alemquer, and Reynier would have

been visible still in line of battle behind Villafranca, the French

diarists of the campaign prefer not to contemplate. Yet they mostly

continued to speak of Wellington as a mediocre general, who had all

the luck on his side.

On the night of the 15th the British Commander-in-Chief had to draw

his deductions from the facts before him. Three things were possible:

Masséna might have been so thoroughly starved out and broken in

spirit, that he might be intending to retire on Spain, either via

Thomar and the Mondego, or by his new bridge on the Zezere and the

route of Castello Branco. Or he might be proposing to cross the Tagus

by means of the boats and pontoons still remaining at Santarem, to

seek unwasted fields in the Alemtejo and a junction with Mortier. Or,

again, he might merely be abandoning a position that was no longer

tenable, in order to take up a new one--perhaps at Santarem, perhaps

at Thomar, but very possibly at and about Abrantes, whose siege he

might be contemplating[550].

[550] Wellington to Fane, Nov. 15: ‘The enemy retreated last

night. He intends either to retire across the Zezere into Spain,

or across the Tagus into Spain, or across the Zezere to attack

Abrantes. The last is possible, as I last night received an

account that on the 9th they had a considerable reinforcement

coming on the frontier at Beira Alta.’

On the whole Wellington thought it probable that the last-named plan

was the one which Masséna intended to adopt. A retreat on Spain

would not only be difficult and dangerous, but inconsistent with the

Marshal’s obstinate and courageous temper. It was much more likely

that he would endeavour to hold out in Portugal, and meanwhile to

cover his partial discomfiture by a bold stroke, such as the siege of

Abrantes, which would still give an offensive air to his movements,

and would also throw on the British army the responsibility of

relieving the fortress. Such a course, it will be remembered, was

what Napoleon recommended to Foy[551]. ‘There is still a chance that

the enemy may take up and try to keep a position at Santarem,’ wrote

Wellington to Fane on the night of the 15th, ‘endeavouring to keep

his rear open, and to get a communication with Ciudad Rodrigo across

the Zezere.’ But he was inclined to think that Abrantes was Masséna’s

goal. He therefore directed Fane to transfer his cavalry to the point

opposite Abrantes on the south bank of the Tagus, and requested

Carlos d’España to enter the place and strengthen the garrison. He

intended to pass over Hill’s two divisions to strengthen Fane, and

for that purpose directed Admiral Berkeley to prepare all the boats

of the fleet to ferry Hill across to Salvaterra, on the south bank

of the Tagus, from whence his force could join Fane, and either

reinforce Abrantes, by means of its bridge of boats, or join in the

pursuit of Masséna if he were about (an unlikely chance) to retire on

Spain by way of his bridge over the Zezere[552] and Castello Branco.

[551] See p. 457 above.

[552] All from the orders issued at 10.30 in the morning ‘from

the hill in front of Sobral’. \_Dispatches\_, vi. 623.

Meanwhile all was still uncertain, and it was Wellington’s first task

to find out what roads the enemy had taken in his retreat. He did

not on the 15th order his whole army to leave the Lines in headlong

pursuit. Only Spencer, Craufurd, and Hill were directed to march

that afternoon. The former, with a cavalry regiment out in his front,

occupied Sobral, and pushed its vanguard forward to Alemquer by the

high road. The second left Arruda, climbed the low hills in front of

him, where Ferey had been encamped for the last month, and felt his

way to Alemquer, by the bad road which his immediate adversary had

taken eighteen hours before. Hill followed the great \_chaussée\_ along

the Tagus bank, by Villafranca and Castanheira, and reached Carregado

before dark. He was warned to be in readiness to cross the river, by

means of Admiral Berkeley’s boats, at the earliest possible moment,

in case the French should have built a bridge at Santarem to enable

them to cross into the Alemtejo.[553]

[553] All from the orders issued at 10.30 in the morning ‘from

the hill in front of Sobral’. \_Dispatches\_, vi. 623.

The advancing troops found the French camps, and the villages where

the more fortunate battalions had been quartered under cover, in the

most dreadful condition. ‘The Alemquer road was covered with horses,

mules, and asses which had perished from want of forage. We passed

many French soldiers lying dead by the road-side, whose appearance

indicated that disease and want of food had carried them off. Every

house in every town or village was thoroughly ransacked[554].’

‘Alemquer had been entirely sacked, the windows and doors torn down

and burnt, as well as most of the furniture; china, pier-glasses, and

chandeliers all dashed to pieces with the objectless fury of savages.

They had left many miserable fellows behind, who were too ill to

march: these were, of course, put to death by the Portuguese whenever

we happened to miss finding them out. We found several peasants whom

the French had murdered and left upon the road, and also several

French killed by the Portuguese. It was a dreadful sight to see

so many fine towns and villages sacked, and without a creature in

them.’[555]

[554] Leach’s \_Journal\_, p. 179.

[555] George Simmons’s \_Journal\_, pp. 121-2.

On the 15th none of the enemy had been seen save the dead and the

abandoned sick. The traces of their retreat, however, showed that all

had gone off by the roads towards Santarem. On the 16th Wellington

moved more troops out of the Lines, to support Hill, Craufurd, and

Spencer, in the event of the enemy showing fight. Slade’s horse

followed Spencer, Pack’s Portuguese followed Craufurd; Picton, Leith,

Cole, and Campbell were left in the Lines, which Wellington still

disliked to leave wholly unguarded while he was not yet certain of

the ultimate intentions of the French. The advanced guard picked up

about 300 prisoners this day--partly marauders, partly debilitated

men who could not keep up with their regiments during a second stage

of hard marching. Next day (November 17) it was evident that the

enemy was being overtaken: Anson’s cavalry brigade, which had reached

the front on the preceding night, cut up a number of small parties

of the French rearguard--the 16th Light Dragoons alone captured two

officers and 78 men, not stragglers, but belated pickets and convoy

guards. One of their exploits was long remembered--Sergeant Baxter,

with five men only, came on an infantry outpost of 50 men, who had

stacked their arms and were cooking. Bursting in upon them, he

captured an officer and 41 men, though some of the Frenchmen had got

to their muskets and wounded one of his troopers.[556]

[556] For a full description of the doings of the 16th on this

day, see Tomkinson, pp. 59-60.

On the afternoon of the 17th the enemy’s rearguard was at last

discovered, drawn up on a heath outside the village of Cartaxo. It

consisted of one of Reynier’s divisions, which Craufurd was preparing

to attack, when the Commander-in-Chief came up, and refused him leave

to begin the combat, because neither Hill nor Spencer was within

supporting distance of him. Opinions differed as to whether an attack

would have led to a repulse by superior numbers, or to the capture

of the French division, which had a bridge and a long causeway--a

most dangerous defile--in its rear[557]. Probably Craufurd was not

in quite sufficient strength to be certain of success: he had but

six strong battalions[558], a battery, and the 16th Light Dragoons

in his company. The enemy had the eleven weak battalions of Merle’s

division, and two regiments of cavalry: probably 1,000 bayonets and

300 sabres in all more than Craufurd could command. But an attack

made with vigour, when half the French had begun to retire across

the defile, might have had considerable results. Merle’s division

was, however, allowed to retire unmolested in the evening, while the

Light Division took up quarters for the night at Cartaxo. Reynier

drew back the whole of his corps next morning to the environs of

Santarem, which he had been directed to defend. Meanwhile the 8th

Corps had reached Pernes with one division, and Alcanhede with the

other and its cavalry: these were the points at which Junot had been

ordered to stay his retreat. The bulk of the 6th Corps was at Thomar,

but Loison’s division had been kept in the neighbourhood of the

Zezere[559], and part of Marchand’s infantry and Ney’s corps-cavalry

were at Cabaços. The retreat was thus ended, for Masséna was in

possession of the new ground on which he intended to maintain himself

for the winter, and he was prepared to accept a defensive battle if

Wellington should push him any further. His left flank near the Tagus

(Reynier’s corps) was advanced: his right flank (Junot’s corps) much

‘refused.’ Ney was forming the central reserve.

[557] Leach thinks, with William Napier (iii. 41), that

Wellington acted wisely in refusing Craufurd leave to attack (p.

180). Tomkinson, another eye-witness, thinks that an opportunity

was missed (pp. 60, 61).

[558] Having now received the Brunswick Oels Jägers, the Light

Division was six battalions strong, not its usual five. Its

strength about this time was some 4,000 bayonets. Merle’s

division was about 5,000 strong: it had dwindled to 4,200

effectives before December was out. Thus the English and Caçadore

battalions averaged 650 men, the French 450 only, so that the

strength was not very unequal. But only 2,500 of Craufurd’s

troops were British.

[559] There its main body was now joined by Ferey’s brigade,

which had been detached for some weeks.

Unfortunately for himself the British Commander-in-Chief received, on

the night of the 17th, confusing intelligence, which led him to the

false conclusion that the enemy was still retiring, and was aiming

either for Abrantes or for the borders of Spain. This news was sent

by Fane, who from the other bank of the Tagus had observed French

columns and convoys marching eastward from Santarem towards the

Zezere[560], and wrongly inferred that the main army was making for

this direction, and that only a rearguard had been left in Santarem.

He was also influenced by the fact, reported from Abrantes, that

Masséna had cast a second bridge over the Zezere near Punhete, as if

to give him a quicker chance of passing that river. In consequence

of this news, Wellington directed Hill to cross the Tagus at Vallada

with his own division, Hamilton’s Portuguese, and the 13th Light

Dragoons, in order to strengthen Abrantes if it were assailed, or to

fall on the flank of the French, if they were merely passing that

fortress on their retreat to Spain. Thus he deprived himself of

14,000 men on the right bank of the Tagus, where alone troops were

really needed. To make up for Hill’s absence, Leith’s and Cole’s

divisions were called out of the Lines, where they had rested till

this moment (18th November)[561]. But they were two marches off,

and Wellington had for the moment in his front line only Craufurd,

Spencer, Pack’s Portuguese, and Slade’s and Anson’s cavalry, a force

of some 16,000 men. Reynier was in his immediate front at Santarem,

with 13,000 men of all arms. Junot’s corps at Alcanhede and Pernes

was twelve miles away, and about 11,000 strong: the greater part of

his men could have been brought up in half a day’s march. Ney was too

distant to come up in less than 24 hours, and then only with half his

corps, as Loison and one of Marchand’s brigades were far away. But if

Wellington had attacked Santarem on the 19th the Duke of Elchingen

would have appeared next morning.

[560] Probably Ferey’s brigade marching to join Loison and trains

following it, and certainly Reynier’s trains which he had sent

off towards Golegão. See \_Dispatches\_, vi. 629.

[561] \_The Diary of the Marches of the 4th Division\_, by its

Assistant Quarter-Master, Charles Vere, settles the date. For

Leith’s start on the same morning, see Leith-Hay’s \_Narrative\_,

i. p. 269.

Craufurd was as strongly convinced as his chief that there was

nothing in front of him but a rearguard on the night of the 18th, and

he even doubted whether the last of the French would not withdraw at

midnight. It was this that induced him to make the curious personal

exploration mentioned by Napier (iii. 63)[562], when, followed by

a single sergeant only, he pushed along the causeway in the small

hours of the morning, ran into the French picket, and escaped as if

by miracle the volley that was fired at him. The picket reported to

Reynier that they had been seriously attacked, had killed three of

their assailants, and had heard the groans of wounded dragged away

by the survivors. Craufurd and his sergeant retired, thoroughly

convinced that the causeway had not been evacuated.

[562] Napier, however, dates the General’s escapade wrongly.

It took place on the night of the 18th-19th, where it is duly

related in the diary of George Simmons (p. 117), and not on the

21st as Napier implies. I have a copy of Delagrave’s \_Campagne

de Portugal\_, which once belonged to Napier; he has written a

sarcastic note on the bottom of page 111, commenting on the

ridiculous account of the event which appeared in the French

narratives. He adds that the sergeant’s name was McCurry, and

that ‘the sergeant had sense enough to hold his tongue, but

Craufurd spoke out, and so drew the fire of the enemy’s picket.’

It was undoubtedly fortunate for the British Commander-in-Chief that

his habitual caution prevented him from making a serious attack

on the force at Santarem, under the impression that it was a mere

rearguard, left behind to detain him while the enemy’s main body

was pushing for Abrantes. Reynier’s position was very formidable.

The town of Santarem, surrounded by an old mediaeval wall, stands

on a lofty height above the Tagus, with a narrow suburb--where the

French dockyard had been established--along the lower edge of the

hill. But this was only the third and last line of the defensive

position. In front of it lay low alluvial ground, inundated by the

rain which had been falling during the last fortnight, and barely

passable save by the \_chaussée\_ from Lisbon. The plain was cut in

two by the Rio Mayor, a deep muddy stream at this time of the year,

and to reach Santarem a narrow bridge over this obstacle had to be

passed. Just where the \_chaussée\_ leaves the marsh, to climb towards

the town, was a long knoll, completely commanding the road: on this

Reynier had placed a battery with infantry supports. This force must

be driven in by the British, and the only practicable way to reach it

was by forcing a passage along the causeway, for the marsh between

the road and the Tagus turned out, when explored, to be practically

inaccessible to formed troops, though individuals might wade through

it in a few places. Behind the advanced French knoll were the

foot-hills of the lofty ridge on which Santarem lies. The enemy

were visible upon it, working hard at the construction of a line of

\_abattis\_ from the olive-trees which cover its slopes. Behind this,

again, was the town itself, hastily prepared for defence.

On the morning of November 19th the British advanced guard was on the

edge of the swampy plain; Craufurd’s Light Division occupied the near

end of the long bridge over the Rio Mayor, and skirmished with the

French outposts, who refused to retire from the further side. Spencer

came up more to the left, and further inland, Pack’s Portuguese

reached the upper course of the Rio Mayor. Neither Leith nor Cole had

yet arrived at the front, so that the force available for an attack

was no more than 16,000 men. Nevertheless, Wellington, still hoping

that he had only a rearguard in front of him, made dispositions for a

demonstration against the enemy’s front, which was to be turned into

a real attack if he showed want of strength. Craufurd was directed to

advance across the swamp near the Tagus, if he found it practicable.

Pack was to cross the upper Rio Mayor, and turn the hostile right.

Spencer was formed at the entrance of the bridge and causeway,

and ordered to charge up the \_chaussée\_ at the French centre, and

the battery commanding the road, so soon as he should see that

the flanking divisions were making good progress. Fortunately for

Wellington the attack was never delivered: more rain during the night

had made the marsh so waterlogged that Craufurd, who had crossed the

Rio Mayor by a narrow wooden bridge near Valle, came to a stand in

the slush, though a few of his skirmishers pushed far enough forward

to engage the enemy’s pickets on the other side. Pack’s Portuguese

on the left flank got across the river with much difficulty, but

their guns were absolutely stuck in the mud far to the rear, and the

brigadier sent back word to Wellington that he should advance no

further without special orders. The 1st Division had not yet begun

to move. Thereupon the Commander-in-Chief called back both Craufurd

and Pack, and gave up his plan. It is clear that he had nourished

some intention of attacking in earnest, for he wrote to Hill that

afternoon: ‘I did not attack Santarem this morning, as the artillery

of the left wing (Pack) had lost its way, and I am rather glad that

I did not attack, as the enemy have there undoubtedly a very strong

post, and we must endeavour to turn it. And if they [the main body]

have not retired across the Zezere or towards the Alva, they must be

too strong for us here.’

It is obvious that both Wellington’s and Masséna’s strategy on the

18th and 19th November is exposed to criticism. Why had the British

General only 16,000 men to the front on these days, when he was

risking a general action with the French? One of two courses must

have been adopted by the enemy: either he must be marching hard for

the Zezere, and intending to retire into Spain, or he must be merely

changing his ground, and proposing to fight at Santarem, or in front

of Abrantes, or elsewhere. In either case it was strange tactics for

Wellington to take the field with 16,000 men (deducting Hill on the

other side of the Tagus), while he left Leith and Cole two or three

marches behind, and still kept the divisions of Picton, Campbell, and

Le Cor, and the unattached Portuguese brigade of Coleman and Alex.

Campbell--20,000 men--unmoved within the Lines. For if the enemy was

flying, there was no need to leave such a force of regulars to guard

positions which the French could not be intending to attack. While

if the other hypothesis was correct, and Masséna, with an army which

Wellington still reckoned at 50,000 men, was in a fighting mood,

and ready to give battle if he saw an advantageous opportunity, it

was still more inexcusable to leave behind 20,000 men, who would be

wanted for the decisive struggle.

On the other hand, the French Marshal was taking a terrible

risk also. Supposing Wellington had been leading his whole

force--deducting Hill--for a resolute attack on the Santarem

positions, which was the most probable course for him to adopt, he

might have had not only the 16,000 men that he had actually brought

forward, but Leith and Cole with 11,000 more, and Picton and the

other 20,000 men left in the Lines, a force, if the cavalry be thrown

in, of full 50,000 sabres and bayonets. If Wellington had left

Craufurd and Pack to block the marshy southern exit from Santarem,

which was as difficult for Reynier as for his adversaries, he might

have thrown 40,000 men into the empty space of twelve miles between

Reynier and Junot, have driven away the latter’s 11,000 men, and

surrounded Reynier’s 13,000 in Santarem. Ney could not have got up

in time to prevent this. The 2nd Corps would either have had to

surrender, for it had hardly any food, or to cut its way out with

disastrous losses[563].

[563] The emplacement of the Anglo-Portuguese army is given as

follows by Beresford’s Quarter-Master-General, D’Urban, on the

night of the 18th-19th, showing its complete dislocation:--

Light Division, Pack, and Slade’s and Anson’s cavalry--before

Santarem.

1st Division--Cartaxo.

2nd Division--passing the Tagus at Vallada.

5th Division--Alemquer.

4th Division--Sobral.

6th Division--Ribaldeira (in the Lines).

3rd Division, and Coleman’s and Alex. Campbell’s

Portuguese--Torres Vedras.

Le Cor’s Division--Alhandra (in the Lines).

Reynier saw this perfectly, and was in an agony of mind on the 18th

and 19th. He wrote urgent appeals to Masséna, for permission to

abandon Santarem on the former day, pointing out that if his front

was practically inaccessible, because of the swamps, his right might

be turned by the upper Rio Mayor, where he had only a single regiment

in observation, to face what might be an overwhelming strength of

British troops, who might be preparing to cut in between him and

Junot. He sent all his train, sick, and wounded to Golegão[564],

and besought leave to follow them. When he received a peremptory

reply, to the effect that he was to hold Santarem to the last, he

came to the conclusion that he was to be sacrificed in order to

allow the other two corps to escape unmolested. When Pack advanced

on the 19th he sent the report that he was turned by 10,000 British

troops--Pack had but 3,000 Portuguese--and that Clausel with Junot’s

nearest division was too far off to succour him. He prepared to

suffer a disaster, and to die fighting[565]. He ordered his troops to

surround Santarem, in rear as well as in front, with a double line of

\_abattis\_, and continued to strengthen and repair its old walls.

[564] It was their march, visible from the other side of the Tagus,

which helped to deceive Fane as to the general movements of the

French army.

[565] See Delagrave, 128-30, and Gachot’s excellent notes thereon.

Nothing, therefore, could exceed Reynier’s relief when Pack and

Craufurd halted, and Spencer did not move at all, after the firing

had begun upon the 19th. On the next morning the British army

was still stationary, save that a cavalry reconnaissance, pushed

northward from Pack’s position on the upper Rio Mayor, discovered

Junot’s outposts in the direction of Alcanhede and Pernes, and

reported to Wellington that the enemy was in strength, with all arms,

in this direction. Leith’s division came up this morning, raising

the British force to 21,000 men, but this, as the Commander-in-Chief

now saw, was not sufficient to enable him to deal with two corps

d’armée, of which one was in an inaccessible position and now

stockaded up to the eyes. He halted, and sent, very tardily, orders

for Cole to join in haste, and for Campbell’s division to come up

from the Lines. But even thus he was too weak to strike. Hill was now

at Almeirim, half way to Abrantes on the other side of the Tagus.

Fane had actually entered Abrantes, and sent news that the enemy was

making no forward movement from the Zezere. Thus at last Wellington

discovered that he must have practically the whole French army in his

front, while his own forces were in a state of terrible dispersion.

On the 21st he wrote a dispatch to Lord Liverpool which shows that

he had given up all intention of pushing Masséna further. ‘Although

the enemy have moved large bodies of troops eastward from Santarem,

I have not heard that any large body has crossed the Zezere....

Their army being collected between Santarem and the Zezere, they are

in a situation to be able to maintain themselves in their strong

position till the reinforcements, which I know are on the frontier,

can join them. For this reason, and because I am unwilling to expose

to the inclemencies of the weather a larger body of troops than is

absolutely necessary to press upon the enemy’s rear, and to support

my advanced guard, I have kept in reserve a considerable proportion

of the allied army--some of them still in their cantonments in the

Lines, our fortified position. I have ordered General Hill to halt

the head of his corps at Chamusca [on the other side of the Tagus,

fifteen miles south of Abrantes] till the enemy’s movements have

been decided.... The rain, which has been very heavy since the 15th,

has so completely filled the rivulets and destroyed the roads, that

I have hitherto found it impossible to dislodge the enemy from his

position at Santarem, by movements through the hills on his right

flank. Possibly the bad state of the roads has also been the cause

of his remaining at Santarem so long.... The enemy’s army may be

reinforced, and they may again induce me to think it expedient,

in the existing state of affairs in the Peninsula, to resume my

positions [the Lines]. But I do not believe that they have it in

their power to bring such a force against us as to render the contest

a matter of doubt[566].’

[566] Wellington to Liverpool, Nov. 26, 1810.

In a supplementary dispatch, dated the same day, Wellington adds:

‘At first I thought the enemy were off, and I am not quite certain

yet that they are not going.... I am convinced that there is no man

in his senses, who has ever passed a winter in Portugal, who would

not recommend them to go now, rather than to endeavour to maintain

themselves upon the Zezere during the winter, or than attack our

position, whatever may be the strength of their reinforcements.’

There were, indeed, men in the French camp who advised Masséna to

continue his retreat, but he had no intention of taking up a timid

policy after braving so many passed dangers. He had resolved to

maintain himself between Santarem and the Zezere, and to call down

Drouet and other reinforcements[567], in the hope that, ere the

winter was over, the Emperor might find means to strengthen him to

a force which, with the co-operation of Soult from Andalusia, would

enable him finally to resume the offensive, and make a second and

more formidable attack upon the Lines. In adopting this resolve he

was, though as yet he knew it not, carrying out the instructions

which the Emperor was at this very moment (November 22) dictating

to Foy at Paris. But Wellington had not written at random when he

reminded Lord Liverpool of the terrors of a Portuguese winter, and

in the end the Prince of Essling was forced to begin on the 1st of

March, with under 40,000 men of his original force, the retreat which

he might have commenced on November 20 with over 50,000[568].

[567] Notably the column of Gardanne, of which we shall speak

presently.

[568] Including sick in each case, and excluding reinforcements

received later.

The scheme for starving out the French, which Wellington had

devised early in 1810, and begun to execute in September, was now

transferred to a different area. Masséna had been able to endure

for a month in front of the Lisbon Lines: the question now was

whether he would be able to live so long in the land between the

Rio Mayor and the Zezere. Wellington could not be sure of his data,

in calculating the day when exhaustion would once more compel the

French to shift their ground. It was only certain that the plain of

Golegão, and the Thomar-Torres Novas country, had not been devastated

by the Portuguese government even with the same energy that they

had displayed in the Lisbon Peninsula. And there, as the British

Commander-in-Chief complained, not half the necessary work had been

done. Yet something had certainly been accomplished; the population

had nearly all been withdrawn, the mills destroyed, the corn buried

or sent over the Tagus. Trusting to these facts, and to the rains

and frosts of the oncoming winter, Wellington hoped that Masséna

would finally be reduced to a disastrous retreat by sheer privation.

‘Though it is certainly astonishing that the enemy have been able to

remain in this country so long, and it is an extraordinary instance

of what a French army can do[569].’

[569] \_Dispatches\_, vii. 59.

Resolved to take no further offensive action, and to let famine do

its work, Wellington, on November 24, gave orders for the army to

draw back and go into winter quarters, leaving only Craufurd and Pack

in touch with the enemy in front of Santarem, and Spencer in support

of them at Cartaxo. Of the other divisions, Hill remained behind the

Tagus at Chamusca and Almeirim, with his own troops and Hamilton’s

Portuguese. Picton and the 3rd Division retained their old post at

Torres Vedras, with Coleman and Alex. Campbell’s Portuguese near

them. Cole remained at Azambuja, in rear of Spencer. Leith was sent

back to Alcoentre, Campbell’s 6th Division was placed at Alemquer,

behind Leith. Le Cor’s Portuguese stayed at Alhandra, within the

Lines.

‘The army thus placed,’ writes D’Urban, the Quarter-Master-General,

on this day, ‘at once takes care of Abrantes (by means of Hill),

observes the enemy at Santarem (with Craufurd and Pack), has a

division on the higher Rio Mayor road to turn the enemy’s right, if

this become expedient (Leith’s to wit), and still “appuis” itself

on the Lines, its retreat into which is secured by its echelloned

position. Means are ready to pass General Hill back to the right bank

of the Tagus, with such celerity, that his divisions can be counted

upon for the order of march or battle on this side of the river as

certainly as if he were already there[570].’

[570] D’Urban’s \_Diary\_, under Nov. 24.

Masséna, on the other hand, also remained nearly quiescent for many

days, the only important change which he made in the cantonments

of his army being that he moved in Clausel’s division closer to

Santarem, to fill the dangerous gap between the 2nd and 8th Corps,

which had existed on November 18. On the 22nd and 23rd he pushed

forward, against Pack’s Portuguese and Anson’s light cavalry, a

considerable force, consisting of Clausel’s whole division and six

squadrons from the 8th Corps, and General Pierre Soult with two

cavalry regiments and three battalions from the 2nd Corps. After some

lively but bloodless skirmishing, the allied troops retired behind

the Rio Mayor, evacuating the village of Calares beyond the stream,

and drawing in their cavalry pickets, which had hitherto held some

ground on the further bank. This affair confirmed Wellington in his

conclusion that nearly the whole French army was now concentrated on

the Santarem-Pernes line, and made him more reluctant than ever to

take the offensive.

Meanwhile Montbrun’s cavalry, supported by small detachments from

the infantry of Ney’s corps, had pressed somewhat further to the

north, in order to occupy a broader tract of land from which the army

might feed itself, a task that grew harder every day. From his head

quarters at Ourem and from Cabaços, on the Thomar-Coimbra road, he

continued to send out strong reconnaissances in every direction, of

which some occasionally pushed as far as Leiria on the road towards

Coimbra, and others scoured the left bank of the lower Zezere and

the Nabao. The limit of their excursions was fixed by the fact that

Wilson’s brigade of Portuguese militia still lay at Espinhal, and,

though it was reduced by desertion and sickness to 1,500 men, was

reported to Montbrun as a serious force, with which he had better not

meddle. Trant’s troops at Coimbra--a weak militia division--were also

estimated at much over their real strength. It was not till later

that sheer starvation drove the French further afield, and revealed

to them the weakness of the \_cordon\_ of inferior troops which hemmed

them in upon the northern side.

The blockade of the French army, therefore, remained still unbroken,

and its communication with the north was as absolutely interrupted

in the end of November as in the beginning of October. One attempt

to break through the screen of Portuguese irregulars had been made

in November, but of its failure Masséna had as yet no knowledge.

When Foy reached Rodrigo, on his way to Paris, he had handed

over his escort of one battalion of infantry and 120 horsemen to

General Gardanne, who was ordered to strengthen them with all the

convalescents of the Army of Portugal, and with the garrisons of

Almeida and Rodrigo also, if these last had now been relieved by

troops of Drouet’s 9th Corps. At the head of 6,000 men, as Masséna

calculated, he could cut his way to join the main army, escorting

a great train of munitions, of which both the artillery and the

infantry at the front were lamentably in need. Gardanne could not

gather in the Almeida garrison, as that place was still blockaded

by Silveira’s Portuguese. But with the two battalions from Rodrigo,

added to Foy’s late escort, and a mass of convalescents, he had

collected some 5,000 men by November 20[571], the day on which he

marched by the Sabugal-Belmonte-Fundão route towards Punhete and

the lower Zezere. He was cursed with dreadful weather, followed

and harassed by all the Ordenança of the Castello Branco country,

hampered by his heavy convoy, and much troubled by the disorderly

convalescents, who were largely professional malingerers. But he got

as far as Cardigos on the Sobreira-Formosa road, only fifteen miles

from Punhete, where Loison was awaiting him on the Zezere. Here he

was brought to a stand (November 27) by the flooded and bridgeless

stream of the Codes. No news had reached him from Masséna, while he

was assured by Portuguese deserters, who probably were sent out to

deceive him by the governor of Abrantes, that the Marshal had not

only evacuated his position before the Lines, but was retreating on

Spain via the Mondego. They added that Hill had just reached Abrantes

with 10,000 men, and was about to march against him. Thereupon

Gardanne hastily turned back, reached Penamacor by forced marches

on November 29, and from thence retired to Rodrigo, having lost 400

men and 300 horses by disease and fatigue during his ill-conducted

expedition. If he had pushed forward fifteen miles further on the

28th, he would have got into touch with Loison, and reached Masséna’s

head quarters in safety. Wellington, not without reason, professed

himself unable to comprehend this strange march and countermarch. ‘I

do not exactly understand this movement[572],’ and ‘if this march

was ordered by superior authority, and was connected with any other

arrangements, it had every appearance of, and was attended by all the

consequences of, a precipitate and forced retreat[573].’

[571] Belmas’s figures (i. 137) given here must be about correct,

not the 2,000 of Fririon, and \_Victoires et Conquêtes\_. For the

two Rodrigo battalions were 1,500 strong, Foy’s escort 600, and

Gardanne took with him some of his own dragoon regiment, beside the

convalescents.

[572] \_Dispatches\_, vii. p. 20, to Craufurd.

[573] Ibid., p. 36, to Lord Liverpool.

Here, then, we leave Masséna and his army, cantoned in the space

between the Rio Mayor and the Zezere, still destitute of news from

France, and still entirely ignorant whether or no any endeavour

was being made to relieve them. Of their further doings during the

three months that ended on March 1, 1811, we shall tell elsewhere.

Suffice it to say that, despite many dangers and risks, Wellington’s

scheme of starvation was played out to the end, and achieved complete

success. Of the privation and losses that the French suffered, and

the atrocities that they committed, of the difficulties of the

British Commander-in-Chief--with an obstinate enemy still in front of

him, a factious Regency and a half-starved population behind him in

Lisbon, and a disquieting prospect that Soult might take a hand in

the game--the fourth volume of this work will give full details.

SECTION XXII

END OF THE YEAR 1810

CHAPTER I

OPERATIONS IN THE NORTH AND EAST OF SPAIN (JULY-DECEMBER 1810)

While tracing the all-important Campaign of Portugal, down to

the deadlock in front of Santarem, which began about the 20th of

November, 1810, and was to endure till the 1st of March in the

succeeding year, we have been obliged to leave untouched events,

civil and military, in many other parts of the Peninsula during the

autumn. Only the Andalusian campaigns have been carried down to

November: in Northern Spain we have traced the course of affairs

no further than September[574]: in Eastern Spain no further than

August[575]. Moreover, little has been said of the general effect on

the French occupation caused by the division of supreme authority

which Napoleon sanctioned in the spring[576], or of the importance of

the long-deferred meeting of the Spanish Cortes, which assembled at

Cadiz in the autumn. With these points we must deal before proceeding

to narrate the campaigns of 1811.

[574] See pp. 270-1.

[575] See pp. 200-1 and 315-16.

[576] See pp. 312-14.

The survey of the military operations, none of which were

particularly important, must precede the summary of the political

situation, with regard to King Joseph on the one side and the

Cortes on the other. For the acts of the King and the Cortes had an

influence extending far beyond the months in which they began, and

were, indeed, main factors in the Peninsular struggle for years to

come. But the doings of the armies in Galicia and Asturias on the

one flank, in Catalonia and Valencia on the other, can easily be

dismissed in a few pages: they were but preliminaries to the greater

operations in the spring of 1811.

We may first turn to the north-west. When Masséna plunged into

Portugal in September 1810, and was lost to the sight of his

colleagues and subordinates for nearly three months, the situation

left behind him was as follows:--Leon and Old Castile, as far as the

Galician foot-hills and the Cantabrian sierras, were held down by

Serras and Kellermann with some 12,000 men--a force none too great

for the task that lay before them. The latter general had charge

of the provinces of Valladolid, Toro, and Palencia, as one of the

‘military governors’ recently appointed by the Emperor. He gave

himself absurd airs of independent authority, and took little more

heed of the orders of Masséna than of those of King Joseph, for whom

he showed a supreme contempt. General Serras’s troops were more

definitely part of the Army of Portugal. They were in charge of the

provinces of Zamora, Leon, and Salamanca, thus covering Kellermann’s

government on the outer flank, and taking care of the borders both of

Galicia on the Spanish and of Tras-os-Montes on the Portuguese side.

To cover this long front Serras had only eleven battalions[577],

and two provisional regiments of dragoons--some 9,000 men. Out of

this force he had to find garrisons for Astorga, Leon, Benavente,

Zamora, and several smaller places. Kellermann, who was intended

to serve as a reserve for Serras, as well as to guard the central

dépôts at Valladolid, had only two regiments of dragoons (part of

his original division) and three infantry battalions, making 3,000

men in all[578]. Both of them were directed to keep in close touch

with Bonnet, who, at the head of his old troops, the four regiments

which never came south of the Cantabrian hills till the Salamanca

campaign[579], kept a precarious hold on Central and Eastern Asturias

with 9,000 men.

[577] Viz. 113th Line (2 batts.), 4th of the Vistula (2 batts.),

one battalion each of the 12th Léger and 32nd and 58th Line, four

‘provisional battalions’ (Nos. 2, 4, 5, 7), and two provisional

regiments of dragoons. Total on Sept. 15, 9,524 men, of whom 1,000

were cavalry.

[578] Two Swiss battalions, one battalion of the Garde de Paris, and

the 5th and 17th dragoons. Total, 1,300 cavalry and 1,700 infantry.

[579] Line regiments (each of 4 batts.), Nos. 118, 119, 120, 122, and

a squadron of the 21st Chasseurs, 9,298 men.

There were also present in the circumscription of Serras’s and

Kellermann’s command the garrison of Ciudad Rodrigo (two battalions)

and Gardanne’s five squadrons of dragoons, which Masséna had left

behind, in the vain hope that they would keep the line clear between

Almeida and Salamanca. This force added 2,500 men to the total of the

French troops in Leon.

If the French were left rather weak in this direction, the same was

not the case in the region further east. From Burgos to the Bidassoa

the country-side was full of troops in the latter half of September,

when the Army of Portugal had gone westward. In the Government of

Burgos were the two infantry divisions of the Young Guard, under

Roguet and Dumoustier, with their two cavalry regiments, making

11,464 sabres and bayonets. Navarre was occupied by 8,733 men,

Biscay by 8,085. The little province of Santander was held by three

provisional battalions 3,500 strong. But this permanent garrison,

making over 31,000 men, was at the moment supplemented by Drouet’s

9th Corps, for whose arrival at the front Masséna had waited so long

and so vainly. On September 15 its commander, its head quarters, and

Claparéde’s division, were at Vittoria: Couroux’s division and the

cavalry brigade of Fournier were echelloned between Vittoria and

Bayonne. The whole corps mustered over 18,000 sabres and bayonets.

Fifty thousand men, therefore, adding the permanent garrisons to

the advancing corps of Drouet, were between Burgos and Bayonne, and

there were yet a few more troops to come forward from the interior of

France, for Caffarelli was bringing up another division, which had

the official title of the ‘Division of Reserve of the Army of Spain,’

and consisted of four provisional regiments of infantry and two

cavalry regiments, with a strength of 8,000 men[580]. It was ordered

to be at Bayonne by October 20, and formed the nucleus of the force

which in the next year was styled the ‘Army of the North’.

[580] See \_Correspondance\_, xxi. 106. On Sept. 13, the date of the

dispatch creating Caffarelli’s division, one of its regiments was

forming at Limoges, another at Blois, another at Bordeaux, the fourth

at Orleans.

Without counting this last unit, which was only in process of

formation in September, Napoleon had between the Galician frontier

and Bayonne no less than 72,000 men[581]. What had his enemies to

oppose to this formidable host, whose strength was considerably

greater than that of the force with which Masséna invaded Portugal?

Of regularly organized troops the number of Spaniards and Portuguese

opposed to them was absolutely insignificant. Silveira in the

Tras-os-Montes had six regiments of militia and one of the line--this

last being the 24th, the absconding garrison of Almeida. The whole

made under 7,000 men, including an incomplete cavalry regiment. Mahy

in Galicia had recruited up the depleted divisions which La Romana

had left with him in the spring to a strength of 12,000 men, mostly

raw and untrustworthy; for the best regiments had been destroyed at

the siege of Astorga. The remains of the army of Asturias, which had

suffered so many defeats at the hands of Bonnet during the spring and

summer, consisted of about 6,000 men, of whom half, under Barcena

and Losada, were holding the western end of the province, behind

the Navia river, with head quarters at Castropol, while the rest

lurked in the higher valleys of the Cantabrian Sierra, rendering

Bonnet’s communication with Serras in Leon insecure, and sometimes

descending to the coast, to make a sudden attack on one of the

small garrisons which linked the French garrison in Oviedo with

that at Santander. Of these roving bands the chief leader was the

adventurous Porlier, the \_Marquesito\_[582], as the Asturians called

him, who won a well-deserved reputation for his perseverance and

never-failing courage. The 25,000 men of Silveira, Mahy, and the

Asturian army were the only regular troops opposed to the 75,000

French in Northern Spain. How came it, then, that the enemy was held

in check, and never succeeded in pushing on to the support of Masséna

any force save the two divisions of Drouet? The answer is simple: the

French garrisons were fixed down to their positions partly because

of Napoleon’s entire lack of naval power, partly because of the

unceasing activity of the guerrilleros, who were far more busy in

1810 than at any preceding time. As to the first-named cause, it may

be said that the 20,000 French in Asturias, Santander, and Biscay

were paralysed by the existence of a small Anglo-Spanish squadron

based on Corunna and Ferrol. As long as this existed, every small

port along the whole northern coast of Spain had to be garrisoned,

under penalty of a possible descent from the sea, which might cut the

road from Oviedo to San Sebastian at any one of a hundred points, and

provide arms and stores for the guerrilla bands of the mountains.

Many such expeditions were carried out with more or less success in

1810. The first and most prosperous of them took place in July, when

Porlier, putting his free corps of some 1,000 men on transports, and

convoyed by the British commodore Mends, with a couple of frigates,

came ashore near the important harbour of Santona, drove out the

small garrison, and then coasted along in the direction of Biscay,

destroying shore-batteries and capturing as many as 200 men at one

point and another. Of the peasantry of the coast, some enlisted in

Porlier’s band, others took to the hills on their own account, when

they had been furnished with muskets from the ships. The Marquesito

repeated his raid in August, but this time stopped on shore, and put

himself at the head of the local insurgents, who made so strong a

head in the country about Potes and the upper Pisuerga, that Serras

marched against him with almost the whole of his division[583],

and spent September in hunting him along the sides of the sierras.

But though aided by troops lent by Bonnet, and by detachments from

Burgos, the French general could never catch the adroit partisan,

who, when too hard pressed, returned to the central mountains of the

Asturias.

[581] Viz. Kellermann, 3,000; Serras, 9,000; Bonnet, 8,000; Young

Guard, 11,500; Biscay, 8,000; Navarre, 8,500; Santander, 3,500; 9th

Corps, 18,000; Masséna’s Garrisons, 2,500.

[582] As being nephew to the Marquis of La Romana.

[583] See pp. 270-1.

Pleased with the exploits of Porlier, the Cadiz Regency resolved

to keep up the game, and sent up to Corunna Colonel Renovales,

the officer who had for so long made head against Suchet in the

mountains of Aragon[584]. He was authorized to requisition a brigade

from Mahy’s army, and the more seaworthy ships from the arsenal of

Ferrol. Applications for naval assistance had also been made to the

British Admiralty, and Sir Home Popham came, with four frigates and a

battalion of marines, to assist in a systematic raid along the coasts

of Asturias and Biscay. The joint expedition started from Corunna on

October 14, with a landing force of 1,200 Spanish and 800 British

bayonets on board. On the 16th it drew in to land near the important

harbour of Gijon, where Bonnet kept a force of 700 men, who depended

for their succour on the main body of his division at Oviedo. But the

French general chanced to be hunting Porlier further to the east,

and had left the Asturian capital almost ungarrisoned. Hence, when

Porlier unexpectedly appeared before Gijon on the inland side, having

eluded his pursuer, and the ships threw the landing force ashore,

the French battalion had to fly. Several ships, both privateers and

merchantmen, with a considerable amount of military stores, fell

into the hands of Porlier and Renovales. This exploit drew down on

them the whole French force in the Asturias, for Bonnet concentrated

every man and musket on Gijon. But the Anglo-Spanish squadron, having

thus drawn him westward, sailed in the opposite direction, and,

after threatening Santona, was about to touch at Vivero, when it was

scattered by a hurricane from the Bay of Biscay. A Spanish frigate

and brig, an English brig, and several gunboats and transports were

dashed on the rocky coast, and lost with all hands. This disaster,

which cost 800 lives, compelled Renovales to return to Corunna

(November 2). But the raid had not been useless; it had compelled

Bonnet to evacuate many posts, distracted the garrisons of Santander

and Biscay, and even induced Caffarelli to march down to the coast

with his newly-arrived division, the ‘Reserve of the Army of Spain.’

Serras, too, had drawn up the greater part of his scattered division

to the north-west, thus leaving the borders of Galicia and the

Tras-os-Montes hardly watched. This enabled Mahy to send down troops

into the plain of Leon, and to establish something like a blockade

around Astorga. But all the operations of the Captain-General of

Galicia were feeble and tentative. He passed among his countrymen as

an easy-going man, destitute of energy or initiative[585]. Silveira,

in the Tras-os-Montes, a more active but a more dangerous man to

entrust with troops, took advantage of Serras’s absence to cross the

Douro, invest Almeida, and cut the communication between that place

and Ciudad Rodrigo[586].

[584] See pp. 10-11.

[585] See for this verdict both Arteche and Toreno.

[586] See p. 447.

Such was the effect of the sea-power, even when it was used sparingly

and by unskilful hands. The raids along the northern coast had kept

Bonnet and the troops in Santander and Biscay fully employed; they

had distracted Serras, Caffarelli, and even the garrisons of the

province of Burgos. They had saved Mahy and Silveira from attack,

and had lighted up a blaze of insurrection in the western hills of

Cantabria which, thanks to the energy of Porlier and his colleague

Louga, was never extinguished.

Meanwhile the mass of French troops between Burgos and Pampeluna--the

9th Corps, the Young Guard Divisions, and the garrison in

Navarre--had been ‘contained’ by an enemy of a different sort. Here

the influence of the British naval supremacy was little felt: it

was due to the energy of Spaniards alone that the 38,000 men under

Drouet, Roguet and Dumoustier, and Reille were prevented during the

months of September, October, and November from doing anything to

help Masséna. Old Castile, Navarre, and the lands of the Upper Ebro,

were kept in a constant turmoil by a score of guerrillero chiefs,

of whom the elder Mina was the leading figure. We have already had

occasion to speak of the exploits of his relative, ‘the Student’ as

he was called, to distinguish him from his uncle, and have noted his

final capture by Suchet[587]. Francisco Espoz y Mina had rallied the

relics of his nephew’s band, and began his long career of raids and

counter-marches in April 1810. His central place of refuge was the

rough country on the borders of Navarre and Aragon, where he kept his

main dépôt at the head of the valley of Roncal; but he often ranged

as far afield as Biscay and the provinces of Soria and Burgos. Almost

from his first appearance he obtained a mastery over the other chiefs

who operated on both sides of the Upper Ebro, having won his place by

the summary process of seizing and shooting one Echeverria, ‘who,’

as he writes, ‘was the terror of the villages of Navarre, which he

oppressed and plundered in a thousand ways, till they complained

to me concerning him. I arrested him at Estella on June 13, 1810,

caused him to be shot with three of his principal accomplices, and

incorporated his band (600 foot and 200 horse) with my own men[588].’

Mina was the special enemy of Reille, then commanding in Navarre,

but he also attracted the attention of Drouet, one of whose divisions

was entirely absorbed in hunting him during the autumn of 1810.

This was the main cause of the non-appearance of the 9th Corps at

Rodrigo and Salamanca, when Masséna was so anxiously awaiting its

arrival. Mina’s lot during this period was no enviable one: he was

beset on all sides by flying columns, and was often forced to bid his

band disperse and lurk in small parties in the mountains, till the

enemy should have passed on. Sometimes he was lurking, with seven

companions only, in a cave or a gorge: at another he would be found

with 3,000 men, attacking large convoys, or even surprising one of

the blockhouses with which the French tried to cover his whole sphere

of activity. The Regency, admiring his perseverance, gave him, in

September, the title of ‘Colonel and Commandant-General of all the

Guerrilleros of Navarre.’ He asserts with pride, in his memoir, that

he was at one and the same time being hunted by Dorsenne, commanding

at Burgos, Reille from Navarre, Caffarelli and his ‘division of

Reserve of the Army of Spain,’ by D’Agoult, Governor of Pampeluna,

Roguet, commanding the Young Guard, and Paris, one of Suchet’s

brigadiers from the Army of Aragon. Yet none of the six generals,

though they had 18,000 men marching through his special district,

succeeded in catching him, or destroying any appreciable fraction of

his band.

[587] See p. 286.

[588] See Mina’s \_Extracto de su Vida\_, published in London, during

his exile, in 1825.

There is no exaggeration in this; his services were invaluable during

the campaign of Portugal, since he was wearing out a French force of

five times his own strength in fruitless marches, under winter rains,

and over roads that had become all but impassable. The archives of

the French War Office show lists of officers by the dozen killed or

wounded ‘dans une reconnaissance en Navarre,’ or ‘dans une rencontre

avec les bandes de Mina,’ or ‘en combat près de Pampelune,’ during

the later months of 1810. Wellington owed him no small gratitude,

and expressed it to him in 1813, when he entrusted him with much

responsible work during the Campaign of the Pyrenees. The suffering

inflicted on the provinces of the Upper Ebro by Mina’s activity

was of course terrible: the French destroyed every village that

sheltered him or furnished him with recruits, and were wont to shoot

every prisoner from his band that they caught, till he began to

retaliate by corresponding or greater numbers of executions from the

considerable number of prisoners in his hands. In 1811 this barbarous

system was in full swing on both sides, but it was put to an end by

mutual agreement in 1812. In addition to the woes that Navarre and

its neighbours suffered under the French martial law, and by the

monstrous requisitions imposed upon them to feed the mass of troops

forming the flying columns, they had also to maintain the patriotic

bands. Mina declares that he always took rations for his men, but

avoided levying money contributions on the peasantry, depending

on his booty, the rents of national and ecclesiastical property,

on which he laid hands, on fines inflicted on ‘bad Spaniards,’ i.

e. those who had done anything to help his pursuers, and on ‘the

custom-houses which I established upon the very frontier of France;

for I laid under contribution even the French custom-house at Irun,

on the Bidassoa, which engaged to deliver, and actually paid to my

delegates, 100 gold ounces (about £320) per month.’ By this strange

secret agreement private goods passing Irun and the other frontier

posts were guaranteed against capture in the district which Mina’s

bands infested[589].

[589] Mina’s \_Breve Extracto\_, p. 39.

Eastward of Mina’s sphere of activity the guerrilleros were more

numerous but less powerful. Among the chief of them was Julian

Sanchez, who, with a mounted band of 300 to 500 lancers--infantry

would have been easily caught in the plain of Leon--busied himself

in cutting the communication between Salamanca, Ciudad Rodrigo,

Zamora, and Valladolid, and was Kellermann’s chief tormentor. He was

in regular communication with Wellington, and sent him many captured

dispatches and useful pieces of information. In Old Castile the

priest Geronimo Merino, generally known as ‘El Cura,’ was the most

famous and most active among many leaders. It was his band, aided by

that of Tapia, also a cleric, which on July 10, 1810, fought a most

daring and desperate action at Almazan, near Soria, with two French

battalions of marines, who were marching, the one to join Masséna

the other to join Soult. It cost the enemy no less than 13 officers

\_hors de combat\_, as the Paris archives show[590], and over 200

men, though the guerrilleros were finally beaten off. In October he

surprised and captured an enormous convoy of corn and munitions of

war, whose loss put the French garrison of Burgos in considerable

straits for some weeks. He waged with Dorsenne the same horrible

contest of retaliation in the shooting of prisoners which Mina was

at the same time carrying on with the generals in Navarre. There

were many other bands in Old Castile, those of Abril, Tenderin,

Saornil, Principe, and others, of whom some are accused by their own

colleagues of being more harmful to the country-side than to the

French, from their reckless and miscellaneous plundering, and their

refusal to combine for any systematic action[591]. Yet even the worst

of them contributed to distract the activity of the French garrisons,

and to retard the communication of dispatches and the march of

isolated detachments. Under the easy excuse that it was dangerous

to move any small body of men along the high-roads, the French

commanders of every small town or blockhouse detained for weeks,

and even months, drafts on their way to the south or the west, with

the result that the number of recruits received at Madrid, Seville,

or Salamanca never bore any proper proportion to the total that had

crossed the Bidassoa.

[590] Martinien’s lists show seven officers hit in the 44th Équipage

de Marine, which joined Masséna in the next month, and six in the

Bataillon D’Espagne, which was on its way to Cadiz.

[591] See Arteche, ix. 241.

Northward from Old Castile, on the skirts of the mountains of

Santander and Biscay, the dominating personality among the

guerrilleros was Louga, who afterwards rose to some distinction as a

commander of regular troops. His special task was the cutting of the

communications between Burgos and Bilbao, and Bilbao and Santander;

but he often co-operated with Porlier, when that restless partisan

made one of his descents from the Asturian mountains, either on to

the coast region or on the southern skirts of the Cantabrian sierras.

On the whole, there were probably never more than 20,000 guerrilleros

in arms at once, in the whole region between the Sierra de Guadarrama

and the shore of the Bay of Biscay. They never succeeded in beating

any French force more than two or three battalions strong, and were

being continually hunted from corner to corner. Yet, despite their

weakness in the open field, their intestine quarrels, their frequent

oppression of the country-side, and their ferocity, they rendered

good service to Spain, and incidentally to Great Britain and to all

Europe, by pinning down to the soil twice their own numbers of good

French troops. Any one who has read the dispatches of the commandants

of Napoleon’s ‘military governments,’ or the diaries of the officers

who served in Reille’s or Dorsenne’s or Caffarelli’s flying columns,

will recognize a remarkable likeness between the situation of affairs

in Northern Spain during 1810 and 1811 and that in South Africa

during 1900 and 1901. Lightly moving guerrilla bands, unhampered by a

base to defend or a train to weigh them down, and well served as to

intelligence by the residents of the country-side, can paralyse the

action of an infinitely larger number of regular troops.

In the north-east of Spain, where the French were engaged not with

mere scattered bands of guerrilleros, but with two regular armies,

O’Donnell’s Catalans and Caro’s Valencians, the fortune of war took

no decisive turn during the autumn of 1810, though one dreadful blow

to the Spanish cause--the loss of Tortosa--was to fall in the winter

which followed.

We left Suchet in August 1810, established in his newly-conquered

positions at Lerida and Mequinenza, master of all the plain-land of

Aragon, as well as of a strip of Western Catalonia, and only waiting

for the co-operation of Macdonald and the 7th Corps to recommence

his operations[592]. That co-operation, however, was long denied

him. The Emperor’s last general orders, which had reached Suchet in

June, briefly prescribed to him that the conquest of the city and

kingdom of Valencia was his final object, but that he must first

break the Spanish line by capturing Tortosa, the great fortress

of the Lower Ebro, and Tarragona, the main stronghold of Southern

Catalonia[593]. For both these latter operations he was to count

on the aid of Macdonald and the Army of Catalonia[594]. Relying on

this support, Suchet, after less than a month had elapsed since the

capture of Mequinenza, had pushed his advanced guard down the Ebro,

till it was at the very gates of Tortosa. One detachment even passed

the town, and seized the ferry of Amposta, the only passage of the

Ebro near its mouth, actually cutting the great road from Tarragona

to Valencia, and only leaving the bridge of Tortosa itself open,

for the linking of the operations of Caro and O’Donnell. Meanwhile

Suchet was preparing his siege-train at Mequinenza, and waiting for a

rise in the Ebro, which would commence to become navigable with the

arrival of the autumn rains, in order to ship his guns down-stream to

their destined goal. He was at the same time making the land route to

Tortosa passable, by repairing the old military road from Caspe to

Mora and Tivisa, which had been constructed during the wars of the

Spanish Succession, but had long ago fallen into ruin.

[592] See pp. 300-9.

[593] \_Correspondance\_ under May 29.

[594] \_Correspondance\_ under Sept. 16.

Suchet was quite aware that by thrusting a comparatively small

force--he had only brought up 12,000 men--into the near neighbourhood

of Tortosa, he was risking the danger of being attacked at once by

the Army of Valencia from the south and O’Donnell’s Catalans from

the north. But he trusted that Macdonald and the 7th Corps would

keep the latter--the more formidable enemy--employed, while he had

a well-founded contempt for the generalship of Caro, who had always

proved himself the most incompetent and timid of commanders. But

Macdonald arrived late, having been forced to spend the whole summer,

as has been already related[595], in his triple revictualling of

Barcelona, and meanwhile the Valencian army came to the front. Its

leading division, under Bassecourt, threatened Morella, on Suchet’s

flank, early in August, hoping to draw him away to defend this

outpost. But a single brigade under Montmarie sufficed to turn back

the Valencian detachment, and Suchet kept his positions. O’Donnell

meanwhile, vainly hoping for solid help from Caro, had joined the

division of his army which was kept at Falcet[596], and after

threatening Suchet’s head quarters at Mora on July 30, so as to

distract his attention, suddenly turned aside and entered Tortosa

with 2,500 men. Calling out all the troops available for a sortie,

he issued from the town on August 3, and beat up the outposts of the

division under Laval, which was in observation before his gates.

But though the Catalans fought fiercely, and drove in the first

French line, they were not strong enough to push the enemy away from

Tortosa. O’Donnell should have brought a heavier force if he intended

to accomplish his end. Shortly after he returned to Tarragona,

whither he was called by the movements of Macdonald.

[595] See p. 311.

[596] See p. 313.

Some days later than he had covenanted, Caro came up to Vinaros,

on the coast-road from Valencia, and to San Mateo on the parallel

inland road, with his whole army, including the force which

Bassecourt had been commanding. It consisted of no more than 10,000

ill-organized troops of the Line, who had been joined by nearly as

many unregimented peasants in loose guerrilla bands. The whole mass

was far from being formidable, as Suchet knew. Wherefore the French

general, cutting down to the smallest possible figure the containing

troops left before Tortosa, and at his head quarters at Mora, marched

with eleven battalions and a cavalry regiment--only 6,000 men in

all--to meet the Valencians. He drove their advanced cavalry from

Vinaros, and advanced against their positions at Calig and Cervera

del Maestre. Caro at once ordered a precipitate retreat, and did

not stop till he had placed thirty miles between himself and the

enemy. His obvious terror and dismay at the approach of the French

roused such anger that he was summoned to give up the command by his

own officers, and obeyed without hesitation[597]. He fled by sea to

Majorca, knowing, it is said, that he would have been torn to pieces

if he had shown his face before the populace at Valencia, over which

he had exercised a sort of dictatorship for more than a year. Suchet,

unable to catch such an evasive enemy, and regarding the routed army

as a negligible quantity, returned to Mora, where he received the

news that the long-expected Macdonald was at last about to appear

(August 20).

[597] For details see Arteche, ix. 267, Schepeler, iv. 659-60, and

Suchet’s \_Mémoires\_, vol. i. p. 193. The dictator’s own brother,

General Juan Caro, was one of those who deposed him.

The Duke of Tarentum had thrown the third and last of his great

convoys into Barcelona on the 18th of August, having brought with

him as its escort the French division of his army, which was now

commanded by Frère[598], and the Italian divisions of Severoli and

Pignatelli. He had left behind him General Baraguay d’Hilliers, in

the position which Reille had been wont to hold, as the defender of

the Ampurdam and Northern Catalonia as far as Hostalrich. Eighteen

thousand men were told off for this task, including all the German

brigades; but after garrisoning Gerona, Rosas, Figueras, and

Hostalrich, d’Hilliers had no great field-force left, and found

full employment in warding off the raids of Manso, Rovira, and

the other miquelete leaders upon the communication between Gerona

and Perpignan. Nearly 10,000 men had also been left in Barcelona,

including many sick, and the three divisions with which Macdonald

marched to join Suchet did not exceed 16,000 sabres and bayonets,

though the whole force of the 7th Corps was reckoned at over 50,000

men.

[598] Vice Souham, wounded at Vich, and Augereau recalled.

On August 13 Macdonald forced the Pass of Ordal, after some

skirmishing with the somatenes, and entered the plain of Tarragona.

It was the news of his approach to the Catalan capital which brought

O’Donnell back in haste from Tortosa. He concentrated the greater

part of his troops, on the hypothesis that the 7th Corps might be

intending to lay siege to the place. He brought down Campoverde’s

division from the north to join those of Ibarrola, Sarsfield, and

the Baron de Eroles, which were already on the spot. It soon became

known, however, to the Spaniards that Macdonald could not be bent

on siege operations, for he was bringing with him neither the

heavy artillery nor the enormous train of provisions that would be

required in such a case. He marched past Reus and Valls to Momblanch,

skirmishing all the way with O’Donnell’s detachments, and thence

to Lerida, which he reached on August 29. There he found Suchet

awaiting him for a conference. The orders from Paris, on which both

were acting, seemed to prescribe that Tortosa and Tarragona should

both be attacked[599]. But the General and the Marshal agreed that

their joint strength was not more than enough for one siege at a

time. They agreed that the 3rd Corps should undertake the leaguer of

Tortosa, and ‘the containing’ of the Valencian army, while the 7th

should cover these operations by keeping O’Donnell and the Catalans

fully employed. Suchet therefore drew his detachments southward from

Lerida and the plains of the Segre, handing over all that tract to

Macdonald. From this fertile region alone could the Marshal have

fed his corps, Central Catalonia being barren, and so overrun by

O’Donnell’s detachments that it was impossible to forage freely

within its bounds. Suchet undertook to provide for his own corps

during the siege of Tortosa by bringing up stores from Saragossa

and the valley of the Ebro, via Mequinenza. Macdonald lent him,

meanwhile, the weakest of his three divisions, 2,500 Neapolitans

under Pignatelli, who were to escort the siege-train for Tortosa

along the Ebro, when the autumn rains made the river navigable from

Mequinenza to the sea.

[599] See Suchet’s \_Mémoires\_, i. 196-7, and the dispatch from

Napoleon’s \_Correspondance\_ of July 25, 1810.

[Illustration: COINS CURRENT IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL IN 1808-14]

While Suchet was moving southward and making ready for the siege, the

Duke of Tarentum established himself with head quarters at Cervera

on the Barcelona-Lerida road, and brigades at Lerida, Agramunt, and

Tarrega, all in the plain; he was ready to fall upon O’Donnell’s

flank if the Catalans should make any attempt to succour Tortosa, by

marching from Tarragona along the roads parallel to the sea coast.

Meanwhile he had completely lost touch both with the garrison of

Barcelona and with Baraguay d’Hilliers in the Ampurdam. This was

the regular state of things during the Catalan war; for if the

French left detachments to guard a line of communication, they were

invariably cut off by the enemy; while, if they did not, the roads

were blocked and no information came through. So vigorous were the

somatenes at this moment, that small parties moving from Tarrega to

Cervera,--places only twelve miles apart, and in the middle of the

cantonments of the 7th Corps,--were not unfrequently waylaid and

destroyed. Macdonald, despite his well-known humanity, was forced to

burn villages, and shoot road-side assassins caught red-handed. He

lay in the position which he had taken up on September 4-6 for the

greater part of that month and the succeeding October, concentrating

at intervals a part of his forces for an expedition into the hills,

when the Catalans pressed him too closely. At the commencement of

his sojourn in the plains, he sent Severoli with an Italian brigade

to collect provisions in the valley of the Noguera Palleresa. This

raid led to dreadful ravaging of the country-side, but Severoli

returned with no spoil and many wounded. He had pushed his advance

as far as Talarn, skirmishing the whole way, and driving the

somatenes before him, but could accomplish nothing save the burning

of poor villages evacuated by their inhabitants. A week later other

expeditions scoured the mountain sides eastward, with little more

success[600].

[600] For details see Vacani, iv. pp. 307-8.

Meanwhile, though Macdonald imagined that he was not only protecting

Suchet’s northern flank, but also attracting the attention of

O’Donnell to himself, the enterprising Spanish general had contrived

an unwelcome surprise for him. He knew that he was not strong enough

to fight the 7th Corps in the open field, nor even to face Suchet

by making another attempt to relieve Tortosa--which place, for the

moment, was in no immediate danger. He therefore resolved to draw

Macdonald from his present position, by a blow at the corner of

Catalonia where the French were weakest.

The Marshal considered that Baraguay d’Hilliers was perfectly

safe in the northern region which he garrisoned, since no regular

Spanish force was now in arms in that direction. O’Donnell resolved

to undeceive him. Leaving the two divisions of Obispo and Eroles

to block the road from Macdonald’s post at Cervera to Barcelona,

with orders to retire into Tarragona if hard pressed, he ordered a

third division, that of Campoverde, to prepare for a forced march

to the north. At the same time a force, consisting of the British

frigate \_Cambrian\_ and the Spanish frigate \_Diana\_, convoying a

few transports with 500 men on board for disembarkation, sailed

from Tarragona, for a destination which was kept secret to the last

moment. The troops were under Doyle, the British commissioner in

Catalonia; Captain Fane of the \_Cambrian\_ was senior naval officer.

O’Donnell’s march was perilous: he had to pass close to the front

of the garrisons of Barcelona, Hostalrich, and Gerona, through a

most difficult and mountainous country, without giving any signs

of his presence; for, if his movement were discovered, Baraguay

d’Hilliers might concentrate his scattered brigades, and crush him

by force of numbers. The march, however, was carried out with

complete success, and on September 13 O’Donnell lay with 6,000

infantry and 400 horse at Vidreras, south of Gerona, while the naval

force was hovering off Palamos, the nearest point on the coast.

The rough region between Gerona and the sea was at this moment

occupied by half Rouyer’s division of troops of the Confederation

of the Rhine, under Schwartz--the ever-unlucky general whose name

was connected with the disasters of Bruch[601] and Manresa[602].

He had with him four weak battalions of the 5th (Anhalt-Lippe)

and 6th (Schwartzburg-Waldeck-Reuss) regiments, and a squadron of

cuirassiers: a force which, owing to the sickliness of the autumn

season, did not amount to much more than 1,500 men in all. But he

was so close to Gerona[603], where lay Rouyer’s other two regiments,

and some French troops, that he was not considered in any danger by

his superiors. Schwartz’s main duty was to prevent any communication

between the somatenes of the inland and the cruisers which were

always passing up and down the coast. Provoked by a recent raid at

Bagur, on September 10, where an English landing-party had stormed

one of his coast batteries, and captured the garrison of 50 men,

Schwartz had just strengthened all his posts along the shore. He

had only 700 men at his head quarters at La Bispal; the rest were

dispersed between Bagur, San Feliu, Palamos, and the connecting post

at Calonje. On the morning of the fourteenth he was stricken with

horror when his outposts informed him that they had been driven in by

Spanish infantry and cavalry in overwhelming force. He sent orders,

too late, for his troops on the coast to concentrate, and prepared

to fall back on Gerona with his whole force. But his messenger had

hardly gone when he was attacked by O’Donnell, who drove him into

the indefensible castle of La Bispal, which was commanded by a

neighbouring hill and the church tower of the village. After losing

some men shot down from these points of vantage, Schwartz surrendered

at nightfall, when the Spaniards were preparing to storm his refuge.

His defence cannot have been very desperate, as he had lost only

one officer and four men killed, and three officers and sixteen men

wounded. But this was only part of the disaster which befell the

German brigade that day: by a careful timing of the attacks Doyle

and Fane stormed Palamos with the landing-force at the same moment

that La Bispal was being attacked, while Colonel Fleires, with a

detachment of O’Donnell’s land troops, surprised San Feliu, and

Colonel Aldea with another cut off the companies at Calonje. In

all the Spaniards captured on that day one general, two colonels,

fifty-six officers, and 1,183 rank and file, with seventeen guns.

Schwartz’s brigade was absolutely destroyed; only a few stragglers

reached Gerona, from which no help had been sent, because O’Donnell

had turned loose all the somatenes of the region to demonstrate

against the place[604].

[601] See vol. i. p. 311.

[602] See this vol. p. 295.

[603] Only about eighteen miles distant.

[604] The best narrative of Schwartz’s disaster may be found in

the diary of the Lippe-Bückeburg officer Barkhausen, one of the

prisoners, pp. 110-15.

Without waiting for Rouyer and Baraguay d’Hilliers to assemble their

forces, O’Donnell departed from the scene of his exploits without

delay. He himself, having received a severe wound in the foot,

embarked with the prisoners on board Fane’s ships and returned to

Tarragona. Campoverde, with the land-force, retired hastily past

Gerona to the mountains of the north, retook Puycerda, beat up the

outposts of the French garrison of Montlouis on the frontier of

Cerdagne, and raised some contributions on the other side of the

Pyrenees. From thence he descended the Segre, and established himself

at Cardona and Calaf, facing Macdonald’s northern flank.

So thoroughly had the main body of the 7th Corps lost touch with

the troops left behind at Gerona and in the Ampurdam, that the news

of the disaster of La Bispal only reached Macdonald, via France and

Saragossa, more than a fortnight after it had happened. It alarmed

him for the safety of the north, but did not suffice to draw him

away from Suchet, as O’Donnell had hoped. The news that the Spanish

raiding division had disappeared from the neighbourhood of Gerona

encouraged him to remain in his present position, which alone made

the siege of Tortosa possible. Presently he was informed that a

considerable force had appeared in his own sphere of operations--this

being the same division of Campoverde which had done all the

mischief in the north. He therefore marched on October 18, with

two French and two Italian brigades, to attack this new enemy.

On the next day he occupied Solsona, where the Junta of Upper

Catalonia had hitherto been sitting. The place was found deserted

by its inhabitants, and was plundered; its great cathedral was

burnt--either by accident or design. On the twenty-first, however,

when the Marshal came in front of Cardona, he found the town, the

inaccessible castle above it, and the neighbouring heights, manned

by Campoverde’s division, strengthened by several thousand somatenes

of the district. The Italian general Eugenio marched straight at

the position, with Salme’s French brigade in support, despising his

enemy, and not waiting for the Commander-in-Chief and the reserves.

He met with a sharp repulse, for the Spaniards charged his columns

just as they drew near the crest, and hurled them down with loss.

Macdonald refused to throw in all his troops, and contented himself

with bringing off the routed brigade. He then returned to Solsona

and Cervera, much harassed in his retreat by the somatenes. It is

curious that he did not press the combat further, as he had a large

superiority of numbers over the Catalan division, and had not lost

much more than 100 men in the first clash[605]. But the position was

formidable, and the Marshal more than once in this campaign showed

himself averse to taking risks. Perhaps, also, he may have already

made up his mind to return to the east and abandon Suchet, since

it was at about this time that more disquieting information from

Baraguay d’Hilliers reached him by way of France.

[605] Martinien’s invaluable lists show only three Italian and one

French officer hurt, which agrees well enough with Vacani’s estimate

of 80 to 100 \_hors de combat\_.

This new budget of troubles contained two main items. The first was

that the August supplies thrown into Barcelona were nearly exhausted,

and that the town urgently required revictualling. The second was

that it was impossible to send on the necessary convoys, because of

the extreme activity of the somatenes, and the inadequate number

of troops left in Northern Catalonia. One considerable train of

waggons had been captured and destroyed near La Junquera, on the very

frontier of France, by the Baron de Eroles, who had now taken up

the command of the northern insurgents. Another was standing fast

at Gerona for want of sufficient escort, a third had been collected

at Perpignan, but dared not start. So pressing was the need for the

relief of Barcelona, that Macdonald made up his mind that he must

break up from his present cantonments--even at the risk of making the

siege of Tortosa impossible--and transfer himself to the north-east.

Accordingly, on November 4, he commenced a toilsome march by way of

Calaf, Manresa, and Hostalrich to Gerona, where he arrived in safety

on the 10th. Campoverde followed him, for some way, by parallel

paths along the mountains, but never dared to strike, the strength

of the 7th Corps when it marched in a mass being too great for him.

It is probable that the Marshal would have had more trouble if

O’Donnell had been in the field, but that enterprising general was

not yet healed of the wound which he had received at La Bispal. It

had gangrened, and he had been sent to Majorca by his physicians,

who declared that a complete cessation from military work was the

only chance of saving his life. The interim command was turned over

in November to the senior Lieutenant-General in Catalonia, Miguel

Iranzo, a very poor substitute for the hard-fighting Spanish-Irish

general.

Macdonald, having joined Baraguay d’Hilliers, had now an imposing

mass of troops under his hand. Moreover, he got back the services of

his old divisional generals Souham and Pino, who arrived from sick

leave, and took over charge of the divisions lately in the charge of

Frère and Severoli. A great draft from France and Italy had rejoined

in their company. The Marshal was therefore able to collect the

fractions of the great convoy destined for Barcelona, and to conduct

it to that city after a slow and cautious march on November 25. He

then changed the battalions in the garrison of Barcelona, where he

left both Pino and Souham, sent back to the Ampurdam the troops he

had borrowed from Baraguay d’Hilliers, as escort for the returning

convoy, and marched for the second time to join Suchet; moving by way

of Momblanch, he got once more into touch with the Army of Aragon at

Falcet, near Mora, on December 12.

Thus the campaign came back, at mid-winter, to the same aspect

that it had shown in the first days of September. It has been the

wont of military critics to throw the blame for the lost three

months on Macdonald[606]. But this seems unfair: it is true that

he was absent from the post which he had promised to hold, for the

protection of Suchet’s rear, from November 4 to December 13. But why

had so little been done to forward the siege of Tortosa during the

time from September 4 to November 4--two whole months--while the

Marshal was in the covenanted position, and actually carrying out

his promise to contain the Catalans, and leave Suchet’s hands free

for the actual prosecution of the projected siege? The commander of

the Army of Aragon had been given two of the best campaigning months

of the year--September and October--and had no enemy about him save

the ever-unlucky Valencian army, the local somatenes of the Lower

Ebro, and the scattered bands of Villacampa in the hills of Upper

Aragon. It was only sixty miles from his base at Mequinenza, where

his siege-train had been collected months before, to the walls of

Tortosa, and he had brought up his field army before that place as

early as August. No doubt the country between Mequinenza and Tortosa

is rough, and its roads execrable, while water-transport along

the Ebro was rendered more difficult than usual by a rather dry

autumn, which kept the river low. But twenty-six heavy siege-guns

were got down to Xerta, only ten miles from Tortosa, as early as

September 5, during a lucky flood, while a considerable number more

were pushed to the front during the same month, by the land route,

formed by Suchet’s new military road from Caspe to Mora. It seems,

therefore, that Suchet’s inactivity in September and October can be

explained neither by laying blame on Macdonald, nor by exaggerating

the difficulties of transport. If, as he wrote himself, ‘Notre corps

d’armée se trouvait enchaîné sur le bas Ebre, sans pouvoir agir, et

son chef n’avait d’espoir que dans une crue d’eau et dans le secours

des circonstances[607],’ he was himself responsible for his failure,

either from over-caution or because he had undertaken a task beyond

his means. The real cause of his two months’ delay was the vigorous

action of the enemy. There was no danger from the disorganized

Valencian army, which only made a feeble attempt on November 26-27

to beat up the small force under General Musnier, which lay at

Uldecona to cover the blockade of Tortosa from the south; the attack,

led by Bassecourt, was driven off with ease. The real opponents of

Suchet were the irregular forces of the Catalans, and the Aragonese

insurgents in his rear. The former, though few in numbers, since

Macdonald was attracting their main attention, attacked every convoy

that tried to float down the gorge of the Ebro, and sometimes with

success. On the 15th of September they captured a whole battalion of

Pignatelli’s Neapolitans, which was acting as guard to some boats. On

other occasions they took or destroyed smaller or greater portions

of flotillas carrying guns or stores to Xerta, where the siege park

was being collected. But Villacampa’s Aragonese gave even greater

trouble; from his lair in the Sierra de Albaracin that enterprising

partisan made countless descents upon Suchet’s rear, and so molested

the garrisons of Upper Aragon, that the French general had repeatedly

to send back troops from his main body to clear the roads behind him.

Villacampa was beaten whenever he tried to fight large bodies, even

though he was aided by a General Carbajal, whom the Regency had sent

from Cadiz with money and arms, to stir up a general revolt in the

Teruel-Montalban region. The Polish General Chlopiski, detached in

haste from the blockade of Tortosa, broke the forces of Carbajal and

Villacampa in two successive engagements at Alventosa, on the borders

of Valencia (October 31), and Fuensanta, near Teruel (November 11).

The insurrection died down, Villacampa retired into his mountains,

and Chlopiski returned to the main army. But only a few days later

Suchet had to cope with a new danger: Macdonald having taken himself

off to Gerona, the Catalans were at last able to detach regular

troops to reinforce the somatenes of the Lower Ebro. A brigade under

General Garcia Navarro came up to Falcet, opposite Mora, and formed

the nucleus of a raiding force, which beset the whole left bank of

the Ebro, and made its navigation almost impossible. Suchet had

to detach against it seven battalions under Abbé and Habert, who

attacked Navarro’s entrenched camp at Falcet on November 12, and

stormed it. The Spanish general, who showed distinguished personal

courage, and charged valiantly at the head of his reserves, was taken

prisoner with some 300 men. The somatenes fled to the hills again,

and the regulars retired to Reus, near Tarragona, where they were out

of Suchet’s sphere of operations. It was just after this combat that

the unfortunate Army of Valencia made the useless diversion of which

we have already spoken[608]. It, at least, kept Suchet busy for a few

days. By the time that it was over, the greater part of the remaining

siege-material was ready at Xerta, the water-carriage down the Ebro

having become easy since Garcia Navarro’s defeat. When, therefore,

Macdonald’s arrival at Momblanch was reported at Suchet’s head

quarters, and an adequate covering-force was once more placed between

him and the Catalan army in the direction of Tarragona, the actual

leaguer of Tortosa could at length begin. It lasted, short though

it was, till the New Year of 1811 had come, and must, therefore, be

described not here but in the fourth volume of this work.

[606] See especially Napier, iii. 199.

[607] Suchet, \_Mémoires\_, i. 205.

[608] See previous page.

Thus six months had elapsed between the fall of Lerida and the

commencement of the next stage of the French advance in Eastern

Spain. If it is asked why the delay was so long, the answer is easy:

it was due not, as some have maintained, to Suchet’s slowness or to

Macdonald’s caution, but solely to the splendid activity displayed

by Henry O’Donnell, a general often beaten but never dismayed, and

to the tenacity of the Catalans, who never gave up hope, and were

still to hold their own, after a hundred disasters, till the tide of

success in the Peninsula at last turned back in 1812-13.

SECTION XXII: CHAPTER II

KING JOSEPH AND THE CORTES AT CADIZ: GENERAL SUMMARY

It only remains that we should deal shortly with the higher politics

of Spain during the last months of 1810--the troubles of King Joseph,

and the complications caused by the meeting of the Cortes at Cadiz.

Of the growing friction between the King and the commanders of the

‘military governments’ created by the Emperor in February, we have

already spoken[609]. Joseph did well to be angry when his dispatches

to Saragossa or Barcelona were deliberately disregarded by his

brother’s special orders. But things became worse, when he was not

merely ignored, but openly contemned. A few examples may suffice.

In the early summer a brigade sent out by Marshal Ney raided the

province of Avila, which was not included in any of the military

governments, raised requisitions there, and--what was still more

insulting--seized and carried off the treasure in the offices of the

civil intendant-general of the province[610]. Joseph wrote to Paris

that ‘the Emperor cannot be desirous that his own brother--however

unworthy--should be openly humiliated and insulted; that he asked

for justice, and abstained from any further comment’[611]. Napoleon

replied by placing Avila in the block of provinces allotted to the

Army of Portugal, and withdrew it for the time from the King’s

authority. It was soon after that he created Kellermann’s new

‘military government’ of Valladolid, thus taking another region

from under the direct authority of Joseph. Some months later

Kellermann asserted the complete independence of his viceroyalty,

by causing the judges of the high-court of Old Castile, which sat

at Valladolid, to take a new oath of allegiance to the Emperor of

the French, as if they had ceased to be subjects of the kingdom of

Spain[612]. Soult, too, continued, as has been shown before, to cut

off all revenues which the King might have received from Andalusia,

and Joseph’s financial position became even worse than it had been in

1809[613].

[609] See pp. 201-2 and 316.

[610] See p. 242.

[611] Joseph to Napoleon. Ducasse’s \_Correspondance du Roi Joseph\_,

vii. 278-9. The Emperor gave Avila back to the King in September, see

Nap. \_Correspondance\_, xxi. 126.

[612] See Miot de Melito’s Diary, Sept. 8, 1810.

[613] Joseph to Napoleon, Aug. 25, 1810. Ducasse, vii. 321, and

ibid., p. 332 of Sept. 12.

The summary of his complaints, containing a declaration that he

wished to surrender his crown to the Emperor, was drawn up as the

autumn drew near; it deserves a record; it is absolutely reasonable,

and confines itself to hard facts. ‘Since Your Majesty withdraws

Andalusia from my sphere of command, and orders that the revenues of

that province should be devoted exclusively to military expenses, I

have no choice left but to throw up the game. In the actual state

of affairs in Spain the general who commands each province is a

king therein. The whole revenues of the province will never suffice

to keep him; for what he calls his “absolute necessities” have

never been formally stated, and as the revenues rise he augments

his “necessities.” Hence it results that any province under the

command of a general is useless for my budget. From Andalusia alone

I hoped to get a certain surplus, after all military expenses had

been paid. But its command is given over to a general who would

never recognize my authority; and with the command, he gets the

administrative and governmental rights. Thus I have been stripped of

the only region which could have given me a sufficient maintenance.

I am reduced to Madrid [i.e. New Castile], which yields 800,000

francs per mensem, while the indispensable expenses of the central

government amount to 4,000,000 francs per mensem. I have around me

the wrecks of what was once a great national administration, with

a guard, the dépôts and hospital of the army, a garrison, a royal

household, a ministry, a council of state, and the refugees from

the rebel provinces. This state of affairs could not endure for two

months longer, even if my honour, and the consciousness of what is

due to me, would allow me to remain in this humiliating position.

Since the Army of Andalusia has been taken from me, what am I? The

manager of the hospitals and magazines of Madrid, the head jailer of

the central dépôt of prisoners!’ Joseph then states his conditions.

If he is allowed (1) to have a real control over the whole army;

(2) to send back to France officers, of whatever rank, notoriously

guilty of maladministration; (3) to reassure his Spanish partisans

as to rumours current concerning his own forced abdication and the

dismemberment of the monarchy; (4) to issue what proclamations

he pleases to his subjects, without being placed under a sort of

censorship, he will retain his crown, and pledge himself to reduce

all Spain, and ‘make the country as profitable to the interests

of France as it is now detrimental.’ If not, he must consider the

question of retiring across the Pyrenees and surrendering his

crown[614].

[614] Joseph to Napoleon, Aug. 9, Ducasse, vii. 307.

Napoleon could not give any such promises, and for good reasons:

he rightly distrusted his brother’s military ability, and knew

that--whatever was the title given to Joseph--men like Soult or

Masséna would disregard his orders. Apparently he considered that a

conflict of authorities in Spain, such as had been existing for the

last six months, was at least better than the concentration of power

in the hands of one indifferent commander-in-chief. It is doubtful

whether he did not err in his conclusion. Almost anything was better

than the existing anarchy, tempered by orders, six weeks late, from

Paris. But a second, and a more fatal, objection to granting Joseph’s

conditions was that the ‘rumours current concerning the dismemberment

of the Spanish monarchy’ were absolutely true. Napoleon was at

this moment at the very height of his wild craze for adding alien

and heterogeneous provinces to the French Empire, in the supposed

interest of the Continental System. It was in 1810 that he declared

Holland and the Valais, Hamburg and Bremen, Oldenburg and Dalmatia,

integral parts of his dominions. And Northern Spain was destined to

suffer the same fate. Mina and Rovira, Eroles and Manso, were to

wake some morning to find themselves French subjects! On October 12

the Emperor wrote to Berthier: ‘You will inform General Caffarelli,

in strict confidence, that my intention is that Biscay shall be

united to France. He must not speak of this intention, but he must

act with full knowledge of it. Make the same private communication to

General Reille about Navarre[615].’ Aragon, or at least the portion

of it north of the Ebro, and Catalonia were to suffer the same fate.

Already justice was administered there in the name of the Emperor,

not in that of the King of Spain, and a coinage was being struck at

Barcelona which no longer bore the name of ‘Joseph Napoleon King of

Spain and the Indies[616].’

[615] \_Correspondance\_, xxi. p. 213.

[616] For a specimen, see the plate of coins in vol. ii, facing p.

478.

The line of argument which Napoleon adopted with regard to this

proposed annexation is very curious. His directions to his Foreign

Minister, Champagny, run as follows[617]: ‘Herewith I send you back

the Spanish documents with six observations, which are to serve as

the base for negotiation. But it is important that you should broach

the matter gently. You must first state clearly what are my opinions

on the Convention of Bayonne [viz. that the Emperor regards his

guarantee of the integrity of Spain as out of date and cancelled].

Then speak of Portugal[618], and next of the expense that this

country [Spain] costs me. Then let the Spanish envoys have time to

reflect, and only after an interval of some days tell them that I

must have the left bank of the Ebro, as an indemnity for the money

and all else that Spain has cost me down to this hour. I think that,

as in all negotiations, we must not show ourselves too much in a

hurry.’ The mention of Portugal means that the Emperor contemplated

making his brother a present of the Lusitanian realm, where Spain

was hated only one degree less than France, as a compensation for

Catalonia and the rest. On the same morning that Mina found himself

a Frenchman, all the Ordenança of the Beira hills were to discover

that they were Castilians! Mad disregard of national feeling could go

no further.

[617] Napoleon to Champagny, Sept. 9, 1810.

[618] I cannot find anywhere any authority for Napier’s strange

statement (iii. p. 261) that it was Almenara, and not Napoleon, who

started the idea that Portugal should be exchanged for the Ebro

Province. The nearest thing to it is that ‘M. d’Almenara déclare

formellement qu’il ne consente à aucune cession de territoire

espagnol, que cette compensation [Portugal] ne soit pas stipulée et

garantie; mais comme il est dans l’intention formelle du roi de ne

pas consentir à aucun démembrement, même avec une compensation plus

avantageuse, il n’aurait jamais ratifié un pareil traité.’ Ducasse,

\_Correspondance\_, vii. 190.

A letter to the French ambassador at Madrid explained at much greater

length the Emperor’s reasons for breaking the oath that he had sworn

to his brother at Bayonne, when he named him King of Spain. ‘When

the promise was made, His Majesty had supposed that he had rallied

to his cause the majority of the Spanish nation. This has proved not

to be the case: the whole people took arms, the new king had to fly

from Madrid, and was only restored by French bayonets. Since then he

has hardly rallied a recruit to his cause; it is not the King’s own

levies that have fought the rebels: it is the 400,000 French sent

across the Pyrenees who have conquered every province. Therefore

all these regions belong not to the King, but to the Emperor, by

plain right of conquest. He intends, for this reason, to regard the

Treaty of Bayonne as null; it has never been ratified by the Spanish

nation. One only chance remains to the King: let him prevail upon

the newly-assembled Cortes at Cadiz to acknowledge him as their

sovereign, and to break with England. If that can be done, the

Emperor may revert to his first intentions, and ratify the Treaty of

Bayonne, except that he must insist on a “rectification of frontiers

sufficient to give him certain indispensable positions”’--presumably

San Sebastian, Pampeluna, Figueras, Rosas, &c.[619]

[619] Napoleon to Laforest, ambassador at Madrid, Nov. 7.

The mere first rumour of his brother’s intentions, transmitted

by Almenara and the Duke of Santa-Fé, his ambassadors ordinary

and extraordinary at Paris, drove Joseph to despair. ‘The Spanish

nation,’ he wrote[620], ‘is more compact in its opinions, its

prejudices, its national egotism, than any other people of Europe.

There are no Catholics and Protestants here, no new and old

Spaniards; and they will all suffer themselves to be hewn in pieces

rather than allow the realm to be dismembered. What would the

inhabitants of the counties round London say if they were menaced

with being declared no longer English? What would Provençals or

Languedocians say if they were told that they were to cease to be

Frenchmen? My only chance here is to be authorized to announce that

the promise that Spain should not be dismembered will be kept. If

that is granted, and the generals who have misbehaved are recalled

to France, all may be repaired. If not, the only honourable course

for me is to retire into private life, as my conscience bids me,

and honour demands.’ On November 18, after having received more

formal news of the Emperor’s intentions from his envoys, Joseph

declared that the die was cast: he would return to his castle of

Mortefontaine, or to any other provincial abode in France that he

could afford to purchase, as soon as his brother’s resolve was made

public.

[620] Joseph to the Queen of Spain, Oct. 12. Ducasse,

\_Correspondance\_, vii. 355.

Yet the crisis never came to a head. The annexation of the Ebro

provinces was never published, though private assurances of their

impending fate were laid before the Spanish ministers and the King.

What caused the Emperor to hesitate, when all was prepared? The

answer may be found in his dispatch to Laforest on November 7: ‘I

need hardly warn you,’ he writes, ‘that these insinuations (the

ultimatum to the King) are to be made only on condition that the

French army has entered Lisbon, and that the English have taken to

their ships.’ And again, ‘The Emperor is acting in sincerity: if

in reality the capture of Lisbon, and an offer from the cabinet of

Madrid, might possibly decide the rebels to treat, His Majesty might

consent, &c., &c.’ It was the Lines of Torres Vedras which saved King

Joseph from abdication and Spain from dismemberment. The evacuation

of Portugal by Wellington was the indispensable preliminary to

the carrying out of the great annexation scheme: its completion

was deferred till the ominous silence of Masséna should be ended

by a triumphant dispatch proclaiming the capture of Lisbon. Since

that dispatch never came, Napoleon kept postponing his ultimatum.

Then followed the news, delivered at Paris by Foy on November 21,

showing that Masséna had been brought to a standstill. Even then the

Emperor’s plan was kept back, not abandoned. It was not till the Army

of Portugal had recoiled in despair and disarray to the banks of the

Coa that Napoleon abandoned his cherished scheme, and consented to

treat with his brother on reasonable terms. But Joseph’s visit to

Paris in the spring of 1811 and its consequences belong to another

chapter of this history. It must suffice here to point out that

he spent all the winter of 1810-11 in a state of mental anguish,

expecting every day to be forced to publish his abdication[621], and,

meanwhile, living a life of shifts and worries--selling his last

silver plate to feed his courtiers[622], and exchanging an endless

correspondence of remonstrances and insinuations with Soult and the

commanders of the ‘military governments’ of the North[623]. Even

from the military point of view he did not consider himself safe;

the Empecinado and other guerrillero chiefs carried their incursions

up to the very gates of Madrid; and La Mancha, from which, by the

Emperor’s orders, much cavalry had been withdrawn for the benefit of

Soult[624], was frequently raided by detachments from Blake’s Army of

Murcia. ‘À chaque instant du jour et de la nuit,’ wrote the unhappy

sovereign, ‘je suis exposé à monter à cheval pour défendre ma vie

contre les bandes exaspérées des insurgés, qui entourent Madrid:

cette ville est aux avant-postes[625].’

[621] See his letters to his wife in December 1810 and January 1811,

about his brother’s ‘mauvaises dispositions à mon égard.’

[622] He writes that at his most splendid State banquets nothing but

china is now to be seen on his table.

[623] The question of the Consuls and Soult (mentioned in an earlier

chapter) crops up again in Joseph to Berthier, Nov. 28.

[624] Napoleon to Berthier, Oct. 4, orders Digeon’s brigade of

Lahoussaye’s dragoons to cross the Sierra Morena, thus leaving the

king only four regiments of French cavalry in New Castile.

[625] Ducasse, \_Correspondance\_, vii. p. 361.

Meanwhile, the other government which claimed to be the legal

representative of Spanish nationality was even more truly ‘aux

avant-postes.’ The Cortes had assembled at Cadiz, where the booming

of the French cannon was perpetually heard, and where an occasional

shell from Villantroys’ celebrated mortars would plump harmlessly

into the sand of the Peninsula or the outskirts of the town itself.

The Cortes had opened its sessions on September 24, though less than

half its members had assembled. The difficulty of collecting them had

been very great, since all had to arrive by sea, and many had to come

from regions very remote, such as Asturias, Galicia, or Catalonia.

The assembly could not be called satisfactory or representative. The

scheme drawn up for its election by the commission that had sat in

the preceding winter was complicated. There was to be a deputy for

every 50,000 souls throughout Spain; but the form of selection was

indirect: the villages chose each one primary elector; the primary

electors met at the chief town of the district to choose a second

body of secondary electors; the secondary electors chose a final

committee for the whole province (\_Junta provincial electoral\_) and

these last, aided by the Governor, Archbishop, and Intendant of the

province, nominated the deputies. But this complicated system could

only work in the regions which were in the hands of the patriots.

Only Valencia, Murcia, Estremadura, the Balearic Isles, and Galicia

were wholly free at the moment. In Catalonia the capital, Barcelona,

and large tracts of the country were occupied by the French. In the

Asturias three-quarters of the province were held down by Bonnet.

The two Castiles, Andalusia (excepting Cadiz), Biscay, Navarre,

Leon, and Aragon were entirely or almost entirely in the hands of

the enemy. The delegates supposed to represent them were either

chosen in hole-and-corner meetings of insurgent juntas lurking in

some remote fastness, or--where even this semblance of local election

was not possible--by nomination by the Regency, or in wholly casual

assemblies of the natives of those districts who chanced to be in

Cadiz at the time. The representatives of Madrid, for example,

were chosen in this fashion by the body of exiles from that city

meeting in the spacious courtyard of a large public building[626].

The result of this informal and irregular method of choice was that

many provinces purported to be represented by deputies who had no

real local influence therein, but had chanced to commend themselves

to the insurgent juntas, or to the persons--in some cases a mere

handful--who happened to have fled from that particular region to

Cadiz. It is said that the very names, and much more the persons, of

a good many of the deputies were absolutely unknown to their supposed

constituents. Most of all was this the case with the members of

the Cortes who were supposed to represent Spanish America. It had

been decreed by the late Central Junta that the colonies formed an

integral part of the Spanish monarchy, and were therefore entitled to

representation. But the modest number of twenty-six members allotted

to them were elected at Cadiz, by a committee of Americans nominated

by the Regency from those who happened to be resident in that town.

Most of the deputies were out of touch with the people beyond the

seas, of whom they were theoretically the delegates.

[626] Argüelles, \_Cortes de Cadiz\_, p. 160.

This fact was specially unfortunate when the first symptoms of

discontent and sedition in Buenos Ayres, Mexico, and the Caraccas

had begun to show themselves. Though few realized it as yet, the

insurrection of Spanish America was just about to break forth. The

least foreseen of all the results of Napoleon’s aggressions in Old

Spain was that the colonies, which had been called upon to take their

part in the national war against the French, and had been promised

a share in the administration of the empire, should accept the

show of freedom and equality that was offered in a serious spirit.

The Americans demanded that they should no longer be treated as

subjects and tributaries of the mother country, but recognized as

possessing rights and interests of their own, which must be taken

into consideration when the general governance of the dominions

of Ferdinand VII was in question. And these rights and interests

included not only a claim to such self-government as other Spanish

provinces possessed, but a demand that their commercial and economic

needs should no longer be subordinated to the convenience of the

mother country. The colonies could not see why the monopoly of all

their trade should be left in the hands of the merchants of Old

Spain. They wished to traffic on their own account with Great Britain

and the United States. This claim was one which no inhabitant of Old

Spain could view with equanimity. The monopoly of South American

commerce had always been believed to be the most essential item in

the greatness of the realm. It had been preserved almost as strictly

in the eighteenth century as in the seventeenth or sixteenth. The old

\_Asiento\_, which gave Great Britain a minute share in that commerce,

had been conceived to be a humiliation and a disgrace to the king who

granted it. Spain had fought more than once to preserve the American

monopoly--it is only necessary to allude to the war of ‘Jenkins’s

Ear’ to show what she was prepared to face in its defence.

And now, when the mother country was in such desperate straits, the

questions of American self-government and American trade were raised

in the crudest form. Great Britain had provoked the distrust of her

Spanish allies by many of her acts, even when they were done in good

faith and with no ulterior motive. But the most irritating of all

was the request, which had been already made more than once in a

tentative fashion, for a measure of free trade with South America.

Wellington had recommended that the point should not be pressed,

when Spain was in her extremity; but it was inevitable that since

nearly all British subjects, and nearly all Americans, were desirous

to see the old barriers removed, the question should crop up again

and again. The opening of the American trade was the only return

that Spain could make for the aid that Great Britain had now been

giving her for more than two years of war. When Canning in 1809 wrote

that ‘in questions of commerce any proper occasion must be used to

recommend a more enlarged and liberal policy than has hitherto been

acted upon in Spain,’ it is easy to see what was in his mind. The

ministers in power in 1810 were mostly of the same opinion. But to

ask for free trade with America in the year when Hidalgo was making

his first rising in Mexico, and the \_cabildos\_ on the Rio de la Plata

were quietly substituting municipal self-government for the ancient

autocratic rule of their viceroys, was to provoke acute suspicion.

In 1806-7 Great Britain had backed Miranda and other colonial

separatists, either with the hope of getting a footing for herself

in South America, or at least with that of establishing republics

which would grant her all the commercial privileges that she asked.

The successive Spanish governments of 1808-10 could never convince

themselves that the scheme had been completely dropped, and mistook

British demands for open trade with America for a desire to sever the

discontented colonies from their mother country. The most unpopular

act of the Regency of 1810 was their decree of May 7, issued, as

all Spaniards held, in base subservience to their allies, which had

granted England and Portugal a certain limited right of exchanging

their products with the colonies, on paying the heavy customs-due of

ten and a half or fifteen and a half per cent[627]. So great was the

cry raised against it in Cadiz that the Regency was cowardly enough

to cancel it on June 22, under the pretext that it had not been

ratified in a session at which all its members were present!

[627] For details see Schepeler, iii. p. 691. The goods must also be

carried in Spanish vessels, so the grant was not a very liberal one!

But it was not the American question alone which lay as a source of

danger before the newly-assembled Cortes, nor was it the American

deputies alone who misrepresented their constituents. Speaking

in general, it may be said that the whole assembly showed a

disproportionate number of liberals, when the relative numbers of the

democratic and the conservative parties throughout Spain were taken

into consideration. The events of the next ten years were to show

that the \_Serviles\_, as their opponents called them, were really in a

majority in the whole country-side and in many towns. If that had not

been so, Ferdinand VII could not have restored autocratic government

with such ease when the Peninsular War was over. Reactionaries of

the blackest dye, who would have liked to restore the Inquisition,

and would have put back the press into the shackles which it had

endured before 1807, were probably in a clear majority in the nation.

The clerical interest was in many ways the mainstay of the War of

Independence, and the clergy, with very few exceptions, would gladly

have gone back to the system of the eighteenth century[628]. The

majority of the old official class sympathized with them, and the

peasantry were almost everywhere under their control. On the other

hand, the liberals, if all shades of them were reckoned together,

had a clear majority in the Cortes, both because the regions which

were properly represented in that assembly chanced to be those

in which they were most numerous, and because they had secured a

disproportionate number of the seats belonging to the lost provinces,

which had been filled up by more or less fictitious elections within

the walls of Cadiz. That town itself was the least conservative place

in Spain, and the refugees who had served as electors because they

happened to be on the spot, were not drawn from the bulk of the

population--were neither priests nor peasants,--but mainly came from

those sections of the upper and middle classes where liberal opinions

had made more progress.

[628] Liberal clergy of the type of the journalist Blanco-White

(Leucadio Doblado) were rare exceptions.

The Cortes on the whole was a democratic body: Spain, on the whole,

was reactionary. The number of those who hated Napoleon because they

regarded him as the enemy of the Church, the jailer of the Pope,

and the breaker-up of old laws, was much greater than that of those

who hated him because he was the embodiment of autocracy, and the

foe of all free self-government. Intense national pride was common

to both parties, and all could unite against a foe whose aim was

the dismemberment of Spain. But the union was made difficult by the

fact that men who had imbibed, more or less consciously, some of the

‘Principles of 1789’ had to co-operate with men who looked back on

the régime of Philip II as a Golden Age. ‘I can see no prospect of

Liberty behind the crowd of priests who everywhere stand foremost to

take the lead of our patriots. I cannot look for any direct advantage

from the feeling which prompts the present resistance to Napoleon,

as it arises chiefly from an inveterate attachment to the religious

system whence our present degradation takes source. If the course

of events enables us to attempt a political reform, it will be by

grafting the feeble shoots of Liberty upon the stock of Catholicism,

an experiment which has hitherto, and must ever, prove abortive’

wrote a desponding Liberal[629]. How could the writer of such words

and his friends work cordially in company with such fanatics as

the Estremaduran deputy who, in one of the earlier sessions of the

Cortes, proposed the astonishing motion that, in spite of all that

had happened since 1807, ‘the Inquisition remains in full possession

of its ancient authority, and can make free use of all the powers

which it has ever enjoyed in the past[630].’ There were others

who objected to the use of the dangerous word ‘constitution,’ and

even to the phrase \_las leyes de España\_, as implying an authority

independent of the crown[631].

[629] Doblado’s Letters, p. 392.

[630] Motion by one Francisco Maria Riesco, deputy, and formerly

Inquisitor, at Llerena in Estremadura. Argüelles’s \_Las Cortes de

Cadiz\_, p. 209.

[631] See below, p. 520.

When it is remembered that the form in which the Cortes had been

summoned was new and experimental, that the elections had been--even

according to that form--irregular, that no single member was

accustomed to parliamentary usages, that the parties represented in

it held views of the most divergent kinds, the wonder is not that

the assembly displayed many weaknesses, but that it did no worse.

Observers of a pessimistic frame of mind had feared that it would

break up altogether after a few stormy sittings. ‘It was too full,’

wrote the regent Lardizabal, ‘of youths, and of men who yesterday

were mere adventurers, without any practice in command, knowledge

of business, or experience of the world. Whole provinces were

represented by deputies whom they had not chosen, and were expected

to conform to a constitution, and to accept sweeping reforms, made

by men to whom they had given no mandate, faculty, or authority to

take such changes into consideration. For neither the Regency, nor

even the King, had the legal right to nominate deputies: no one could

choose them save the provinces or cities which were integral parts of

the nation, and no one could claim to represent a province save the

men to whom that same province had given powers, and instructions to

act in conformity with its wishes.’

This motley assembly, so many of whose members were of doubtful

legitimacy, held its opening session on September 24, 1810. The

meeting-place was not within the walls of Cadiz itself, but in the

large suburban town of La Isla, in the centre of the great island

of Leon, which forms the outwork of the city. It was hoped that

the six miles which separated its sitting-place from Cadiz would

prevent interruption by popular demonstrations, such as had been so

pernicious to the French chamber during the Revolution. The Cortes

had as their home the large but bare theatre of San Fernando, which

had been roughly fitted up with benches and tribunes. After high

mass had been celebrated by the old Cardinal Bourbon, the only male

member of the royal family who was not in captivity[632], the Regency

declared the session opened, and then withdrew, after a brief speech

by the Senior Regent, the Bishop of Orense, who bade the assembly

constitute itself in due form and elect its president and secretaries.

[632] He was of the same branch as the Countess of Chinchon,

Godoy’s wife, being son of Luis, youngest child of Philip V, by a

quasi-morganatic marriage with a lady of the name of Vallabriga.

This was done with no delay; the president chosen was a Catalan,

Ramón Lazaro de Dou, while the two secretaries were Evaristo Perez de

Castro and Manuel Lujan. Both of them were well known to entertain

Liberal opinions, and their choice marked the predominance of their

party in the Cortes. Sitting till midnight was long past, the

assembly passed six decrees drawn up by Muñoz Torrero, one of the

few clerical deputies who held Liberal views, and Manuel Lujan. By

these the Cortes declared itself in possession of supreme power in

the State, but resolved that, of the three branches of authority--the

legislative, the executive, and the judicial--it intended to take

only the first-named under its own charge, handing over the executive

to the late Regency, and the judicial to the ordinary courts of law.

The Regency should be responsible to the Cortes for all its acts of

administration, and liable to be called to account. It was ordered

to make an instant oath of obedience to the assembly, ‘recognizing

the sovereignty of the nation represented by the deputies of this

general and extraordinary Cortes.’ This Castaños and the other

regents did with an ill grace, all save the Bishop of Orense, who

misliked the oath, contending that its terms spoke of the nation

as being sovereign in its own right, without consideration of the

King’s indefeasible majesty[633]. He would not swear, and so vacated

his place. He did not lose much by his early dismissal, for on

October 28 the Cortes abruptly deposed his four colleagues--Castaños,

Lardizabal, Saavedra, and Escaño--and replaced them by a new Regency

of three members. These were Joaquim Blake, that most unlucky of

generals; Admiral Cisgar, then commanding the Cartagena squadron,

who passed as an able administrator; and an obscure naval captain,

Pedro Agar, of whom little was known save that he was American born,

and might, therefore, theoretically represent the colonies. The

change in regents was decidedly for the worse as far as character and

ability went. Apparently the Cortes were jealous of an administration

whose power was older than their own, and had not originally been

created by them. They wished to have an executive more entirely

dependent on themselves. Some of the Liberals pretended that the

old regents were plotting to hold a sort of ‘Pride’s Purge’ of the

Cortes, and to restore themselves to power. But of this no proof

was ever given[634]. Considering the difficult times which they had

passed through, and their well-intentioned if rather feeble attempt

to serve the state, Castaños and his colleagues deserved a better

fate than arbitrary dismissal, without thanks, and with a tacit

accusation of treason laid to their charge.

[633] ‘Que la nación era soberana \_con el rey\_, desde luego prestaría

el juramento pedido. Pero si se entendía que la nación era soberana

\_sin el rey\_, y soberana de su mismo soberano, nunca se sometería á

tal doctrina.’ See more of his argument in Toreno, ii. 225.

[634] Compare Toreno’s insinuation against the Regent Lardizabal (ii.

213), to whom he ascribes a definite plot, with Arteche’s defence and

eulogy of the late Regency, ix. 109-11.

Between the time of the first assembly of the Cortes and the change

in the Regency an infinite number of subjects had been dealt with.

The Liberal majority, led by Agustin Argüelles, had decreed liberty

of the Press in all political discussions, but very illogically

refused it for discussions on matters of religion. They had abolished

all feudal rights and privileges of nobility. They passed a decree

of amnesty for all rebels in America who should lay down their

arms, and proposed many projects for improving the position of the

Colonies, few of which, unfortunately, happened to bear any relation

to the chief grievances under which the South Americans conceived

themselves to be labouring. The insurrection still went on, and,

though the mother country was placed in such a desperate condition,

troops were actually withdrawn from the Murcian army to sail with

General Elio, who was directed to restore order at Buenos Ayres and

in the provinces of the Rio de la Plata. Discussions continued,

with much heat and a considerable amount of eloquence, on many

other points, during the early days of the Junta. The subjects of

debate were generally constitutional, occasionally financial. It was

worthy to be observed that the two topics on which all the deputies

rallied together were the question of opposition to the French, and

the question of the defence of their own sovereign rights. Even the

majority of the \_Serviles\_ would join with the Liberals whenever any

doubt was raised with regard to the right of the Cortes to arrogate

to itself the title of Majesty or the attributes of supreme power.

When, for example, the Bishop of Orense refused to take the oath of

obedience, several clericals of most reactionary views took part

against him; and when a few weeks later the Marqués del Palacio,

named as a deputy-regent during the absence of Blake, also displayed

reluctance to swear to the same form on similar grounds, he did not

receive the report that he had expected from the reactionaries.

Indeed, he was put under arrest for some time, without, as it seems,

any attempt to protect him being made by the \_Serviles\_. Like the

Bishop of Orense, he ended by swallowing his scruples and accepting

the prescribed formula[635].

[635] Toreno, ii. pp. 222-3.

A similar desire to assert its own absolute supremacy impelled the

Cortes to refuse to countenance two dynastic intrigues which came

from different quarters. The eldest daughter of Charles IV, Carlotta,

Princess of the Brazils and wife of the Regent João of Portugal,

was the nearest of kin to Ferdinand VII who had escaped Napoleon’s

claws in 1808. She was of opinion that she had a good right to

expect the Regency during her brother’s captivity at Valençay, and

her agents repeatedly urged her claims, both during the days of the

first Regency and after the Cortes had assembled. Sousa-Holstein,

the Portuguese ambassador, naturally lent them his aid, and she

had Spanish partisans, though few of them were persons of good

reputation. Yet, by constant persuasion and promises, Carlotta’s

representatives actually succeeded in inducing great numbers of the

deputies to pledge themselves to push her interests. It is said

that, at one time or another, a full half of the members had given

the intriguers encouragement. But to do this, and to make a formal

attempt to pass a decree conferring the Regency on her, were very

different things. When overt action was urged by her agents, or their

partisans in the Cortes, nothing came of the attempt. The assembly

was naturally unwilling to surrender its own sovereignty, and to

introduce a court and its intrigues into Cadiz. It must be added

that João of Portugal had no liking for his wife’s scheme, that

Wellington saw its disadvantages[636], and that the great bulk of

the Spaniards would have resented the whole affair, as a Portuguese

intrigue, if it had ever been laid before the nation as a definite

proposal.

[636] See Wellington to Henry Wellesley, Nov. 4, 1810:--‘If the

Princess of the Brazils be the person appointed regent, the Court

will be inundated with intriguers of all nations, and attended by

other evils.’

The second dynastic scheme which was running its course at this time

was engineered by another branch of the Spanish royal house. The

restless and unscrupulous Queen Caroline of Sicily could not forget

that if Carlotta of Portugal was the nearest relative of the captive

King, yet her husband Ferdinand was his nearest male kinsman, save

the princes in Napoleon’s hands. She availed herself of this fact

to urge that one of her children would be a very suitable person to

be entrusted with power in Spain, and thought of her younger son

Prince Leopold as a possible candidate for the Regency. But since he

had not the necessary reputation or age, the Queen soon fell back

upon her son-in-law Louis Philippe, Duke of Orleans, the exiled son

of the infamous Philippe Égalité. He had not only a good military

record for his services at Jemappes and elsewhere in the early

Belgian campaigns, but was universally known as a man of ability.

Unfortunately, he had fought on the Republican side in 1792--a thing

hard to forget, and certain to cause suspicion: and his ability was

always displayed for purposes of self-interest, and savoured of

unscrupulousness.

Nevertheless, Orleans had already made overtures to the old Regency

in the spring of 1810, and had been promised by them a command on the

borders of Catalonia. They had failed to keep the pledge, and he now

appeared at Cadiz, and wished to present himself before the Cortes

and plead his cause. He took small profit thereby, for the assembly

regarded him and his relatives as suspicious persons, refused to

give him an audience when he presented himself before its doors, and

politely but firmly insisted that he should return to Sicily in a

few days--an order which he was forced to obey. ‘Whether it was that

he was a Frenchman, though a Bourbon, or whether it was that he had

once been a Republican, though he had ceased to be one, or whether

it was that he was a prince of the royal house, and therefore

distasteful to the newly-assembled Cortes, who were secretly inclined

to democratic views, the majority viewed him with disfavour[637].’ On

October 3 he set sail for Palermo.

[637] See Galiano, quoted by Arteche, ix. 76.

At the end of 1810 we leave the Cortes still indulging in fiery

constitutional debates, still busy in asserting its own supreme

power, and curbing many attempts at self-assertion in the new Regency

which it had created. With the English government it was not on the

best of terms: though it decreed the erection of a statue to George

III as the friend and deliverer of Spain--a monument which (it need

hardly be said) was never erected--it was very slow to seek or

follow the advice of the allied power. It clamoured for subsidies,

but refused the opening of the South American trade--the only return

that could be given for them. Money in hard gold or silver Great

Britain could no longer supply--for the years 1810-11 were those

when the paper-issues of the Bank were our sole currency; cash had

almost disappeared, and could only be procured by offering six pounds

or more in notes for five guineas. But the Spaniards did not want

paper, but gifts or loans in gold or silver. They got no more of

the precious metals--Great Britain had none to spare, and found it

almost impossible even to procure dollars to pay Wellington’s army in

Portugal. All that was given after 1809 was arms and munitions of war.

English observers in the Peninsula were not well pleased with the

first months of the rule of the Cortes. ‘The natural course of

all popular assemblies,’ wrote Wellington to his brother, Henry

Wellesley, now minister at Cadiz, ‘and of the Spanish Cortes among

others, is to adopt democratic principles, and to vest all the

powers of the State in their own body. This assembly must take care

that they do not run in that tempting course, as the wishes of the

nation are decidedly for monarchy. Inclination to any other form of

government would immediately deprive them of the confidence of the

people, and they would become a worse government, and more impotent,

because more numerous, than the old Central Junta.’ A few weeks later

he doubted whether even a Regency under Carlotta of Portugal, with

all its disadvantages, would not be better than mere democracy[638].

[638] Wellington to Henry Wellesley, from Cartaxo, Nov. 21, 1810.

Vaughan, on the spot at Cadiz, gave quite a different view of the

situation, but one equally unfavourable to the Cortes as a governing

power. ‘It is full of priests, who (united with the Catalans) are

for preserving the old routine, and adverse to everything that can

give energy and vigour to the operation of government. Fanaticism

and personal interest direct their opinions.... Be assured that the

Cortes is, as at present constituted, anything but revolutionary or

Jacobinical.... If there is not soon some new spirit infused into it,

it will become an overgrown Junta, meddling with every paltry detail

of police, and neglecting the safety of the country--and the Regency

will be content to reign (very badly) over Cadiz and the Isla[639].’

[639] Charles Vaughan to Charles Stuart, Feb. 27, 1811.

There was much truth in both these verdicts, though Vaughan

underrated the force of self-interest in driving a popular assembly

to claim all power for itself, while Wellington underrated the

dead-weight of clerical conservatism, which was the restraint upon

that tendency. Both were right in asserting that, whatever the Cortes

might be, the mass of the nation had no wish to set out on the path

of Jacobinism. They both perceived the danger that the Cortes might

turn itself into a constitutional debating society, and at the same

time prevent any really efficient executive from being established.

Such was its actual fate. Except that Spain now possessed a

governing authority which, with all its faults, had infinitely more

pretension to claim a legal mandate from the people than any of

its predecessors, the situation was not greatly changed. From the

military point of view, as we shall see in the next volume, the

aspect of the Peninsula was in no degree improved. The same blunders

that had marked the administration of the old Provincial Juntas, of

the Supreme Central Junta, and of the first Regency, continued to

exhibit themselves under the rule of the Cortes.

APPENDICES

I

THE SPANISH FORCES AT THE SIEGE OF GERONA

The original garrison under the command of Alvarez consisted of the

following units. The first column gives the strength on May 6, the

second the number that remained on Dec. 11, 1809, the day of the

surrender.

Regiment of Ultonia (three batts.) 800 250

Regiment of Borbon (three batts.) 1,300 360

Voluntarios de Barcelona, 2nd batt. 1,125 378

1st battalion of the Miqueletes of Vich 600 250

1st & 2nd batts. ” Gerona 1,120 380

Squadron of San Narciso 108 50

Regular Artillery 278 140

Men of the 2nd batt. of the Miqueletes of Gerona

drafted into the artillery 240 100

Sailors drafted into the artillery 130 90

Sappers 22 10

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Total of the original garrison 5,723 2,008

\_Reinforcements received August 17\_:

Miquelete battalion of Cervera 500 320

Draft for the 1st battalion of Vich 300 200

Draft for the 2nd battalion of Gerona 100 50

\_Reinforcements brought in by Garcia Conde on Sept. 1\_:

Regiment of Baza (2 batts.) 1,368 1,074

1st and 2nd Miqueletes of Talarn 900 390

2nd Miqueletes of Vich 300 100

Picked companies of Santa Fé, Iliberia,

Voluntarios de Tarragona 180 106

----- -----

3,648 2,240

Add 1,100 irregulars of the ‘Crusade.’ Losses unknown.

Of 9,371 men engaged first and last in the defence, only 4,248

survived.

II

THE FRENCH FORCES AT THE SIEGE OF GERONA

The following were the losses of the three divisions which conducted

the siege of Gerona during its first three months, down to Sept. 15,

1809:--

(1) REILLE’S Original Siege Corps:

\_Strength on\_ \_Strength on\_

Division Verdier: \_June 1.\_ \_Sept. 15.\_ \_Losses.\_

French Brigade: \_Rank & file.\_ \_Rank & file.\_

32nd Léger (one batt.) 846 489 357

16th Line (one batt.) 730 324 406

2nd ” ” 490 205 285

56th ” ” 684 449 235

German Brigade:

Würzburg (two batts.) 1,519 649 870

1st of Berg (two batts.) 1,310 705 605

2nd ” ” 1,313 604 709

Division Morio:

2nd Westphalians (two batts.) 1,009 340 669

3rd ” ” ” 1,446 491 955

4th ” ” ” 832 534 298

4th Light Infantry (one batt.) 300 269 31

Division Lecchi:

Velites of the Italian Guard 461 50 411

5th Italian Line (two batts.) 820 280 540

1st Neapolitans (two batts.) 765 172 593

2nd ” ” ” 1,119 322 797

------ ----- -----

13,644 5,883 7,761

Of these 6,666 were returned as sick or wounded, and 1,495 as dead or

missing. Probably 300 were deserters.

The Artillery counted on the first date (June 1): \_Officers.\_ \_Men.\_

From the 7th corps 11 961

Siege-Train from France 36 1,362

The engineers and sappers were 12 314

The cavalry (28th chasseurs, and five squadrons of

Italian horse) 51 771

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110 3,408

Adding these figures to those of the infantry the total of the Siege

Army was 17,162 men.

(2) The Covering Army, under ST. CYR in person, consisted on June 1

of the following troops:

SOUHAM’S Division:

Brigade Bessières: \_Men.\_

1st Léger (three batts.) 1,965

3rd ” (one batt.) 639

24th Dragoons (three squadrons) 597

Brigade Espert:

42nd Line (three batts.) 2,406

67th ” (one batt.) 644

PINO’S Division:

Brigade Mazzuchelli:

1st Italian Léger (three batts.) 1,359

4th Italian Line ” 1,580

Brigade Fontane:

2nd Italian Léger (three batts.) 1,507

6th Italian Line ” 1,427

7th Italian ” (one batt.) 477

Cavalry Brigade Palombini (Italian Chasseurs

and Dragoons, six squadrons) 912

CHABOT’S Division:

7th Line (two batts.) 1,034

93rd ” (one batt.) 687

3rd Provisional Chasseurs 498

------

Total of the Covering Army 15,732

On Dec. 31 the Siege Army showed 6,343 infantry, 2,390 engineers,

artillery, &c. The Covering Army had still 11,666 men. But two

battalions and some drafts had joined from France, so that the total

loss was more than that indicated by these figures.

III

DEL PARQUE’S ARMY IN THE TAMAMES-ALBA DE TORMES CAMPAIGN, OCT.-NOV.

1809

MORNING STATE OF NOVEMBER 20

\_Officers.\_ \_Men.\_

Vanguard Division, Major-General Martin de la Carrera:

\*Principe (three batts.), \*Saragossa (three batts.),

\*1st of Catalonia, \*2nd of Catalonia, \*Gerona,

\*Barbastro, ‡Escolares de Leon, ‡Vittoria, ‡Monforte

de Lemos, ‡Voluntarios de la Muerte, one battery

field artillery 363 7,050

1st Division, Major-General Francisco Xavier Losada:

†Granaderos Provinciales de Galicia (two batts.),

\*Leon (two batts.), \*1st and 2nd of Aragon,

\*Voluntarios de la Corona (two batts.), ‡Regimento

del General, ‡1st and 2nd of La Union, ‡Betanzos

(two batts.), ‡Orense, ‡Compañía de Guardias

Nacionales, one battery field artillery 351 7,985

2nd Division, Major-General Conde de Belveder:

\*Rey (1st and 2nd batts.), \*Zamora (1st and 2nd

batts.), \*Seville (1st and 2nd batts.), \*Toledo

(1st and 3rd batts.), \*Hibernia (two batts.),

\*Voluntarios de Navarra, ‡Santiago, ‡Lovera (two

batts.), one battery field artillery 344 6,415

3rd Division [Asturians], Major-General Francisco Ballasteros:

\*Navarra (three batts.), \*Princesa (two batts.),

†Oviedo, ‡Covadonga, ‡Villaviciosa, ‡Candas y

Luanco, Castropol, ‡Pravia, ‡Cangas de Tineo,

‡Grado, ‡Infiesto, ‡Lena, one battery field

artillery 368 9,623

5th Division [Leonese], Brigadier-General Marquis de Castrofuerte:

‡Tiradores de Ciudad Rodrigo, ‡2nd of Ciudad Rodrigo,

‡Voluntarios de Fernando VII, †Leon, †Logroño,

†Toro, †Valladolid, one battery field artillery 245 5,912

Head-Quarters’ Guard: Batallón del General 40 897

[N.B.--The 4th Division, Galician troops under Mahy

about 7,000 strong, and the garrison of Ciudad

Rodrigo, 3,817 bayonets, were never brought up to

the front.]

Cavalry Division, the Prince of Anglona:

\*Borbon, \*Sagunto, ‡Granaderos de Llerena 83 1,053

(With only 868 horses.)

\*Reyna, \*Provisional Regiment[640], ‡Cazadores de

Ciudad Rodrigo (incomplete units, lately reformed),

with one horse-artillery battery 46 500

[640] This Provisional regiment received the name of ‘2nd of

Algarve’ in December.

The artillerymen and a few companies of sappers are

included in the divisional totals.

----- ------

Total 1,840 39,435

From this total of 41,275 men there were to be deducted, on Nov. 20,

sick 5,601, absent 1,573, detached (from the 5th Division) 1,279, so

that the total of efficients under arms was 32,822.

\* Old line regiments. † Old militia regiments. ‡ New levies.

IV

FRENCH LOSSES AT TAMAMES, OCT. 18, 1809

The detailed return of the losses of the 6th Corps at Tamames has

not been preserved. Marchand merely states that he lost 1,300 men.

But the subjoined list of losses of officers, taken from Martinien’s

invaluable tables, shows sufficiently well which were the units that

were hard hit:--

1st Division: \_Killed.\_ \_Wounded.\_

Brigade Maucune:

{6th Léger 1 6

{69th Ligne 2 4

Brigade Marcognet:

{39th Ligne 4 12

{76th Ligne 7 15

-- --

14 37

2nd Division:

Brigade Labassée:

{25th Léger 3 8

{27th Ligne - 2

59th Ligne - 3

Cavalry:

15th Dragoons - 2

15th Chasseurs 1 1

État-Major - 2

-- --

4 18

Total 18 killed, 55 wounded.

At the average rate of 21 men hit per officer, which prevailed during

the Peninsular War, this total of 73 officers ought to imply a total

loss of about 1,533 men. But Marchand’s 1,300 is probably correct.

V

THE PARTITION OF THE ARMY OF ESTREMADURA IN SEPTEMBER 1809

[N.B.--‘bon’ is Spanish contraction for \_batallón\_.]

The way in which the old army of Cuesta was divided in September 1809

has never been worked out; nor has the composition of Areizaga’s

army of La Mancha, after it had been joined by the Estremaduran

reinforcements, ever been reconstructed. A search in the Madrid War

Office, in which I was assisted by the kindness of Captain Figueras,

has produced the following two documents:--

(1) A list of Albuquerque’s army without any figures of strength save

the general total, as follows:

Cuerpos que quedaron constituendo el Cuerpo de Ejercito de

Estremadura, de 12,000 hombres. Oct. 1, 1809.

\*Reales Guardias Walonas (4º batallón). [Late in garrison at Badajoz.]

‡Osuna (2 batallones). [Late of Iglesias’s Division.]

‡Velez Malaga (3 batallones). ” ”

‡Voluntarios Extrangeros (1 bon). ” ”

†Provincial de Burgos ” ” ”

‡Tiradores de Merida ” [Late of Zayas’s Division.]

†Provincial de Truxillo ” ” ”

‡2ndo de Antequera ” [Late of Portago’s Division.]

†Provincial de Badajoz ” ” ”

‡Leales de Fernando VII (2 bones). [Late in garrison at Badajoz.]

‡Voluntarios de Plasencia (1 bon) ” ”

‡Voluntarios de Zafra ” ” ”

‡Voluntarios de La Serena ” ” ”

Caballería--Comandante General el Brigadier Baron de Carondelet.

\*Calatrava, \*Villaviciosa, \*Voluntarios de España, ‡Cazadores

Perseguidores de Andalucia, ‡Cazadores de Sevilla.

\*Borbon, ‡Cazadores de Llerena and \*Sagunto have marched for Ciudad

Rodrigo under the Prince of Anglona.

(2) A second document gives, as having marched under Eguia to join

the Army of the Centre in La Mancha, the following corps:

\*Real Marina (1º y 2º batallones). [Late of Bassecourt’s Division.]

\*Africa (3º bon). ” ”

\*Murcia (1º y 2º bones). ” ”

\*Reyna (1º bon). ” ”

\*2ond de Mallorca (1º bon). [Late of Iglesias’s Division.]

\*Cantabria (1º, 2º, 3º bones). [Late of Zayas’s Division.]

\*Badajoz (1º, 2º bones). [Late of Portago’s Division.]

†Provincial de Toledo (1 bon). ” ”

\*Cazadores de Barbastro (1 bon). [Late of the Vanguard Division.]

\*Voluntarios de Valencia (2º bon). ” ”

‡Tiradores de Estremadura (1 bon). ” ”

Provincial de Plasencia

Caballería

\*Reales Carabineros, \*Rey, \*Reyna, \*Infante, \*Pavia, \*Almanza, \*1º y

2º Usares de Estremadura, ‡Cazadores de Madrid, ‡Cazadores de Toledo,

‡Carabineros y Lanceros de Estremadura.

30 piezas de Artillería.

This leaves unaccounted for, of Cuesta’s old army, the following

corps: \*2º de Voluntarios de Cataluña, \*Campo Mayor, ‡Cazadores de

Valencia y Albuquerque, ‡Canarias, †Provincial de Guadix, \*Irlanda

(two batts.), \*Jaen, ‡3º de Sevilla, ‡2º de Voluntarios de Madrid,

‡Voluntarios de la Corona, †Provincial de Sigüenza, Granaderos

Provinciales.

Of these Jaen, Corona, Madrid, and the grenadiers certainly went with

Eguia to La Mancha. Irlanda went to Del Parque at Ciudad Rodrigo, 2º

de Cataluña went to Cadiz to recruit. There are left Campo Mayor,

Canarias, 3º de Sevilla, Provincial de Sigüenza, Provincial de

Guadix, Cazadores de Valencia y Albuquerque. Probably they formed the

division of 6,000 men which the Junta is said to have deducted from

the army of Estremadura for its own protection, and to have withdrawn

to the borders of Andalusia in September. At any rate we find in

November Campo Mayor, Canarias, and Provincial de Guadix serving

again in the army of Albuquerque. But I cannot be sure that some of

the others did not accompany Eguia (like Jaen and Corona), though not

mentioned in the document no. 2.

\* Old regular units. † Old militia units. ‡ New levies.

VI

AREIZAGA’S ARMY IN THE OCAÑA CAMPAIGN

No detailed ‘morning state’ of this army has been preserved, but the

names and gross totals of the divisions are on record in documents at

the Madrid War Office. So far as I can make it out, the organization

of the army must have been nearly as follows:--

INFANTRY DIVISION

Vanguard Division, General José Zayas: \_Officers.\_ \_Men.\_

Voluntarios de Valencia, 2nd of Majorca, Provincial

de Plasencia, Voluntarios de España, Granaderos

Provinciales, Cantabria (seven batts.) 210 5,768

1st Division, General L. Lacy:

Burgos, 1st of España, Provincial de Cordova, 1st of

Loxa, Alcala, 1st of Seville, Provincial de Chinchilla

(nine batts.) 328 7,420

2nd Division, General Gaspar Vigodet:

Corona, Ordenes Militares, 1st of Guadix, Ronda,

Alcazar, Ciudad Real (nine batts.) 288 6,797

3rd Division, General P. Giron:

1st and 2nd Spanish Guards, 2nd of Cordova, Bailen,

Provincial de Jaen, Provincial de Toledo (eight batts.) 200 5,034

4th Division, General Francisco Castejon:

1st of Malaga, 5th of Seville, 2nd of Loxa, Bujalance,

Cazadores de Velez Malaga, Xeres, 3rd of Cordova

(eight batts.) 236 6,151

5th Division, General T. Zerain:

Cazadores de Barbastro, 2nd of España, 2nd of Seville,

2nd of Madrid, Provincial de Granada, 3rd Walloon

Guards (seven batts.) 209 5,677

6th Division, General N. Jacomé:

Badajoz, Provincial de Malaga, Tiradores de Estremadura,

Jaen, Provincial de Ecija (?), 4th of Seville (?),

Alpujarras (?) (nine batts.?) 312 7,325

7th Division, Brigadier-General F. Copons:

Murcia, Real Marina, Africa, Reyna (six batts.) 197 4,927

Troops not included in any division:--Granaderos del

General, Compañía de Buen Orden, Compañías Sueltas -- 778

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1,980 49,877

CAVALRY

Commanded by General Manuel Freire.

1st Division, Brigadier-General Juan Bernuy: }

Rey, Infante, Voluntarios de Madrid, Almanza, Carabineros }

y Lanceros de Estremadura }

2nd Division, Brigadier José Rivas: }

Cazadores de Toledo, Pavia, 1st and 2nd Hussars of Estremadura } 5,766

3rd Division, Brigadier Miguel March: }

Montesa, Reyna, Santiago, Principe, Cordova, Alcantara }

4th Division, Colonel V. Osorio: }

Cazadores de Granada, Granaderos de Fernando VII, Farnesio, }

Lusitania, España }

60 guns with artillerymen, about 1,500

Sappers, &c., no figures given, perhaps 600

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General Total 59,723

The materials from which the above organization has been

reconstructed are: (1) Rolls of Venegas’s army, before it was joined

by Eguia’s reinforcements. (2) Roll of the reinforcements led by

Eguia (printed in Appendix No. V). (3) Gross totals of each division,

without list of their component battalions, preserved in the Madrid

War Office. (4) A morning state of the army taken on Dec. 1: in

this the divisions of Lacy and Zayas are amalgamated, and that of

Jacomé has disappeared, its wrecks having been distributed among the

remaining six divisions. (5) The regimental annals in the Conde de

Clonard’s great history of the Spanish army. Unfortunately this only

serves for the regular regiments, there being no record of the fates

of the militia battalions or the newly-raised volunteer regiments.

I am specially uncertain about the Cavalry and the 6th Division

(Jacomé), which seems to have been composed of those Estremaduran

units which had not been organized as the ‘Vanguard’ and ‘7th

Division.’ But it almost certainly had some Andalusian regiments

added. I mark them with a (?).

VII

THE FRENCH ARMY OF SPAIN ON JAN. 15, 1810

FROM A DOCUMENT IN THE ARCHIVES NATIONAUX AT PARIS

-----------------------++-------------------++---------+---------+---------++---------

||Present under Arms.|| | | ||

|+------------+------+|Detached.| Sick. |Prisoners|| Total.

||Officers.| Men. || | | ||

-----------------------++---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

1st CORPS (MARSHAL || | || | | ||

VICTOR): || | || | | ||

1st DIVISION (Ruffin) || | || | | ||

at Almagro: || | || | | ||

9th Léger, 24th || | || | | ||

Line, 96th Line || | || | | ||

(3 batts. each) || 120 | 4,306 || 96 | 991 | -- || 5,513

|| | || | | ||

2nd DIVISION (Darricau)|| | || | | ||

at Daymiel: || | || | | ||

16th Léger, 8th Line,|| | || | | ||

45th Line, 54th || | || | | ||

Line (2 batts. || | || | | ||

each) || 15 | 5,744 || 287 | 1,893 | 29 || 8,110

|| | || | | ||

3rd DIVISION (Villatte)|| | || | | ||

at Membrilla: || | || | | ||

27th Léger, 63rd || | || | | ||

Line, 94th Line, || | || | | ||

95th Line (3 batts.|| | || | | ||

each) || 21 | 6,124 || 156 | 589 | 3 || 7,087

|| | || | | ||

LIGHT CAVALRY BRIGADE || | || | | ||

(Beaumont) at || | || | | ||

Villanueva de los || | || | | ||

Infantes: || | || | | ||

2nd Hussars, 5th || | || | | ||

Chasseurs || 45 | 778 || 254 | 27 | 23 || 1,127

|| | || | | ||

DIVISION OF DRAGOONS || | || | | ||

(Latour-Maubourg) at || | || | | ||

El Moral: || | || | | ||

1st, 2nd, 4th, 9th, || | || | | ||

14th, 26th Dragoons|| 96 | 2,164 || 633 | 76 | 61 || 3,030

|| | || | | ||

ARTILLERY AND TRAIN || 33 | 1,747 || 252 | 144 | 2 || 2,178

DETACHMENTS on the || | || | | ||

march to join || 4 | 1,019 || -- | -- | -- || 1,023

|| | || | | ||

ÉTAT-MAJOR || 112 | -- || -- | -- | -- || 112

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

Corps Total || 782 | 21,882 || 1,678 | 3,720 | 118 || 28,180

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

2nd CORPS (GENERAL || | || | | ||

HEUDELET, vice || | || | | ||

SOULT): || | || | | ||

|| | || | | ||

1st DIVISION (Merle) at|| | || | | ||

Talavera: || | || | | ||

2nd Léger, 36th Line,|| | || | | ||

4th Léger, 15th || | || | | ||

Line (3 batts. || | || | | ||

each) || 231 | 5,718 || 238 | 660 | -- || 6,847

|| | || | | ||

2nd DIVISION (Heudelet)|| | || | | ||

at Talavera: || | || | | ||

17th Léger, 47th, || | || | | ||

70th, 86th Line (3 || | || | | ||

batts. each), 31st || | || | | ||

Léger (4 batts.) || 290 | 7,035 || 227 | 920 | -- || 8,472

|| | || | | ||

LIGHT CAVALRY DIVISION || | || | | ||

(Soult): || | || | | ||

1st Hussars, 22nd || | || | | ||

Chasseurs, 8th || | || | | ||

Dragoons, Chasseurs|| | || | | ||

Hanovriens || 79 | 787 || 191 | 36 | -- || 1,093

|| | || | | ||

DIVISION OF DRAGOONS || | || | | ||

(Lahoussaye): || | || | | ||

17th, 18th, 19th, || | || | | ||

27th Dragoons || 58 | 1,171 || 242 | 66 | 8 || 1,545

|| | || | | ||

ARTILLERY, TRAIN, AND || | || | | ||

ENGINEERS || 15 | 664 || 71 | 44 | -- || 794

|| | || | | ||

ÉTAT-MAJOR || 79 | -- || -- | -- | -- || 79

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

Corps Total || 752 | 15,375 || 969 | 1,726 | 8 || 18,830

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

|| | || | | ||

3rd CORPS (GENERAL || | || | | ||

SUCHET): || | || | | ||

1st DIVISION (Laval) at|| | || | | ||

Montreal: || | || | | ||

14th and 44th Line, || | || | | ||

2nd of the Vistula || | || | | ||

(2 batts. each) || | || | | ||

[3rd of the Vistula|| | || | | ||

absent and not || | || | | ||

counted] || 119 | 4,171 || 280 | 290 | 488 || 5,348

|| | || | | ||

2nd DIVISION (Musnier) || | || | | ||

at Alcañiz: || | || | | ||

114th, 115th, 121st || | || | | ||

Line (3 batts. || | || | | ||

each), 1st of the || | || | | ||

Vistula (2 batts.) || 203 | 6,970 || 212 | 813 | 267 || 8,465

|| | || | | ||

3rd DIVISION (Habert) || | || | | ||

at Fraga: || | || | | ||

5th Léger, 116th Line|| | || | | ||

(2 batts. each), || | || | | ||

117th Line (3 || | || | | ||

batts.) || 136 | 4,193 || 8 | -- | -- || 4,757

|| | || | | ||

CAVALRY BRIGADE || | || | | ||

(Boussard): || | || | | ||

4th Hussars, 13th || | || | | ||

Cuirassiers || 77 | 1,822 || 229 | 44 | -- || 2,172

|| | || | | ||

ARTILLERY, TRAIN, AND || | || | | ||

ENGINEERS || 28 | 1,179 || -- | 66 | -- || 1,273

|| | || | | ||

GARRISON TROOPS at || | || | | ||

Tudela, Saragossa, || | || | | ||

Jaca, &c., including || | || | | ||

the 3rd of the || | || | | ||

Vistula and 3 batts. || | || | | ||

of Chasseurs des || | || | | ||

Montagnes || 132 | 4,030 || 187 | 186 | -- || 4,535

|| | || | | ||

ÉTAT-MAJOR || 80 | -- || -- | -- | -- || 80

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

Corps Total || 775 | 22,365 || 916 | 1,819 | 755 || 26,630

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

|| | || | | ||

4th CORPS (GENERAL || | || | | ||

SEBASTIANI): || | || | | ||

1st DIVISION: || | || | | ||

58th Line (3 batts.) || 57 | 1,573 || 98 | 550 | 1 || 2,279

[28th, 32nd, 75th || | || | | ||

Line left at || | || | | ||

Madrid] || -- | -- || -- | -- | -- || --

|| | || | | ||

2nd DIVISION (Laval): || | || | | ||

9 German batts. || | || | | ||

(absent at Segovia,|| | || | | ||

on march to Bayonne|| | || | | ||

with the prisoners || | || | | ||

of Ocaña) || -- | -- || -- | -- | -- || --

|| | || | | ||

3rd DIVISION (Werlé) at|| | || | | ||

Ocaña: || | || | | ||

4th, 7th, 9th Poles || | || | | ||

(2 batts. each) || 130 | 4,679 || 112 | 1,177 | 50 || 6,148

|| | || | | ||

LIGHT CAVALRY BRIGADE || | || | | ||

(Perreymond) at || | || | | ||

Ocaña: || | || | | ||

10th and 27th || | || | | ||

Chasseurs, and || | || | | ||

Polish Lancers || 62 | 1,289 || 390 | 89 | 109 || 1,939

|| | || | | ||

DIVISION OF DRAGOONS || | || | | ||

(Milhaud) at Velez: || | || | | ||

5th, 12th, 16th, || | || | | ||

20th, 21st Dragoons|| 104 | 1,617 || 250 | 216 | 128 || 2,315

|| | || | | ||

ARTILLERY, TRAIN, AND || | || | | ||

ENGINEERS || 14 | 555 || 20 | 45 | -- || 634

|| | || | | ||

ÉTAT-MAJOR || 45 | -- || -- | -- | -- || 45

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

Corps Total || 412 | 9,713 || 870 | 2,077 | 288 || 13,360

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

|| | || | | ||

5th CORPS (MARSHAL || | || | | ||

MORTIER): || | || | | ||

1st DIVISION (Girard) || | || | | ||

at El Moral: || | || | | ||

34th, 40th, 64th, || | || | | ||

88th Line (3 batts.|| | || | | ||

each) || 201 | 6,839 || 228 | 1,683 | -- || 8,951

|| | || | | ||

2nd DIVISION (Gazan) at|| | || | | ||

El Moral: || | || | | ||

21st and 28th Léger, || | || | | ||

100th and 103rd || | || | | ||

Line (3 batts. || | || | | ||

each) || 219 | 6,414 || 212 | 1,432 | 10 || 8,287

|| | || | | ||

CAVALRY DIVISION || | || | | ||

(Marisy) at || | || | | ||

Granatuela: || | || | | ||

10th Hussars, 21st || | || | | ||

Chasseurs, 13th and|| | || | | ||

22nd Dragoons || 81 | 1,458 || 391 | 411 | 11 || 2,352

|| | || | | ||

ARTILLERY AND TRAIN || 17 | 741 || 50 | 135 | 3 || 946

|| | || | | ||

PROVISIONAL REGIMENT of|| | || | | ||

2 squadrons each of || | || | | ||

13th and 22nd || | || | | ||

Dragoons, on march to|| | || | | ||

join their corps || 31 | 557 || -- | -- | -- || 588

|| | || | | ||

ÉTAT-MAJOR || 54 | -- || -- | -- | -- || 54

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

Corps Total || 603 | 16,009 || 881 | 3,661 | 24 || 21,178

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

|| | || | | ||

6th CORPS (MARSHAL || | || | | ||

NEY): || | || | | ||

1st DIVISION (Marchand)|| | || | | ||

at Ledesma: || | || | | ||

6th Léger (2 batts.),|| | || | | ||

39th, 69th, 76th || | || | | ||

Line (3 batts. || | || | | ||

each) || 163 | 5,908 || 31 | 943 | 132 || 7,177

|| | || | | ||

2nd DIVISION (Mermet) || | || | | ||

at Alba de Tormes: || | || | | ||

25th Léger (2 || | || | | ||

batts.), 27th and || | || | | ||

59th Line (3 batts.|| | || | | ||

each), 50th Line || | || | | ||

(2 batts.) || 201 | 6,656 || 10 | 714 | 4 || 7,585

|| | || | | ||

3rd DIVISION (Loison) || | || | | ||

on the march: || | || | | ||

26th and 82nd Line || | || | | ||

(4 batts. each), || | || | | ||

66th Line (3 || | || | | ||

batts.), Légion du || | || | | ||

Midi and Légion || | || | | ||

Hanovrienne (2 || | || | | ||

batts. each), 15th || | || | | ||

Léger, 32nd Léger || | || | | ||

(1 batt. each), 2 || | || | | ||

provisional batts. || 302 | 11,948 || 543 | 1,652 | 142 || 14,587

|| | || | | ||

CAVALRY DIVISION || | || | | ||

(Lorges): || | || | | ||

3rd Hussars, 15th || | || | | ||

Chasseurs, 15th, || | || | | ||

25th Dragoons || 108 | 2,314 || 60 | 132 | 2 || 2,616

|| | || | | ||

ARTILLERY, TRAIN, || | || | | ||

ENGINEERS || 24 | 1,120 || 6 | 78 | 2 || 1,230

|| | || | | ||

DRAFTS, on the march || | || | | ||

from Bayonne to || | || | | ||

Salamanca || 156 | 5,636 || 506 | -- | -- || 6,298

|| | || | | ||

ÉTAT-MAJOR || 79 | -- || -- | -- | -- || 79

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

Corps Total || 1,033 | 33,582 || 1,156 | 3,519 | 282 || 39,572

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

|| | || | | ||

7th CORPS (MARSHAL || | || | | ||

AUGEREAU): || | || | | ||

1st DIVISION (Souham) || | || | | ||

at Vich: || | || | | ||

1st Léger and 42nd || | || | | ||

Line (3 batts. || | || | | ||

each), 7th Line (2 || | || | | ||

batts.), 3rd Léger || | || | | ||

and 93rd Line (1 || | || | | ||

batt. each), 24th || | || | | ||

Dragoons, 3rd || | || | | ||

Provisional || | || | | ||

Chasseurs || 169 | 5,213 || 397 | 2,627 | 57 || 8,463

|| | || | | ||

2nd DIVISION (Pino) at || | || | | ||

Massanet: || | || | | ||

Italians: 1st and 2nd|| | || | | ||

Léger, 4th, 5th, || | || | | ||

6th Line (2 batts. || | || | | ||

each), 7th Line (1 || | || | | ||

batt.), and || | || | | ||

Dragoons of || | || | | ||

Napoleon || 238 | 6,346 || 201 | 2,409 | 93 || 9,287

|| | || | | ||

3rd DIVISION (Verdier) || | || | | ||

at Besalu, including || | || | | ||

the remains of || | || | | ||

Morio’s and Lecchi’s || | || | | ||

late divisions: || | || | | ||

French--32nd Léger, || | || | | ||

2nd, 16th, 56th || | || | | ||

Line (1 batt. || | || | | ||

each); || | || | | ||

Neapolitans--1st || | || | | ||

and 2nd Line (2 || | || | | ||

batts. each); || | || | | ||

Westphalians--2nd, || | || | | ||

3rd, and 4th Line || | || | | ||

(2 batts. each), || | || | | ||

1st and 2nd of || | || | | ||

Berg, and Würzburg || | || | | ||

(2 batts. each), || | || | | ||

and Valais, Ducal || | || | | ||

Saxon, and La Tour || | || | | ||

d’Auvergne (1 batt.|| | || | | ||

each), with 2nd || | || | | ||

Neapolitan Light || | || | | ||

Horse || 334 | 6,009 || 486 | 7,190 | 299 || 14,318

|| | || | | ||

4th DIVISION (Duhesme) || | || | | ||

at Barcelona: || | || | | ||

French--7th Line (2 || | || | | ||

batts.), 37th and || | || | | ||

112th Line (1 batt.|| | || | | ||

each), 2nd Swiss (1|| | || | | ||

batt.), Chasseurs || | || | | ||

des Montagnes (1 || | || | | ||

batt.), 5th Italian|| | || | | ||

Line (2 batts.), || | || | | ||

\_Bataillon || | || | | ||

Départemental\_, and|| | || | | ||

3rd Provisional || | || | | ||

Cuirassiers || 240 | 5,971 || 33 | 2,056 | 87 || 8,387

|| | || | | ||

HEAD-QUARTERS GUARD || | || | | ||

(1 batt. French 67th)|| 17 | 527 || 12 | 260 | 4 || 820

|| | || | | ||

ARTILLERY, TRAIN, || | || | | ||

ENGINEERS || 44 | 1,346 || 43 | 708 | 27 || 2,168

|| | || | | ||

DRAFTS marching from || | || | | ||

Perpignan to || | || | | ||

Barcelona || 32 | 1,608 || -- | -- | -- || 1,640

DRAFTS at Perpignan, || | || | | ||

&c. || 127 | 6,125 || -- | -- | -- || 6,252

ÉTAT-MAJOR || 137 | -- || -- | -- | -- || 137

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

Corps Total || 1,338 | 33,145 || 1,172 | 15,250 | 567 || 51,472

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

|| | || | | ||

8th CORPS (GENERAL || | || | | ||

JUNOT): || | || | | ||

|| | || | | ||

1st DIVISION (Clausel) || | || | | ||

at Burgos: || | || | | ||

22nd Line (4 batts.),|| | || | | ||

14th, 19th, 25th, || | || | | ||

28th, 34th, 36th, || | || | | ||

50th, 75th Line (1 || | || | | ||

batt. each) || 241 | 9,105 || 541 | 890 | -- || 10,777

|| | || | | ||

2nd DIVISION (Lagrange)|| | || | | ||

at Burgos: || | || | | ||

65th Line (4 batts.),|| | || | | ||

2nd, 4th, 12th, || | || | | ||

15th Léger, 32nd, || | || | | ||

46th, 58th, 121st, || | || | | ||

122nd Line (1 batt.|| | || | | ||

each) || 195 | 8,688 || 668 | 701 | 91 || 10,343

|| | || | | ||

3rd DIVISION (Solignac)|| | || | | ||

at Burgos: || | || | | ||

15th, 47th, 70th, || | || | | ||

86th Line (2 batts.|| | || | | ||

each), Régiment || | || | | ||

Irlandais, Régiment|| | || | | ||

de Prusse (2 batts.|| | || | | ||

each) || 135 | 6,925 || 573 | 398 | 43 || 8,074

|| | || | | ||

CAVALRY DIVISION (Ste. || | || | | ||

Croix): || | || | | ||

3 provisional || | || | | ||

brigades of 2 || | || | | ||

squadrons each from|| | || | | ||

16 dragoon || | || | | ||

regiments || 255 | 5,193 || 31 | -- | -- || 5,479

|| | || | | ||

ARTILLERY, TRAIN, || | || | | ||

ENGINEERS || 30 | 1,614 || 4 | 62 | -- || 1,710

|| | || | | ||

DETACHMENTS forming || | || | | ||

garrison of Burgos || 12 | 714 || 4 | 132 | 4 || 866

|| | || | | ||

ÉTAT-MAJOR || 88 | -- || -- | -- | -- || 88

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

Corps Total || 956 | 32,239 || 1,821 | 2,183 | 138 || 37,337

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

TOTAL OF THE EIGHT ARMY|| | || | | ||

CORPS || 6,651 | 184,310 || 9,463 | 33,955 | 2,180 || 236,559

-----------------------++---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

TROOPS NOT FORMING PART OF THE EIGHT ARMY CORPS

-----------------------++-------------------++---------+---------+---------++---------

||Present under Arms.|| | | ||

|+------------+------+|Detached.| Sick. |Prisoners|| Total.

||Officers.| Men. || | | ||

-----------------------++---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

(1) DIVISION DESSOLLES || | || | | ||

(Reserve) in march || | || | | ||

for Andalusia: || | || | | ||

12th Léger (4 || | || | | ||

batts.), 43rd, || | || | | ||

51st, 55th Line (3 || | || | | ||

batts. each) || 229 | 8,125 || 1,277 | 960 | 50 || 10,641

|| | || | | ||

(2) GOVERNMENT OF || | || | | ||

NAVARRE (Dufour): || | || | | ||

Garrison entirely || | || | | ||

composed of drafts, || | || | | ||

dépôts, and || | || | | ||

provisional units || 177 | 8,335 || 192 | 972 | -- || 9,676

|| | || | | ||

(3) GOVERNMENT OF || | || | | ||

BISCAY (Valentin): || | || | | ||

One batt. each of || | || | | ||

118th, 119th, 120th|| | || | | ||

Line, 3 \_régiments || | || | | ||

de marche\_, and 6 || | || | | ||

‘\_Bataillons || | || | | ||

auxiliaires\_’ || 329 | 14,943 || 2,299 | 1,834 | -- || 19,405

|| | || | | ||

(4) PROVINCES OF || | || | | ||

VALLADOLID AND || | || | | ||

PALENCIA || | || | | ||

(Kellermann): || | || | | ||

Kellermann’s Division|| | || | | ||

of Dragoons, 3rd, || | || | | ||

6th, 10th, 11th || 131 | 3,077 || 165 | 123 | 47 || 3,543

2nd, 3rd, 4th Swiss || | || | | ||

(1 batt. each), || | || | | ||

Garde de Paris || 80 | 1,690 || -- | -- | -- || 1,770

|| | || | | ||

(5) PROVINCE OF || | || | | ||

SEGOVIA: || | || | | ||

Laval’s German || | || | | ||

Division, detached || | || | | ||

from the 4th Corps,|| | || | | ||

Nassau, Hesse, || | || | | ||

Baden, Holland (2 || | || | | ||

batts. each), || | || | | ||

Frankfurt (1 || | || | | ||

batt.), and || | || | | ||

Westphalian || | || | | ||

Chevaux-Légers, || | || | | ||

with French || | || | | ||

detachments || | || | | ||

garrisoning Segovia|| 204 | 4,203 || 1,730 | 3,371 | 231 || 9,739

|| | || | | ||

(6) MADRID AND NEW || | || | | ||

CASTILE: || | || | | ||

1st DIVISION OF THE 4th|| | || | | ||

CORPS: || | || | | ||

28th, 30th, 72nd Line|| | || | | ||

(2 batts. each) || 125 | 4,123 || 90 | 1,710 | 35 || 6,083

|| | || | | ||

CAVALRY BRIGADE: || | || | | ||

26th Chasseurs, 3rd || | || | | ||

Dutch Hussars || 41 | 765 || 208 | 50 | 32 || 1,096

|| | || | | ||

ARTILLERY, ENGINEERS, || | || | | ||

TRAIN || 49 | 1,472 || 83 | 107 | -- || 1,711

|| | || | | ||

PROVISIONAL BATTALIONS || | || | | ||

newly arrived at || | || | | ||

Madrid || 77 | 4,784 || -- | 37 | 91 || 4,989

|| | || | | ||

ÉTAT-MAJOR AT MADRID || 38 | -- || -- | -- | -- || 38

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

Total in Madrid and || | || | | ||

New Castile || 330 | 11,144 || 381 | 1,904 | 158 || 13,917

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

(7) SANTANDER (Bonnet):|| | || | | ||

118th, 119th, 120th, || | || | | ||

122nd Line (3 || | || | | ||

batts. each) || 225 | 6,839 || -- | 646 | 232 || 7,972

|| | || | | ||

(8) IMPERIAL GUARD: || | || | | ||

|| | || | | ||

1st DIVISION YOUNG || | || | | ||

GUARD (Roguet): || | || | | ||

4 Regiments of || | || | | ||

Infantry, 1st || | || | | ||

Provisional || | || | | ||

Regiment of Cavalry|| 190 | 6,424 || 76 | 299 | -- || 6,989

|| | || | | ||

2nd DIVISION YOUNG || | || | | ||

GUARD (Dumoustier): || | || | | ||

4 Regiments of || | || | | ||

Infantry, 2nd || | || | | ||

Provisional || | || | | ||

Regiment of Cavalry|| 227 | 6,945 || 386 | 143 | -- || 7,701

3rd Provisional || | || | | ||

Regiment of Cavalry|| 39 | 674 || -- | -- | -- || 713

|| | || | | ||

ARTILLERY, TRAIN, || | || | | ||

ENGINEERS || 40 | 1,854 || -- | -- | -- || 1,894

|| | || | | ||

ÉTAT-MAJOR || 8 | -- || -- | -- | -- || 8

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

Total Imperial Guard || 504 | 15,897 || 462 | 442 | -- || 17,305

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

(9) TROOPS AT BAYONNE || | || | | ||

or near it and on the|| | || | | ||

march for Spain: || | || | | ||

Neuchâtel (1 batt.), || | || | | ||

Marines (2 batts.), || | || | | ||

20 squadrons of || | || | | ||

Gendarmes, Artillery,|| | || | | ||

Train, Engineers || 357 | 12,939 || 318 | 47 | -- || 13,661

|| | || | | ||

(10) ARRIÈRE-GARDE DE || | || | | ||

L’ARMÉE DE PORTUGAL || | || | | ||

[troops designated || | || | | ||

for service, who have|| | || | | ||

not yet marched], || | || | | ||

afterwards forming || | || | | ||

Drouet’s 9th Corps || 267 | 16,148 || -- | -- | -- || 16,415

|+---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

Grand Total || 9,484 | 287,650 || 16,287 | 44,254 | 2,898 || 360,603

-----------------------++---------+---------++---------+---------+---------++---------

Of whom 324,996 are actually in Spain, and of these 262,051 are

‘Present under arms’ with the colours.

VIII

MUSTER-ROLL OF MASSÉNA’S ARMY OF PORTUGAL

ON SEPT. 15, 1810, JAN. 1, 1811, AND MARCH 15, 1811

From returns in the Archives Nationaux at Paris.

----------------------------++------------------++------------------++------------------

|| On Sept. 15, || On Jan. 1, || On March 15,

|| 1810. || 1811. || 1811.

|| | || | || |

||Officers.| Men. ||Officers.| Men. ||Officers.| Men.

----------------------------++---------+--------++---------+--------++---------+--------

2ND CORPS, General REYNIER. || | || | || |

|| | || | || |

1st Division, General MERLE:|| | || | || |

Brigade Sarrut: || | || | || |

2nd Léger (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd, 4th batts.) || 77 | 2,281 || 52 | 1,670 || 54 | 1,343

36th Ligne (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd, 4th batts.) || 82 | 1,994 || 54 | 1,226 || 73 | 1,163

Brigade Graindorge: || | || | || |

4th Léger (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd, 4th batts.) || 77 | 2,078 || 48 | 1,318 || 61 | 1,142

|+---------+--------++---------+--------++---------+--------

Divisional Total || 236 | 6,353 || 154 | 4,214 || 188 | 3,648

|| | || | || |

2nd Division, General || | || | || |

HEUDELET: || | || | || |

Brigade Foy: || | || | || |

17th Léger (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd batts.) || 57 | 1,341 || 48 | 998 || 34 | 876

70th Ligne (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd, 4th batts.) || 71 | 2,38 || 40 | 1,422 || 41 | 1,231

Brigade Arnaud: || | || | || |

31st Léger (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd, 4th batts.) || 57 | 1,711 || 44 | 1,641 || 54 | 1,620

47th Ligne (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd, 4th batts.) || 76 | 2,387 || 64 | 1,461 || 59 | 1,541

|+---------+--------++---------+--------++---------+---------

Divisional Total || 261 | 7,826 || 196 | 5,522 || 188 | 5,268

|| | || | || |

Cavalry Brigade, General P. || | || | || |

SOULT: || | || | || |

1st Hussars, 22nd || | || | || |

Chasseurs, 8th Dragoons,|| | || | || |

Hanoverian Chasseurs || 106 | 1,291 || 92 | 1,048 || 91 | 808

Artillery, Train, Engineers || 25 | 1,554 || 33 | 1,251 || \*[641] | \*[641]

État-Major || 66 | -- || 65 | -- || 60 | --

|+---------+--------++---------+--------++---------+--------

Grand Total of Corps || 694 | 17,024 || 540 |12,035 || 527 | 9,724

[641] Not stated separately. All the Artillery of the Army of

Portugal is placed under one head in the return of March 15, and

not distributed to the corps.

|| | || | || |

6TH CORPS, Marshal NEY. || | || | || |

|| | || | || |

1st Division, General || | || | || |

MARCHAND: || | || | || |

Brigade Maucune: || | || | || |

6th Léger (1st, 2nd || | || | || |

batts.) || 42 | 1,436 || 29 | 1,008 || 33 | 1,011

69th Ligne (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd batts.) || 56 | 1,661 || 47 | 1,198 || 42 | 1,058

Brigade Marcognet: || | || | || |

39th Ligne (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd batts.) || 58 | 1,628 || 54 | 1,249 || 37 | 1,150

76th Ligne (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd batts.) || 58 | 1,732 || 52 | 1,350 || 39 | 1,247

|+---------+--------++---------+--------++---------+--------

Divisional Total || 214 | 6,457 || 182 | 4,805 || 151 | 4,466

|| | || | || |

2nd Division, General || | || | || |

MERMET: || | || | || |

Brigade Bardet: || | || | || |

25th Léger (1st, 2nd || | || | || |

batts.) || 37 | 1,678 || 39 | 1,363 || 37 | 1,275

27th Ligne (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd batts.) || 59 | 1,827 || 59 | 1,550 || 32 | 1,185

Brigade Labassée: || | || | || |

50th Ligne (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd batts.) || 65 | 2,056 || 54 | 1,551 || 51 | 1,431

59th Ligne (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd batts.) || 60 | 1,834 || 60 | 1,556 || 42 | 1,430

|+---------+--------++---------+--------++---------+--------

Divisional Total || 221 | 7,395 || 212 | 6,040 || 162 | 5,321

|| | || | || |

3rd Division, General || | || | || |

LOISON: || | || | || |

Brigade Simon: || | || | || |

26th Ligne (5th, 6th, || | || | || |

7th batts.) || 64 | 1,561 || 46 | 989 || 47 | 1,077

Légion du Midi || 18 | 546 || 17 | 363 || 15 | 397

Légion Hanovrienne (2 || | || | || |

batts.) || 29 | 1,129 || 19 | 611 || 23 | 698

Brigade Ferey: || | || | || |

32nd Léger (2nd batt.) || 20 | 393 || 14 | 243 || 18 | 262

66th Ligne (4th, 5th, || | || | || |

6th batts.) || 68 | 1,762 || 42 | 1,353 || 44 | 1,316

82nd Ligne (4th and 6th || | || | || |

batts.)[642] || 40 | 1,196 || 25 | 733 || 36 | 801

|+---------+--------++---------+--------++---------+--------

Divisional Total || 239 | 6,587 || 163 | 4,292 || 183 | 4,551

|| | || | || |

Cavalry Brigade, Gen. || | || | || |

LAMOTTE: || | || | || |

3rd Hussars, 15th || | || | || |

Chasseurs || 74 | 1,606 || 48 | 604 || 51 | 839

Artillery, Train, || | || | [643]|| |

Engineers || 28 | 1,403 || 34 | 1,735 || \* | \*

État-Major || 82 | -- || 77 | -- || 70 | --

|+---------+--------++---------+--------++---------+--------

Grand total of Corps || 858 | 23,448 || 716 | 17,476 || 617 | 15,177

[642] The 82nd had detached its 5th battalion, 575 strong, to

form part of the garrison of Almeida.

[643] Some fractions of the general artillery reserve had been

transferred to the corps since Sept. 15, hence the rise in

numbers.

|| | || | || |

8TH CORPS, General JUNOT, || | || | || |

Duc d’Abrantès. || | || | || |

|| | || | || |

1st Division, General || | || | || |

CLAUSEL: || | || | || |

Brigade Ménard: || | || | || |

19th Ligne (4th batt.) || 19 | 634 || 18 | 278 || [644]| 231

25th Ligne (4th batt.) || 16 | 571 || 15 | 253 || [644]| 238

28th Ligne (4th batt.) || 17 | 442 || 19 | 324 || [644]| 250

34th Ligne (4th batt.) || 15 | 624 || 13 | 342 || [644]| 305

Brigade Taupin: || | || | || |

15th Léger (4th batt.) || 21 | 813 || 17 | 485 || 18 | 501

46th Ligne (4th batt.) || 18 | 546 || 15 | 259 || [644]| 202

75th Ligne (4th batt.) || 19 | 532 || 16 | 233 || [644]| 178

Brigade Godard: || | || | || |

22nd Ligne (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd, 4th batts.) || 80 | 2,427 || 72 | 1,648 || 70 | 1,617

|+---------+--------++---------+--------++---------+--------

Divisional Total || 205 | 6,589 || 185 | 3,822 || 88 | 3,522

|| | || | || |

2nd Division, General || | || | || |

SOLIGNAC: || | || | || |

Brigade Gratien: || | || | || |

15th Ligne (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd batts.)[645] || 63 | 1,262 || 58 | 925 || 62 | 906

86th Ligne (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd batts.)[646] || 55 | 1,090 || 54 | 1,006 || 43 | 982

Brigade Thomières: || | || | || |

65th Ligne (1st, 2nd, || | || | || |

3rd, 4th batts.) || 82 | 2,680 || 80 | 1,951 || 65 | 1,555

Régiment Irlandais || 37 | 971 || 23 | 525 || 21 | 462

Régiment de Prusse || 29 | 957 || 22 | 354 || 22 | 435

|+---------+--------++---------+--------++---------+--------

Divisional Total || 266 | 6,960 || 237 | 4,761 || 213 | 4,340

|| | || | || |

Cavalry Division Gen. Ste.|| | || | || |

CROIX: || | || | || |

1st, 2nd, 4th, 9th, || | || | || |

14th, 26th Dragoons, || | || | || |

two squadrons of each || 92 | 1,771 || 86 | 895 || 118 | 1,443

Artillery, Train, || | [646]|| | [647]|| |

Engineers || 17 | 964 || 23 | 1,083 || \* | \*

État-Major || 75 | -- || 69 | -- || 70 | --

|+---------+--------++---------+--------++---------+--------

General Total of Corps || 655 | 16,284 || 600 | 10,561 || 489 | 9,305

[644] By March 15 these six battalions had got so weak that their

cadres had been sent back to France, and the remaining rank and

file were being drafted into the regiments of the 2nd Corps.

[645] These regiments had detached their 4th battalions, 578 and

873 strong respectively, to form the garrison of Ciudad Rodrigo.

[646] Like the 6th Corps, the 8th had received part of the

General Park of the army, and absorbed it.

[647] About 17 officers and 150 men had been drafted into the

garrisons of Almeida and Rodrigo.

|| | || | || |

RESERVE OF CAVALRY, || | || | || |

General MONTBRUN. || | || | || |

Brigade Lorcet: || | || | || |

3rd[648] and 6th || | || | || |

Dragoons || 52 | 1,040 || 51 | 793 || 51 | 733

Brigade Cavrois: || | || | || |

11th Dragoons[649] || 27 | 634 || 28 | 557 || 28 | 551

Brigade Ornano: || | || | || |

15th and 25th Dragoons || 57 | 1,369 || 57 | 1,178 || 58 | 1,014

Horse Artillery || 6 | 294 || 4 | 162 || \* | \*

|+---------+--------++---------+--------++---------+--------

Divisional Total || 142 | 3,337 || 140 | 2,690 || 137 | 2,298

|| | || | || |

Artillery Reserve, Train, || | || | || |

and Engineers not || | || | || |

attached to any || | || | || | [651]

corps[650] || 54 | 2,311 || 42 | 1,546 || 127 | 5,728

Gendarmerie || 6 | 171 || 7 | 190 || 6 | 210

État-Major of the Army and|| | || | || |

officers not attached to|| | || | || |

any corps || 66 | -- || 60 | -- || 62 | --

|+---------+--------++---------+--------++---------+--------

Total of the whole Army || 2,475 | 62,575 || 2,105 | 44,488 || 1,965 | 42,442

----------------------------++---------+--------++---------+--------++---------+--------

[648] The 3rd Dragoons left one squadron, 157 men, at Almeida.

[649] The 10th Dragoons, the other regiments of this brigade, 718

strong, had been left at Ciudad Rodrigo under General Gardanne.

[650] About 300 artillerymen left at Ciudad Rodrigo and Almeida.

[651] This includes not only the original reserve artillery,

park, &c., of the army, but the whole of the artillery of the

three corps, which is not distributed among them in the return of

March 15, 1811.

NOTE.--On Dec. 26 General Gardanne brought up to the front the

4/86th Line originally left at Ciudad Rodrigo, and some drafts,

making in all 1,393 men; these are counted in the figures of Jan. 1,

1811. On Feb. 5 General Foy brought up in a similar fashion 1,862

convalescents and drafts: these are counted in the figures of March

15, 1811.

The losses of the original 65,050 men who entered Portugal were

therefore greater by 3,255 casualties than is shown in the table. The

increase in the number of some regiments (e. g. 47th Line and Ste.

Croix’s Dragoons) between Jan. 1 and March 15 is thus explained. Of

the original 65,000 only 40,000 remained, not 44,000, on March 15,

1811.

There is another ‘return’ in the Archives Nationaux dated Sept. 27

where the figures are slightly lower than those given above, the

total running to 62,538 effectives present instead of 65,050. The

2,500 men deficient represent the sick, stragglers, etc. between

Sept. 15 and Sept. 27. The Second Corps for example returns 896 ‘sick

present’ in addition to its 16,641 ‘effectives present.’ The 62,538

represent therefore the exact fighting-force at Bussaco.

N.B.--No French return gives the 44th Équipage de Marine, which

certainly marched with Masséna on Sept. 15. This naval battalion of

924 men should be added to the total.

IX

BRITISH LOSSES AT THE COMBAT OF THE COA, JULY 24, 1810

\_Killed.\_ \_Wounded.\_ \_Missing.\_ \_Total.\_

Officers. Men. Officers. Men. Officers. Men.

Staff -- -- 1 -- -- -- 1

1/43rd Foot 3 15 10 86 -- 15 129

1/52nd Foot -- 1 2 16 -- 3 22

1/95th Foot 1 11 8 55 1 53 129

1st Portuguese

Caçadores -- 2 -- 7 -- 7 16

3rd ditto -- 2 1 24 -- 2 29

Cavalry--1st

Hussar, K.G.L.,

and 16th Light

Dragoons -- 1 1 3 -- 2 7

---- ---- ---- ---- ---- ---- ----

Total 4 32 23 191 1 82 333

The total in the text, as in Wellington’s dispatch, is wrong because

of the omission of the 16 wounded of the 1/52nd who are inserted from

the regimental returns, Wellington made out the total to be 317.

X

WELLINGTON’S ARMY AT BUSSACO, SEPT. 27, 1810

INFANTRY

1st Division, General SPENCER:

Stopford’s Brigade: \_Officers.\_ \_Men.\_

1st Coldstream Guards 24 790 }

1st Scots Fusilier Guards 26 791 } 1,684

1 company 5/60th Foot 2 51 }

Lord Blantyre’s Brigade:

24th Foot, 2nd batt. 30 338 }

42nd ” 23 391 } 1,516

61st ” 1st ” 36 648 }

1 company 5/60th Foot 3 47 }

Löwe’s Brigade:

1st Line batt. K.G.L. 28 510 }

2nd ” ” 31 453 }

5th ” ” 30 460 } 2,061

7th ” ” 24 429 }

Detachment Light Batts. K.G.L. 6 90 }

Pakenham’s Brigade:

7th Foot, 1st batt. 26 843 } 1,792

79th ” ” 38 885 }

---- ------ ------

Total of 1st Division 327 6,726 7,053

2nd Division, General HILL:

W. Stewart’s Brigade:

3rd Foot, 1st batt. 32 826 }

31st ” 2nd ” 27 384 }

48th ” ” 27 454 } 2,247

66th ” ” 30 433 }

1 company 5/60th Foot 1 33 }

Inglis’s Brigade:

29th Foot 31 430 }

48th ” 1st batt. 32 519 } 1,818

57th ” ” 28 727 }

1 company 5/60th Foot 1 50 }

Catlin Craufurd’s (Wilson’s) Brigade:

28th Foot, 2nd batt. 32 522 }

34th ” ” 36 617 } 1,672

39th ” ” 27 394 }

1 company 5/60 Foot 2 42 }

Hamilton’s Portuguese Division attached to 2nd Division:

Archibald Campbell’s Brigade:

4th Line Regiment (two batts.) -- 1,164 } 2,250[652]

10th ” ” ” -- 1,086 }

Fonseca’s Brigade:

2nd Line Regiment (two batts.) -- 1,317 } 2,690[652]

14th ” ” ” -- 1,373 }

---- ------ ------

Total of 2nd Division 306 10,371 10,677

3rd Division, General PICTON:

Mackinnon’s Brigade:

45th Foot, 1st batt. 35 560 }

74th ” ” 38 456 } 1,808

88th ” ” 40 679 }

Lightburne’s Brigade:

5th Foot, 2nd batt. 31 464 }

83rd ” 2nd ” 43 461 } 1,160

90th ” 5th ” (three companies) 16 145 }

Champlemond’s (vice Harvey’s) Portuguese Brigade:

9th Line Regiment (two batts.) -- 1,234 }

21st ” ” (one batt.) -- 541 } 1,775[652]

---- ------ ------

Total of 3rd Division 203 4,540 4,743

4th Division, Major-General COLE:

Alex. Campbell’s Brigade:

7th Foot, 2nd batt. 29 585 }

11th ” 1st ” 42 920 } 2,109

53rd ” 2nd ” 25 448 }

1 company 5/60th Foot 2 58 }

Kemmis’s Brigade:

27th Foot, 3rd batt. 34 785 }

40th ” 1st ” 48 1,007 } 2,448

97th ” 27 493 }

1 company 5/60th Foot 4 50 }

Collins’s Portuguese Brigade:

11th Line (two batts.) -- 1,438 } 2,843[652]

23rd ” ” -- 1,405 }

---- ------ ------

Total of 4th Division 211 7,189 7,400

5th Division, General LEITH:

Barnes’s Brigade:

1st Foot, 3rd batt. 35 733 }

9th ” 1st ” 30 585 } 1,879

38th ” 2nd ” 29 467 }

Spry’s Portuguese Brigade:

3rd Line (two batts.) -- 1,134 }

15th ” ” -- 905 } 2,619[652]

Thomar Militia (attached) -- 580 }

Lusitanian Legion (three batts.),

Baron Eben[653] -- 1,646 } 2,807[652]

8th Line (two batts.), Colonel Douglas -- 1,161 }

---- ------ ------

Total of 5th Division 94 7,211 7,305

Light Division, Brigadier-General CRAUFURD:

Beckwith’s Brigade:

43rd Foot, 1st batt. 40 804 }

95th ” ” (four companies) 12 384 } 1,896[652]

3rd Portuguese Caçadores -- 656 }

Barclay’s Brigade:

52nd Foot, 1st batt. 29 946 }

95th ” ” (four companies) 12 358 } 1,891[652]

1st Portuguese Caçadores -- 546 }

---- ------ ------

Total of Light Division 93 3,694 3,787

Independent Brigades of Portuguese Infantry:

1st Brigade, Brig.-Gen. D. Pack:

1st Line Regiment (two batts.) -- 1,089 }

16th ” ” ” -- 1,130 } 2,769

4th batt. Caçadores -- 550 }

5th Brigade, Brig.-Gen. A. Campbell:

6th Line Regiment (two batts.) -- 1,317 }

18th ” ” ” -- 1,386 } 3,249

6th batt. Caçadores -- 546 }

6th Brigade, Brig.-Gen. Coleman:

7th Line Regiment (two batts.) -- 815 }

19th ” ” ” -- 1,124 } 2,345

2nd batt. Caçadores -- 406 }

------

Total of Independent Portuguese Brigades 8,363

[652] In the Portuguese regiments the officers are counted in

with the men.

[653] Leith in his report (Wellington, \_Supplementary

Dispatches\_, vi. 636) gives the above brigading. The Portuguese

official list of troops present (given by Soriano da Luz, iii)

puts Eben as commanding an imperfect brigade, consisting of the

8th Line only, while the Lusitanian legion is given as a separate

force under Lieut.-Col. Grant.

CAVALRY

4th Dragoons (two squadrons) 15 195

ARTILLERY

{ Horse 18 314

British { Field 37 663

K.G.L. Field 19 299

Portuguese --[654] 880[655]

---- ------ ------

Total Artillery 74 2,156 2,230

[654] In the Portuguese regiments the officers are counted in with

the men.

[655] This figure includes two batteries not present, but detached

with Lecor’s division beyond the Mondego. The totals can not be

distinguished.

ENGINEERS 24 19 43

WAGGON TRAIN 25 397 422

STAFF CORPS 1 40 41

GENERAL TOTAL

\_British.\_ \_Portuguese.\_ \_Total.\_

Infantry 24,777 24,549 49,326

Cavalry 210 -- 210

Artillery 1,350 880 2,230

Engineers 43 -- 43

Waggon Train 422 -- 422

Staff Corps 41 -- 41

------ ------ ------

Total present at Bussaco 26,843 25,429 52,272

N.B.--It may be convenient to give here the list of the units of

Wellington’s field army which were \_not\_ present at the battle of

Bussaco; these were:--

BRITISH CAVALRY:

De Grey’s Brigade: \_Officers.\_ \_Men.\_

3rd Dragoon Guards 18 392 } 620

4th Dragoons (two squadrons) 14 196 }

(Near Mealhada.)

Slade’s Brigade:

1st Dragoons 20 513 } 967

14th Light Dragoons 17 417 }

Anson’s Brigade:

16th Light Dragoons 23 440 } 902

1st Hussars, K.G.L. 19 420 }

(Both near Mealhada.)

Fane’s Brigade:

13th Light Dragoons 29 401 430

PORTUGUESE CAVALRY (under Fane):

1st Regiment -- 422 }

4th ” -- 451 } 1,450

7th ” -- 223 }

10th ” -- 354 }

(All beyond the Alva in the direction of Chamusca, &c.)

LECOR’S Portuguese Division:

Bradford’s Brigade:

12th Line Regiment (two batts.) -- 1,277 }

13th ” ” ” -- 1,078 } 2,811

5th batt. Caçadores -- 456 }

Militia Brigade:

Three regiments (Idanha, Castello Branco,

Covilhão) -- ?2,000 2,000

------

4,811

(At and about Ponte de Murcella, and behind the Alva.)

In garrison at Lisbon, 88th Foot, 2nd batt. }

In march for Lisbon, 58th ” ” } 68 1,086

At Raiva, 1 comp. K.G.L. }

Sick -- 6,565

‘On command’ -- 2,220

Of the remaining Portuguese regiments Nos. 5 and 17 were at Elvas,

No. 20 at Cadiz, No. 22 at Abrantes, No. 24 had been taken prisoner

at Almeida. These are not part of the field army.

The total of the fractions of the field army not present at Bussaco

was 9,180.

XI

MASSÉNA’S ORDERS FOR THE BATTLE OF BUSSACO

\_Moura\_, 26 7bre 1810.

Demain le 27 7bre l’armée attaquera les hauteurs en avant de Moura

occupées par l’armée ennemie.

Le 2nd Corps attaquera la droite de l’armée ennemie: il tentera à cet

effet de couper la ligne, en gravissant un des points de la montagne

le plus accessible. Il y arrivera par une ou deux colonnes, en se

faisant précéder par des tirailleurs. Une fois arrivé sur le sommet

du point qu’il aura décidé d’attaquer, il se formera en colonne

serrée, et descendra par la crête de la montagne sur le chemin de

Coimbre. Le point où il devra s’arrêter est le Couvent de \_Bussaco\_.

Il aura soin de se former une réserve, pour se soutenir au besoin.

Son artillerie sera disposée de manière à pouvoir contrebattre celle

de l’ennemi, et à lui servir de point d’appui.

Le 6me Corps attaquera par les deux chemins qui conduisent sur la

route de Coimbre; une de ses divisions formera sa réserve, et son

artillerie sera placée par différentes positions, pour pouvoir le

soutenir au besoin. M. le Maréchal Ney disposera ses deux colonnes

d’attaque de manière à donner quand le Général Reynier sera maître

des hauteurs, et qu’il marchera sur le Couvent de \_Bussaco\_. Ce sera

à M. le Maréchal Ney à presser son attaque s’il voit que l’ennemi

s’avance pour faire un mouvement sur le Général Reynier, ou pour

faire un mouvement de retraite (\_sic\_)[656]. M. le Maréchal est trop

pénétré de l’à-propos de son mouvement pour qu’on le lui détermine.

Il se fera précéder par ses tirailleurs. Arrivé sur la crête de la

montagne il se mettra en bataille pour l’ensemble des mouvements

ultérieurs de l’armée.

[656] A strange phrase. How could the enemy ‘advance in order to

make movement of retreat’?

Le 8me Corps se rassemblera en arrière de Moura à 6 heures du matin.

Il y prendra position, et fera des dispositions pour soutenir au

besoin les corps d’armée attaquants, et pour marcher lui-même à

l’ennemi.

Son artillerie sera placée de manière à arrêter l’ennemi s’il faisait

un mouvement en avant.

La réserve de Cavalerie sera placée sur la route de Coimbre, en

arrière et au centre du 8me Corps.

Le Maréchal Prince d’Essling: Signé MASSÉNA.

Copie conforme: Le Gén. de division B. N. Fririon.

Pour son Excellence M. le duc d’Abrantès.

XII

LOSSES AT BUSSACO

ENGLISH AND PORTUGUESE

--------------------------++-----------++-----------++-----------++------

|| \_Killed.\_ || \_Wounded.\_|| \_Missing.\_||

||Offi-| ||Offi-| ||Offi-| ||

||cers.| Men.||cers.| Men.||cers.| Men.||Total.

--------------------------++-----+-----++-----+-----++-----+-----++------

1st DIVISION (Spencer): || | || | || | ||

Stopford’s Brigade: || | || | || | ||

1st Coldstream Guards || -- | -- || -- | -- || -- | -- || --

1/3rd Guards || -- | -- || -- | 2 || -- | -- || 2

Blantyre’s Brigade: || | || | || | ||

24th Foot, 2nd batt. || -- | -- || 1 | -- || -- | -- || 1

42nd ” ” || -- | -- || -- | 6 || -- | -- || 6

61st ” 1st ” || -- | -- || -- | -- || -- | -- || --

Löwe’s Brigade: || | || | || | ||

1st Line batt. K.G.L. || -- | 3 || 1 | 5 || -- | -- || 9

2nd ” ” ” || -- | 1 || 1 | 6 || -- | 1 || 9

5th ” ” ” || -- | 1 || -- | 9 || -- | -- || 10

7th ” ” ” || -- | -- || -- | 9 || -- | -- || 9

Light Companies || -- | 1 || -- | 11 || -- | 3 || 15

Pakenham’s Brigade: || | || | || | ||

7th Foot, 1st batt. || -- | 1 || 1 | 22 || -- | -- || 24

79th ” ” || -- | 7 || 1 | 41 || 1 | 6 || 56

|+-----+-----++-----+-----++-----+-----++------

Divisional Loss || -- | 14 || 5 | 111 || 1 | 10 || 141

2nd DIVISION (Hill). No Losses whatever.

3rd DIVISION (Picton): || | || | || | ||

Mackinnon’s Brigade: || | || | || | ||

45th Foot, 1st batt. || 3 | 22 || 4 | 109 || -- | 12 || 150

74th ” || 1 | 6 || 1 | 21 || -- | 2 || 31

88th ” ” || 1 | 30 || 8 | 94 || -- | 1 || 134

Lightburne’s Brigade: || | || | || | ||

5th Foot, 2nd batt. || -- | 1 || -- | 7 || -- | -- || 8

60th ” 5th ” || -- | 3 || 5 | 16 || -- | 5 || 29[657]

83rd ” 2nd ” || -- | -- || 1 | 4 || -- | -- || 5

Champlemond’s Portuguese|| | || | || | ||

Brigade: || | || | || | ||

9th Line (two batts.) || -- | 5 || 1 | 23 || -- | -- || 29

21st ” (one batt.) || 2 | 13 || 5 | 67 || -- | -- || 87

|+-----+-----++-----+-----++-----+-----++------

Divisional Loss || 7 | 80 || 25 | 341 || -- | 20 || 473

4th DIVISION (Cole). No Losses whatever.

5th DIVISION (Leith): || | || | || | ||

Barnes’s Brigade: || | || | || | ||

1st Foot, 3rd batt. || -- | -- || -- | -- || -- | -- || --

9th ” 1st ” || -- | 5 || 1 | 18 || -- | -- || 24

38th ” 2nd ” || -- | 5 || 1 | 17 || -- | -- || 23

[657] The greater part of the losses of this battalion were

in the companies attached to other brigades, but the total is

inserted here.

Spry’s Portuguese Brigade:

3rd and 15th Line. No losses whatever.

Lusitanian Legion. No losses whatever.

Portuguese 8th Line: || | || | || | ||

two batts. || 1 | 29 || 3 | 102 || -- | 9 || 144

|+-----+-----++-----+-----++-----+-----++------

Divisional Loss || 1 | 39 || 5 | 137 || -- | 9 || 191

|| | || | || | ||

LIGHT DIVISION || | || | || | ||

(Craufurd): || | || | || | ||

43rd Foot, 1st batt. || -- | -- || -- | 8 || -- | -- || 8

52nd ” ” || -- | 3 || 3 | 10 || -- | -- || 16

95th ” ” || -- | 9 || -- | 32 || -- | -- || 41

1st Caçadores || -- | 2 || -- | 20 || -- | 1 || 23

3rd ” || -- | 10 || 3 | 76 || -- | -- || 89

|+-----+-----++-----+-----++-----+-----++------

Divisional Loss || -- | 24 || 6 | 146 || -- | 1 || 177

|| | || | || | ||

Pack’s Portuguese || | || | || | ||

Brigade: || | || | || | ||

1st Line (two batts.) || 1 | 4 || 2 | 32 || -- | -- || 39

16th ” ” || 1 | 2 || 2 | 26 || -- | 2 || 33

4th Caçadores || 1 | 9 || 4 | 52 || -- | -- || 66

Coleman’s Portuguese || | || | || | ||

Brigade: || | || | || | ||

7th Line (two batts.) || -- | -- || -- | 3 || -- | -- || 3

19th ” ” || -- | 8 || 1 | 28 || -- | -- || 37

2nd Caçadores || -- | 6 || -- | 30 || -- | 7 || 43

A. Campbell’s Portuguese|| | || | || | ||

Brigade: || | || | || | ||

6th Line (two batts.) || -- | -- || -- | -- || -- | -- || --

18th ” ” || -- | -- || -- | -- || -- | -- || --

6th Caçadores || -- | 1 || 1 | 20 || -- | 1 || 23

|+-----+-----++-----+-----++-----+-----++------

Total || 3 | 30 || 10 | 191 || -- | 10 || 244

|| | || | || | ||

ARTILLERY: || | || | || | ||

British || -- | 1 || -- | 7 || -- | -- || 8

K.G.L. || -- | -- || -- | 3 || -- | -- || 3

Portuguese || -- | 1 || -- | 8 || -- | -- || 9

|+-----+-----++-----+-----++-----+-----++--------

Total || -- | 2 || -- | 18 || -- | -- || 20

|| | || | || | ||

GENERAL STAFF || -- | -- || 6 | -- || -- | -- || 6

|+-----+-----++-----+-----++-----+-----++------

Grand Total || 11 | 189 || 57 | 944 || 1 | 50 || 1252

of whom British || 5 | 99 || 34 | 457 || 1 | 30 || 626[658]

” Portuguese || 6 | 90 || 23 | 487 || -- | 20 || 626[658]

[658] An extraordinary coincidence in the total losses of the two

nations!

XIII

FRENCH LOSSES AT BUSSACO

-----------------------++----------------++----------------++-------

|| Killed || ||

|| or prisoners. || Wounded. || Total.

||Officers.| Men. ||Officers.| Men. ||

-----------------------++---------+------++---------+------++-------

2ND CORPS. || | || | ||

|| | || | ||

MERLE’S Division || | || | ||

Sarrut’s Brigade: || | || | ||

2nd Léger || 2 | 81 || 16 | 209 || 308

36th Ligne || 6 | 178 || 22 | 277 || 483

Graindorge’s Brigade:|| | || | ||

4th Léger || 11 | 118 || 9 | 110 || 248

Artillery || -- | -- || -- | 2 || 2

|+---------+------++---------+------++-------

Divisional Total || 19 | 377 || 47 | 598 || 1,041

|| | || | ||

HEUDELET’S Division: || | || | ||

Foy’s Brigade: || | || | ||

17th Léger || 2 | 60 || 20 | 271 || 353

70th Ligne || 6 | 54 || 11 | 246 || 317

Arnaud’s Brigade: || | || | ||

31st Léger || 3 | 67 || 7 | 219 || 296

47th Ligne || -- | -- || 3 | 3 || 6

Artillery || -- | -- || -- | 6 || 6

|+---------+------++---------+------++-------

Divisional Total || 11 | 181 || 41 | 745 || 978

|| | || | ||

Corps Troops: || | || | ||

Engineers || -- | 1 || -- | 2 || 3

Train || -- | 1 || -- | -- || 1

|+---------+------++---------+------++-------

Grand Total || 30 | 560 || 88 |1,345 || 2,023

-----------------------++---------+------++---------+------++-------

[Signed: BARBOT, Saldere, Oct. 1.]

This return from the \_Archives du Ministère de la Guerre\_ omits

the État-Major, which had one officer killed and four wounded, and

the Cavalry, which, though in reserve, had some slight losses, for

Martinien’s \_Liste des Officiers\_ shows that the 8th Dragoons and

the 1st Hussars had each one officer wounded, and that Pierre Soult,

the general commanding the brigade, was also hit; probably ten or a

dozen casualties among the men are implied. But the casualties must

have been very few in the mounted arm. Fririon, Masséna’s chief of

the Staff, says that the prisoners of the second corps came to 15

officers and 349 rank and file, many of them wounded. If so, the

killed must have amounted to 15 officers and 211 men.

-----------------------++----------------++----------------++-------

|| Killed || ||

|| or prisoners. || Wounded. || Total.

||Officers.| Men. ||Officers.| Men. ||

-----------------------++---------+------++---------+------++-------

|| | || | ||

6TH CORPS. || | || | ||

|| | || | ||

MARCHAND’S Division: || | || | ||

Maucune’s Brigade: || | || | ||

6th Léger || 2 | 70 || 12 | 281 || 365

69th Ligne || 2 | 44 || 18 | 416 || 480

Marcognet’s Brigade: || | || | ||

39th Ligne || -- | 19 || 3 | 213 || 235

76th Ligne || -- | 7 || 3 | 83 || 93

|+---------+------++---------+------++-------

Divisional Total || 4 | 140 || 36 | 993 || 1,173

|| | || | ||

MERMET’S Division: || | || | ||

Bardet’s Brigade: || | || | ||

25th Léger || -- | 3 || -- | 20 || 23

27th Ligne || -- | -- || 1 | -- || 1

Labassée’s Brigade: || | || | ||

(50th, 59th) || | || | ||

no losses || -- | -- || -- | -- || --

|+---------+------++---------+------++-------

Divisional Total || -- | 3 || 1 | 20 || 24

|| | || | ||

LOISON’S Division: || | || | ||

Simon’s Brigade: || | || | ||

26th Ligne || 6 | 37 || 15 | 225 || 283

Légion du Midi || 1 | 32 || 5 | 273 || 311

Légion Hanovrienne || 4 | 26 || 5 | 182 || 217

Ferey’s Brigade: || | || | ||

32nd Léger || 2 | 13 || 3 | 95 || 113

66th Ligne || 5 | 15 || 15 | 123 || 158

82nd Ligne || 3 | 18 || 4 | 145 || 170

|+---------+------++---------+------++-------

Divisional Total || 21 | 141 || 47 |1,043 || 1,252

|| | || | ||

ÉTAT-MAJOR: || -- | -- || 7 | -- || 7

|+---------+------++---------+------++-------

Grand Total || 25 | 284 || 91 |2,056 || 2,456

-----------------------++---------+------++---------+------++-------

No return from the Artillery, part of which was engaged beside Moura,

and must have had a few casualties, like that of the 2nd Corps.

8TH CORPS. Junot’s corps having been in reserve, we should not have

expected to find any casualties, but Martinien’s lists show a few

officers--five in all--hit, in the 28th and 86th Ligne, besides

an aide-de-camp of Clausel wounded. This must mean that the corps

caught a few stray shells when it was brought up to cover the retreat

of Ney’s routed divisions. It would be a minimum to estimate the

losses at sixty. Three of Masséna’s \_adjoints de l’État-Major\_, and

an officer from the Grand Park, are also mentioned as wounded in

Martinien’s lists.

The total of the French losses therefore must have been quite 4,600

killed, wounded, and missing. The return accounts for no prisoners

from the 6th Corps. But General Simon was certainly captured, and he

is not likely to have been the \_sole\_ prisoner.

XIV

WELLINGTON’S ARMY WITHIN THE LINES OF TORRES VEDRAS. MORNING STATE OF

NOV. 1, 1810

I. BRITISH TROOPS (effective, without sick or detached)

\_Officers.\_ \_Men.\_ \_Total.\_

CAVALRY DIVISION (STAPLETON COTTON):

De Grey’s Brigade: 3rd Dragoon Guards and

4th Dragoons 51 753 804

Slade’s Brigade: 1st Dragoons and 14th Light

Dragoons 40 858 898

Anson’s Brigade: 16th Light Dragoons and

1st Hussars K.G.L. 39 769 808

Unbrigaded: 13th Light Dragoons 23 300 323

---- ------ ------

Total Cavalry 153 2,680 2,833

---- ------ ------

INFANTRY

1st DIVISION (SPENCER):

Stopford’s Brigade: 1st Coldstream Guards,

1st Scots Fusilier Guards, and one company

5/60th Foot 61 1,624 1,685

Cameron’s Brigade: 2/24th, 2/42nd, 1/79th Foot,

and one company 5/60th 101 1,438 1,539

Erskine’s Brigade: 1/50th, 1/71st, 1/92nd Foot,

and one company 5/60th Foot 108 1,935 2,043

Löwe’s Brigade: 1st, 2nd, 5th, 7th Line

battalion K.G.L., and a light company K.G.L. 120 1,561 1,681

---- ------ ------

Divisional Total 390 6,558 6,948

---- ------ ------

2nd DIVISION (HILL):

Colborne’s Brigade: 1/3rd, 2/31st, 2/48th,

2/66th Foot, and one company 5/60th 138 1,967 2,105

Houghton’s Brigade: 29th, 1/48th, 1/57th, and

one company 5/60th Foot 97 1,560 1,657

Lumley’s Brigade: 2/28th, 2/34th, 2/39th, and

one company 5/60th Foot 94 1,395 1,489

---- ------ ------

Divisional Total 329 4,922 5,251

---- ------ ------

3rd DIVISION (PICTON):

Mackinnon’s Brigade: 1/45th, 1/74th,

1/88th Foot 117 1,564 1,681

Colville’s Brigade: 2/5th, 2/83rd, 94th,

and three companies 5/60th Foot 122 1,533 1,655

---- ------ ------

Divisional Total 239 3,097 3,336

---- ------ ------

4th DIVISION (COLE):

Kemmis’s Brigade: 2/27th, 1/40th, 97th,

and one company of 5/60th Foot 118 2,454 2,572

Pakenham’s Brigade: 1/7th, 1/61st Foot, and

Brunswick-Oels Jägers 125 2,095 2,220

---- ------ ------

Divisional Total 243 4,549 4,792

---- ------ ------

5th DIVISION (LEITH):

Hay’s Brigade: 3/1st, 1/9th, 2/38th Foot 89 1,958 2,047

Dunlop’s Brigade: 2/30th, 2/44th Foot 56 1,126 1,182

---- ------ ------

Divisional Total 145 3,084 3,229

---- ------ ------

6th DIVISION (ALEX. CAMPBELL):

Only one Brigade; 2/7th, 1/11th, 2/53rd Foot,

and one company 5/60th Foot 101 1,847 1,948

---- ------ ------

Divisional Total 101 1,847 1,948

---- ------ ------

LIGHT DIVISION (CRAUFURD):

Beckwith’s Brigade: 1/43rd, and companies

of the 1st and 2nd 95th 56 1,427 1,483

2nd Brigade: 1/52nd and companies of 1/95th 52 1,230 1,282

---- ------ ------

Divisional Total 108 2,657 2,765

---- ------ ------

INFANTRY UNATTACHED TO ANY DIVISION:

2/58th, 2/88th Foot, and one company K.G.L. 64 874 938

------ ------ ------

General Total of Infantry 1,619 27,588 29,207

------ ------ ------

BRITISH ARTILLERY (Horse) 18 304 322

” ” (Foot) 48 797 845

K.G.L. ARTILLERY 19 328 347

-- ------ ------

Total Artillery 85 1,429 1,514

-- ------ ------

ENGINEERS 24 19 43

TRAIN 24 398 422

STAFF CORPS 3 37 40

TOTAL EFFECTIVE STRENGTH OF THE BRITISH TROOPS

ON NOV. 1, 1810:

CAVALRY 153 2,680 2,833

INFANTRY 1,619 27,588 29,207

ARTILLERY 85 1,429 1,514

OTHER CORPS 51 454 505

------ ------ ------

Grand Total 1,908 32,151 34,059

------ ------ ------

The army had at the same time 9,213 men in hospital, and 2,628 men

detached, who are not counted in the above total.

N.B.--Wellington, as it will be noted on page 451, says that he had

only 29,000 British sabres and bayonets ready to take the offensive

at this date. This appears to be an under-estimate; but it must be

remembered that he (according to his custom) only counts rank and

file, omitting officers. Moreover, the two battalions not brigaded,

2/58th and 2/88th, forming the garrison of the Lisbon forts, the

gunners (about 200) in the forts, and the Train (as non-combatant)

are also omitted in his calculation, so that 29,000 is not far out.

II. PORTUGUESE TROOPS (effective, without sick or detached)

FROM A RETURN OF OCT. 29, 1810

\_Officers

& Men

INFANTRY OF THE LINE: Present.\_

1st Brigade (Pack): 1st and 16th Line, 4th Caçadores 2,267

2nd Brigade[659] (Fonseca): 2nd and 14th Line 2,414

3rd Brigade[660] (Spry): 3rd and 15th Line 2,163

4th Brigade[659] (Arch. Campbell): 4th and 10th Line 2,407

5th Brigade (A. Campbell): 6th and 18th Line and 6th Caçadores 2,442

6th Brigade (Coleman): 7th and 19th Line, and 2nd Caçadores 2,196

7th Brigade[661] (Baron Eben): 8th Line, 1st and 2nd Lusitanian

Legion 2,083

8th Brigade[662] (Sutton, vice Champlemond): 9th and 21st Line 1,961

9th Brigade[663] (Collins, vice Harvey): 11th and 23rd Line 2,535

1st and 3rd Caçadores, attached to Light Division 964

12th Line[664], attached to Lecor’s Militia Division 1,213

------

Total Regular Infantry 22,645

------

REGULAR CAVALRY (FANE’S DIVISION):

1st, 4th, 7th, 10th Regiments 1,193

REGULAR ARTILLERY (9 batteries) 701

------

Total Regulars of all Arms 24,539

[659] These two brigades, forming Hamilton’s division, were

always acting with Hill’s British Division.

[660] Forming part of Leith’s 5th Division.

[661] Forming part of Alex. Campbell’s 6th Division.

[662] Forming part of Picton’s 3rd Division.

[663] Forming part of Cole’s 4th Division.

[664] This regiment, with the 13th Line, formed Bradford’s

brigade of Lecor’s Portuguese division. But the 13th was absent,

in garrison at Abrantes.

N.B.--The Portuguese regulars had, over and above these 24,539

officers and men present with the colours, 3,011 men sick and

detached.

MILITIA AND EMBODIED ORDENANÇA:

(1) Lecor’s Division (Alhandra Forts): Regiments of Santarem,

Idanha, Castello Branco, Covilhão, and Feira. [12th Line,

counted above, was also attached][665] 2,616

(2) At Bucellas Forts: Regiments of Lisbon (Termo), Thomar,

Torres Vedras 1,907

(3) In the Forts facing Sobral: Atiradores Nacionaes (embodied

Ordenança), 2 batts. 761

(4) In Torres Vedras Forts; Regiments of Lisbon (E.), Lisbon

(W.), Setubal, Alcaçer do Sul 2,231

(5) At Mafra Forts: Regiment of Vizeu 691

Militia Artillery [composed of cadres from the regular artillery

filled with Volunteers from the Militia and embodied

Ordenança] 2,886

------

Total Militia, &c. 11,092

------

[665] The 5th Caçadores, which had formed part of Bradford’s

brigade and Lecor’s division, was in October and November outside

the lines, on the south side of the Tagus, observing Santarem,

and under the orders of the Cavalry-General Fane.

The Militia and embodied Ordenança had, over and above these

11,092 officers and men present with the colours, 1,267 sick and

detached.

DÉPÔT TROOPS:

The dépôts of the Line and Militia contained, on Oct. 29, 6,470

more or less trained recruits, who had not yet joined their

corps, but all did so before Dec. 1, and 530 sick. I have on

page 434 reckoned the amount of these available on Oct. 15 at

3,000 men. Besides these 6,470 men there was at Peniche, outside

the lines and in Masséna’s rear, a general dépôt of recruits,

containing several thousand men who were not yet trained. Of

these no account, of course, is taken here.

III. SPANISH TROOPS WITHIN THE LINES

VANGUARD DIVISION OF THE ARMY OF ESTREMADURA (LA CARRERA):

Principe (2 batts.), 1st and 2nd of Catalonia (1 batt. each),

Vittoria (1 batt.)--about 2,500

[N.B.-One battalion of Principe, and Volunteers of Gerona,

belonging to this division, remained behind at Badajoz.]

2nd DIVISION (CHARLES O’DONNELL):

Zamora (2 batts.), Rey (2 batts.), Toledo (2 batts.), Hibernia

(2 batts.), Princesa (2 batts.), 2nd of Seville (1 batt.)--about 5,500

[N.B.-Fernando VII, Voluntarios de Navarra, and Tiradores

de Castilla, belonging to this division, remained behind in

Estremadura, at Badajoz and elsewhere.]

------

Total 8,000

------

These numbers are probably a little overstated; on Feb. 1 the whole

Vanguard, including the battalions left behind, had only 2,687

effectives, and the whole 2nd Division, including the four battalions

left in Estremadura, only 5,108. It is probable that the wastage of

the Spanish troops when inside the Lines was not large, and that on

Nov. 1 the whole of La Romana’s sixteen battalions did not make 7,000

men.

TOTAL OF REGULAR TROOPS IN THE LINES

BRITISH 34,059

PORTUGUESE 24,539

SPANISH 8,000

------

Total 66,598

------

Add Portuguese Militia and embodied Ordenança, 11,092 strong, and the

total of organized troops in the Lines makes 77,690.

XV

THE BRITISH AND PORTUGUESE ARTILLERY IN THE CAMPAIGN OF 1810

To match the list of the Artillery units in Wellington’s army which

the late Colonel F. A. Whinyates was so good as to compile for me

for the year 1809, and which forms Appendix XI of my second volume,

I have compiled, with the invaluable aid of Major John H. Leslie,

R.A., who is responsible for all the British section, the following

appendix to cover the year 1810.

ROYAL HORSE ARTILLERY.

Two troops served in the Bussaco campaign, viz.:--

A Troop, Captain H. D. Ross, which had arrived in Portugal in

July 1809. [Present-designation, ‘A Battery,’ R.H.A.]

I Troop, Captain R. Bull, which had arrived in August 1809.

[Present designation, ‘I Battery,’ R.H.A.]

There was also present in Lisbon the skeleton of D Troop, Captain G.

Lefebvre. [Present designation, ‘V Battery,’ R.H.A.] But this unit

had suffered from perils of the sea: a transport carrying part of its

officers and men had been driven ashore on Ireland; and the portion

which arrived in March 1810, being incomplete and almost horseless,

was not sent to the front. It lent some men to the other two R.H.A.

batteries: the rest were employed in the Lisbon Forts.

ROYAL FOOT ARTILLERY[666].

[666] The companies of the battalions R.A. were not numbered in

1810, but only designated by their captains’ names. The numbers

here given, for purposes of easier identification, are those

given to these companies when numeration was introduced about

1822.

Two batteries served in the Bussaco campaign, viz.:--

6th Company, 7th battalion, Captain G. Thompson, which had

arrived in March 1809. [Present designation, 18th Battery, R.F.A.]

7th Company, 8th battalion, Captain R. Lawson, which had arrived

in September 1808. [Present designation, 87th Battery, R.F.A.]

There were also present in the Peninsula, but not in the Bussaco

campaign:--

1st Company, 4th battalion, Captain J. Hawker [now 72nd Company,

R.G.A.].

10th Company, 8th battalion, Captain P. Meadows [an extinct unit].

Both of which arrived at Lisbon in October 1810, and waited in the

Torres Vedras Lines for the retiring army, having come too late for

the field operations. Also

1st Company, 8th battalion, Bt.-Major A. Bredin [now 27th

Battery, R.F.A.].

2nd Company, 1st battalion, 2nd Captain H. Baynes [now 2nd

Battery, R.F.A.].

10th Company, 5th battalion, Captain F. Glubb [now 48th Company,

R.G.A.].

All of which had arrived in 1808-9. But Baynes’s battery had not

taken the field since Talavera, and Bredin’s and Glubb’s [both

incomplete] had not gone to the front in 1809 or in 1810. They had

all lain within the Lines since the winter of 1809-10.

In addition there were five batteries with Graham’s force at Cadiz.

8th Company, 5th battalion, Captain H. Owen [now 60th Company,

R.G.A.].

6th Company, 9th battalion, Captain P. J. Hughes [an extinct

unit].

6th Company, 10th battalion, Captain W. Roberts [now 63rd

Company, R.G.A.].

4th Company, 10th battalion, Captain R. H. Birch[667] [now 21st

Company, R.G.A.].

[667] Captain Birch commanded this company from June 1810 to July

1812, vice Captain Alex. Dickson, employed with the Portuguese

army.

5th Company, 10th battalion, Captain W. H. Shenley [now 11th Company,

R.G.A.].

KING’S GERMAN LEGION ARTILLERY.

2nd Company, Captain C. von Rettberg [arrived August 1808].

4th Company, Captain A. Cleeves [arrived August 1808].

Both present at Bussaco. In the 1809 campaign they had been commanded

respectively by Captains A. Tieling and H. L. Heise.

PORTUGUESE ARTILLERY.

The Portuguese Artillery force consisted of four regiments of about

1,200 men each, from which batteries were formed from time to time

for field service, or garrison service indifferently.

In the Bussaco campaign there took part the following units, which

were present at the battle:--

1st Regiment, two batteries under Major Alex. Dickson, both of

6-pounders, viz. those of Captain Pedro de Rozierres and Captain João

da Cunha Preto.

2nd Regiment, two batteries under Major V. von Arentschildt, viz.

those of Captain João Porfirio da Silva and Captain Jacinto P. M.

Freire, both of 3-pounders.

4th Regiment, one battery commanded by Captain Antonio de Sousa

Passos (6-pounders).

There were also at the front, but not engaged at Bussaco, two more

batteries, which were with Lecor’s division behind the Alva, on the

Ponte Murcella position--viz. one of 9-pounders, captainless till

Oct. 1, when it came under the command of Captain Wilhelm Braun, and

one of 3-pounders. The former joined Dickson’s division on Sept. 28;

the latter joined Arentschildt’s division.

Two more field batteries joined the army at the Lines after its

retreat: that of Captain Francisco Cypriano Pinto (6-pounders) was

allotted to Dickson’s division; the other (no captain, 9-pounders)

joined Arentschildt’s command.

The rest of the Artillery at Lisbon was utilized as

garrison-artillery for the Lines, receiving into its ranks an

immense proportion of half-trained volunteers from the Militia and

Ordenança, so that the whole can hardly be considered as forming

part of the regular army. I have reckoned it into the militia force

in the preceding table. The districts served by this artillery, the

commanders of the districts, and the number of effective men in each

were on Nov. 15, 1810:--

Militia-

Regulars. volunteers. Total.

Alhandra Forts--Major João C. Pinto 258 182 440

Bucellas Forts--Colonel Romão de Arriada 218 847 1,065

Monte Agraça Forts--Major J. J. da Cruz 150 300 450

Torres Vedras Forts--Captain F. J. V. Barreiros 150 248 398

Mafra Forts--Major Caetano P. Xavier 233 305 538

------ ------ ------

1,009 1,882 2,891

Adding these to the 701 men of the nine field batteries we get 3,592

in all, of whom 1,710 were regulars.

The officer in command of the whole Portuguese artillery was Marechal

de Campo J. A. da Roza. Colonel Romão de Arriada commanded the 1st

Regiment.

The 4th Regiment of the Portuguese artillery, that of the Oporto

district, furnished only one battery (that of Captain Passos) to

the army of Wellington, the rest of it being either serving with

Silveira’s army in the north, or with Trant, or doing garrison duty

at Oporto. This regiment had also contributed to the lost garrison of

Almeida.

The 3rd Regiment supplied no men to the field army or the garrison

of the Torres Vedras Lines, being absorbed in garrisoning Abrantes,

Elvas, Campo Mayor, and the other places on the frontier south of the

Tagus.

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