Sect. II. *Of Ambuſcades from the Army.*

A general who loses a battle, says Vigetius, may attri­bute his ill luck to fortune, although theſe kind of events are generally the effects of art and skill ; but he who ſuffers himſelf to be ſurpriſed, and who falls into the snares laid for him by the enemy, has no excuse to make, becauſe, by his vigilance, and the goodneſs of his ſpies, he might have avoided them.

A design ſhould never be formed for an attack upon marches, detachments, convoys, forages, or upon one or many quarters, without knowing the ways which are to be passed, and the places where ambuſcades may be formed ; whether to avoid, or whether to conceal troops in them, in order to facilitate a retreat, or to draw the enemy into it. A general who receives information from his ſpies that ſome enterpriſes are intended upon ſome bodies detached from the army, upon one of his convoys, on a forage, or upon his quarters, ought alſo, on his side, to form ambuscades in the ways leading to it. The number of troops in ambuſcade ought to be regulated by that of the detach­ment intended to be ſurpriſed ; it ſhould be ſufficiently strong to attack the enemy on all sides, that is, in head, flank, and rear. The troops who ſet out to form an ambuſcade ſhould always march by night, unleſs it be in a country ſo covered that the enemy cannot perceive them.

A general, according to Santa Cruz, ſhould endeavour to form as many ambuſcades as poſſible ; ſo that if the enemy ſhould not fall into one, he may not eſcape the others : they ought to be diſpoſed after ſuch a manner, that one can neither attack nor be attacked without being heard, ſustained, and assisted by the others; this junction is a stratagem which the enemy could not expect, and which will assure the victory. If, from the fewneſs of the troops, or the fatigues of the campaign, it is impossible to form many, there ſhould at least be one ſufficiently strong to re­fill the enemy it would attack : but still it is not requiſite that it ſhould be as numerous as the enemy, becauſe troops in ambuſcade, who charge a detachment that is unprovided en all sides, ought, by this ſurpriſe, to have a particular advantage, and conſequently ſupply the place of number ; which will certainly be the case, particularly if the enemy falls into the ambuſcade during the night, and that care hath been alſo taken to place a great number of drums and trum­pets, that when the troops of ambush charge, they may ſerve to increaſe the numbers in appearance, by the terror which noiſe always raises in the night-time.

In order to deceive the enemy who is in detachment, small bodies ſhould be ſent out towards him, with orders to retire to the troops in ambuſcade as ſoon as they meet him.

Ambuſcades ſhould always have ſome object Before they are undertaken, it ſhould be known whether the enemy is in the field ; if he intends either to attack or moleſt the quarters ; whether it is proper to wait for him or to ſeek him : without theſe precautions the troops will be fatigued, and no end answered.

Ambuſcades may be compoſed of infantry, huſſars, or dragoons ; but it is the situation of the country that muſt determine which. Theſe troops may be mixed together or ſent ſeparately ; but that must be according to the design intended to be executed, or according to the nature of the troops employed by the enemy in his detachments.

If the design is to attack a convoy, all theſe troops are necessary, becauſe the escort of it will undoubtedly consist of infantry, cavalry, or dragoons, and alſo ſome huſſars to clear the march ; if a green forage, infantry is very necessary, but it ſhould always be left in the rear to ſecure the retreat : cavalry, with huſſars or dragoons, is ſufficient to attack a forage, to beat the eſcort of it, or at least to pre­vent the foraging being executed. If a dry forage is to be attacked, it muſt be done with infantry, becauſe, as it can only be performed in the villages, it is certain they will be occupied by infantry, and that there will be a chain of ca­valry in the front, which will be protected by it : if a de­tachment, it is according to the nature of the country through which it marches ; if an open country, horse, huſ­ſars, or dragoons, muſt be employed : but in a woody or mountainous country, infantry must be made uſe of. After all that can be ſaid, it is impossible to lay down fixed rules for the kind of troops which ſhould be employed : there are ſome woody countries where huſſars and dragoons can act with eaſe, and be of great ſervice : there are mountains where they can act ſecurely, becauſe very fine plains, di­vided by woods, are to be found in the bodies of them, where they can place themselves in ambuſcade ; but care muſt be taken to ſecure their retreat. There are, on the other hand, plains ſo divided by hollows and canals, that infantry only are capable of acting ; therefore it is the ge­neral’s busineſs to diſcover from which kind of troops, in either country, he may expect the greatest advantage.

There is no country but preſents ſome place proper for forming ambuſcades ; hollows from which it is eaſy to ſally, the least height, woods, hedges, ruins, vineyards, ſometimes corn-fields, marshes covered with reeds, all preſent expe­dients to a general who knows how to take advantage of them : he must only be careful to place the ambuſcades after ſuch a manner that they ſhall not be diſcovered by the ene­my’s parties ; and that they are not themſelves diſcovered by the inattention of any of the ſoldiers, by noiſe, or by other accidents.

If the ambuſcade consists of huſſars or dragoons, the horses must not be together ; their neighings may prove very prejudicial. Even a peaſant, attracted by the barking of a dog or the neighing of a horſe, may go into a wood, diſcover an ambuſcade, and, often induced by the hope of a reward, will go and give the enemy information of the whole. Every perſon passing near an ambuſcade ſhould be stopped, and that without noiſe ; the peaants ſhould be tied to trees, and guarded by ſentries. If the ambuſcade is formed in an hollow way, behind an high ground, or in any places whatever, the general muſt cauſe every body that is taken to be tied together, and well guarded.

The troops in ambuſcade must fall on all parties of the enemy that paſs near them, unleſs when the design is to carry off a convoy or to attack a large detachment. It ſhould in that case continue silent, and let them paſs : but if theſe parties, by making a strict examination, diſcover the ambu­ſcade, as there can no longer remain any hope of attacking the convoy or detachment, it ſhould fall upon and endeavour to ſurround them, and, if poſſible, take them priſoners ; and if the troops in ambuſcade are ſo lucky as not to let any of the enemy eſcape, the ambuſcade may remain in its first situation, but always pursue its first object, becauſe here will be no reaſon to apprehend the enemy’s having received in­telligence of it.

The troops in ambuſcade ſhould attack theſe parties ſword in hand, and not with their fire-arms, and, if poſſible, prevent them from using theirs. From this manner of at­tacking, there will reſult two considerable advantages. The first is, that a briſk and unexpected attack astoniſhes, and scarcely gives them time to think of their defence. The second is, that, by firing, it is to be feared, that if there are any other parties farther off they will hear it, and send and give notice. In that case, the ambuſcade must change situ-