

to evade Wellington's onfall. He even turned suddenly on his pursuers, recovering and carrying off a dismounted howitzer by a gallant rush which he himself led. Ney was determined, though in retreat, to maintain a temper of haughty courage in his men.

Wellington's pursuit was so close and eager, that Massena, though he summoned Coimbra, found it impossible to cross the Mondego, and so swung round to Casal Nova, moving up the rugged valley of the Mondego to Guarda. At Casal Nova on the 14th, the fiercest fight of the retreat took place.

A heavy fog shrouded the landscape. The sound of rumbling wheels, the tread of marching battalions, came constantly through the damp air, but the positions of the French were quite hidden. Erskine, who was in charge of the Light Brigade, was a soldier of more fire than discretion. He came up to his pickets, swore with energy, and in spite of the evidence of the men's senses, "there was not a Frenchman in their front," and with great rashness pushed the 52nd forward in column through the fog, the Rifles following. The regiment vanished in the eddying mist; a fierce rattle of musketry presently broke out; suddenly, like some vast aerial curtain, the fog lifted, and then the 52nd found itself thrust into the middle of Ney's entire corps. The regiment, to quote William Napier, "re-

sembled nothing so much as a red pimple on the face of the country, which was black with the French masses."

The 52nd fought gallantly, but it was a duel betwixt a regiment and an army. Wellington came up, and three divisions had to be pushed forward to save the 52nd from being destroyed. Once in this desperate combat the 52nd failed to follow its officers. Napier left four companies of the 52nd in a good position, and took two companies down a deep ravine, in whose gloomy depths he had just heard the shouting charge of the left wing of his regiment. He found himself with his two companies in front of a huge mass of the enemy. He halted for a moment under cover of a wall, and realised that to attack was his single chance. With Captain Dobbs by his side, he called on his men to follow, leaped the wall, and ran with a shout at the enemy. Only two men of the 52nd, however, followed, and here were four men charging an army. Napier tried again to bring up his men, and once more failed. This, he adds, was the bitterest moment of his life. The men, as a matter of fact, were blown from climbing down and up the ravine with their heavy packs; they could hardly lift a foot; and those two particular companies, Napier adds, had been without their captains for some time. Napier himself presently fell, badly wounded, with a musket-bullet lodged near his spine.

At the village of Foy d'Aronce, again, on March 15, Wellington caught Ney in a false position. He had repeated, on a small scale, Craufurd's blunder at the Coa, keeping two divisions on the British side of the Deuca, with only a single bridge by which to retreat. It was rapidly growing dark; thick rain was falling. But Wellington was a captain in whose presence it was singularly dangerous for an opponent to blunder. A glance showed him Ney's fault. Picton was hurled on the French left; the British horse-artillery galloping up, smote its front, and Ney's battalions broke. Some were flung into the river, others effected a bloody retreat across the bridge, but they lost 500 men and an eagle.

On March 16 Wellington halted. He had out-marched his supplies; his men were worn-out with fatigue. But in the game of strategy he had won. Massena had been able neither to move towards Sault, nor to cross the Mondego to reach unexhausted country and leap on Oporto. On the 16th the pursuit was renewed, and Massena fell back to Guarda, and thence to Sabugal. Here he made a last and obstinate stand. To retreat farther was to be pushed across the frontiers of Portugal. While his battalions were still encamped on Portuguese soil, he at least seemed to threaten Lisbon, and a decent mask was put over the despairing visage of defeat; but to re-enter Spain was to make his failure confessed and open. His position at Sabugal was

strong, and Massena had every motive for making a desperate stand. His reputation as a captain was at stake. To be driven in defeat across the Spanish frontier would be a shock to the whole French power in Spain.

Wellington, however, was in a happy mood of generalship. At daybreak the two fighting divisions of the British army—the third and the Light Divisions—with Slade's cavalry, were to ford the Coa; the fifth division and the guns were to carry the bridge of Sabugal, and Regnier's corps, which formed Massena's left wing, would thus be pierced and crushed before Massena's centre could come to its support.

But war has strange chances and mischances. The morning was thick with fog, and Erskine's impatience well-nigh ruined Wellington's combination. The 43rd and a wing of the 95th under Beckwith were launched at the French without support and at the wrong point. Beckwith, in fact, with a single regiment and four companies of Rifles, was assailing an entire French corps with its artillery and cavalry. A breeze blew the fog aside, and at the same moment Beckwith saw his danger and Regnier his opportunity. A heavy French column with guns was sent forward to crush Beckwith's tiny force. The 43rd and 95th, however, were troops who took a great deal of "crushing." The 43rd held the crest of the hill, and resolutely charged and broke the French column as it came up in attack, while the

Rifles tormented the flank of the attacking column with their fire. Again, and yet again, the French column came gallantly on, and was as often driven back. In one of their counter-charges the 43rd actually captured a French howitzer, and round the captured piece a bloody combat raged, the French being as vehement to recover it as the British were stern to hold it.

The 52nd, drawn by the tumult of the fight, came up to the aid of the 43rd. Regnier put his whole reserve—6000 infantry with cavalry and artillery—in motion to crush the two unconquerable British regiments; but by this time Picton's division was coming into the fight, the fifth division had carried the bridge at Sabugal, and Regnier, to escape so formidable a combination, fell hastily back. The fight had raged only an hour, but round the dismounted howitzer lay more than 300 of the slain, while the French wounded or captured exceeded 1200. "This," wrote Wellington, "was one of the most glorious actions British troops ever engaged in." "We have given the French," he added, "a handsome dressing, and I think they will not say again that we are not a manœuvring army. We may not manœuvre so beautifully as they do; but I do not desire better sport than to meet one of their columns *en masse* with our lines. The poor second corps received a terrible beating from the 43rd and 52nd on the 3rd."

On April 4th, Massena was in full retreat; on the 5th, he crossed the frontier into Spain, and fell back through Ciudad Rodrigo to Salamanca, and Wellington stood on the Portuguese frontier, visible to Europe as one of the great soldiers of the age. He had saved Portugal! He had arrested and rolled back the most formidable invasion that country had ever known. He had driven the most famous of French marshals, commanding an army of French veterans, in ruin and defeat back into Spain. The mere arithmetic of Massena's losses is amazing. Nearly 40,000 Frenchmen had perished or had been taken prisoners in the six months which elapsed betwixt September 16, 1810, when Massena, in all the pride of apparently irresistible strength, had entered Portugal, and April 5, 1811, when, with broken fortunes and wrecked fame, he re-crossed the Spanish frontier. And in discipline and character, as well as in health and numbers, the French suffered to an extent which arithmetic can hardly express.

A French pen may describe the aspect Massena's army wore when it re-crossed the Portuguese frontier. "They marched in disorderly crowds," says Thiers, "loaded with plunder, mingled with long files of wounded borne by asses, with artillery and baggage waggons drawn by oxen, for the greater part of the horses had died from want of nourishment. Hardly did there remain horses enough to manœuvre the guns in the presence of the enemy, and the cavalry

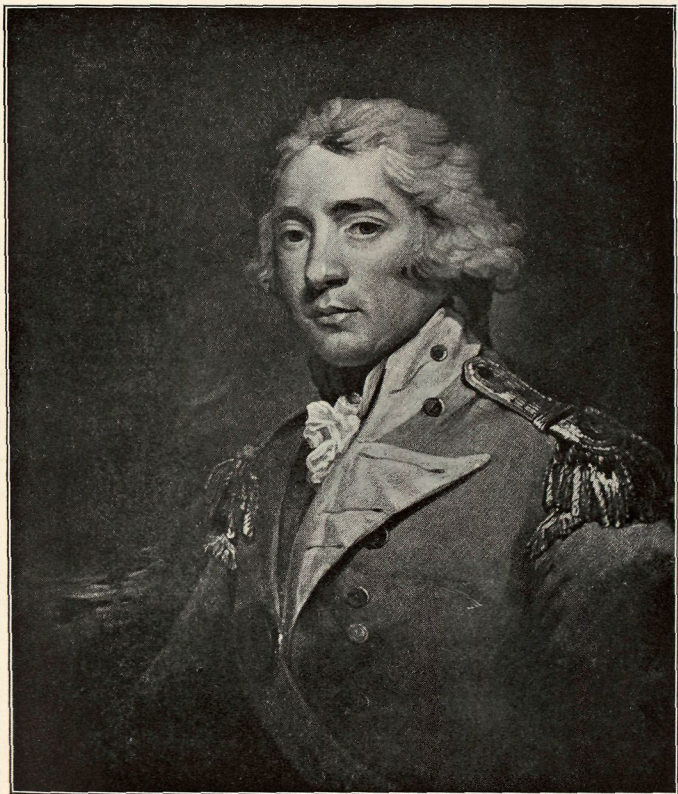
were in such a state of exhaustion that the riders could not venture to give their steeds the rein for a charge. The soldiers, blackened by the sun, thin, covered with rags, without shoes, but still bold and audacious in language, did not support their distress with the resignation which sometimes dignifies misfortune. They vented their ill-humour on all the world for so many sufferings undergone for no purpose; they broke out against their immediate superiors, the generals-in-chief, the Emperor himself."

CHAPTER XIX

BAROSSA AND FUENTES

MEANWHILE, on March 6, the day after Massena commenced his retreat from Santarem, and five days before Soult captured Badajos, a great blow had been struck at the French arms in front of Cadiz, a blow which recalled Soult abruptly to the south, and helped still further to defeat Napoleon's plans for the conquest of Portugal.

Victor, with 20,000 men, held Cadiz blockaded, and Graham, who commanded the English contingent in Cadiz, as soon as he knew of Soult's march northward framed a bold scheme for driving Victor from his lines. Napier describes Graham as "a daring old man and of ready temper for battle." He was a soldier by natural genius rather than by training. A Scotch laird, with Scottish shrewdness in his brain and the martial temper of a fighting clan in his blood, Graham had outlived his youth when, driven by domestic grief, he sought consolation in a soldier's life. In 1794, when he was nearly fifty years of age, he raised a regiment of Scottish volunteers, afterwards the famous



THOMAS GRAHAM, LORD LYNEDOCH

From a mezzotint after the painting by J. HOPFNER, R.A.



90th. He served in Egypt as colonel of that regiment, was aide-de-camp to Moore at Corunna, commanded a brigade at Walcheren, and was in 1810-11 in command of the British garrison at Cadiz. Graham's face reveals his character—strong, shrewd, manly; not the face of a diplomatist or of a statesman, perhaps, but the face of a man capable of standing unshaken in disaster, and from whose look and bearing in the hour of danger weaker men would catch courage.

Graham's plan was to sail from Cadiz, land at Algeiras, march inland, and fling himself on Victor's rear. La Pena, the Spanish Captain-General, with 7000 Spaniards, was in command; Graham had 4000 British troops. It was a perilous, not to say rash, attempt. A mixed force of less than 12,000 men, of whom 7000 were Spaniards, and under a Spanish general, were to attack 20,000 French troops under a famous French marshal. There was no element of surprise, moreover, in the expedition. Victor knew exactly his enemy's plans.

The expedition, with some difficulty, landed at Algeiras, and La Pena illustrated all the characteristics of Spanish generalship in the operations which followed. He scorned counsel; he took no precautions. He rambled on, as though engaged in a picnic, ran his army into an almost hopeless position, and then allowed his British allies to do all the fighting.

On March 5 Victor found La Pena marching across

his front from Barossa, a coastal ridge, rugged and low, to the parallel ridge of Bermega, some five miles distant. Victor had in hand three divisions commanded by Laval, Ruffin, and Villatte, making a force of 9000 good troops with fourteen guns. He thrust Ruffin's division in column past Graham's rear, and seized the Barossa height, while Laval moved to strike at Graham's flank. La Pena meanwhile marched off into space with great diligence, some companies of Walloon guards and some guerilla cavalry alone wheeling round as the roar of the guns broke out behind them, and coming up to aid Graham. Graham thus found himself suddenly assailed by a French army double his own in numbers; his Spanish allies were hurrying off beyond the horizon; one French column was in possession of his baggage, and another about to smite him on the flank.

Graham's rear-guard consisted of the flank companies of the 9th and 82nd, under Major Brown. Graham sent him the single message, "Fight;" then, with instant decision, he wheeled his columns round, sent one of his divisions under General Dilkes to storm the Barossa ridge, and launched the other, under Wheatley, against Laval. Duncan's guns, attached to Wheatley's brigade, opened a rapid fire on Laval's columns, whilst Barnard took his riflemen out at speed and skirmished fiercely with the enemy. The contest with Laval was determined by a rough,

vehemently sustained charge of the 87th and three companies of the Coldstreams. It was a charge which for daring almost rivalled that of the Fusiliers at Albuera, and Laval's massive battalions were simply wrecked by it.

Brown, meanwhile, obeying Graham's orders literally, was standing in the path of Ruffin's whole force, fighting indomitably with half his men down. Dilkes' brigade came up at the double. The hurrying regiments saw before them Brown's gallant companies dwindled to a handful, yet fighting desperately against a whole French division. The English regiments, roused to passion at the sight, did not pause to fall into line, but stormed up the ridge, and were met by the French with a courage as high as their own. Ruffin himself was slain; his second in command fell mortally wounded. By the mere strength of their attack, and the swift and thundering volleys, which clothed their front with a spray of flame, the British broke the French columns and drove them from the ridge with the loss of three guns.

The fight lasted only an hour and a half; for suddenness and for fury it is not easily paralleled. But on the part of the British it represents a very gallant achievement. Deserted by their allies, they yet overthrew a force more than double their own in number, with the loss to themselves of 1200 killed and wounded. Every fourth man in the British ranks, that is, was struck down. The French killed and

wounded amounted to 2300, two of their generals were slain, they lost six guns and an eagle, and 500 prisoners. The victory was due mainly to Graham's instant resolve to attack, a resolution so wise and so sudden that, says Napier, it may well be described as "an inspiration." But even Graham's generalship would have been in vain had it not been for the stern valour and warlike energy of his incomparable troops.

La Pena watched the battle as a remote and disinterested spectator; but when the victory was won, he appeared on the scene to claim the glory of the fight, and to accuse Graham of disobedience to his orders! La Pena, it may be added—again in the characteristic Spanish fashion—refused to assist the British by either supplying food for the living or helping to bury the dead. Graham, in a mood of dour Scotch fury, marched his men off the battlefield, and refused further co-operation with this remarkable ally. In a sense Barossa was a barren victory. Victor remained in possession of his lines in front of Cadiz; but the shock of Graham's feat brought Soult back into Andalusia, and so helped to make impossible any combination with Massena. The Spanish Cortes conferred on Graham a grandeeship of Spain, with the title of "Duke of the Cerro de la Cabeza del Puerco." That title in Spanish is sonorous and imposing. Translated into English it simply means "Duke of the Hill of the Pig's Head"—the local

name of Barossa. Graham, however, had lost his regard for all things Spanish, and declined a title so curious.

The campaign for the rest of the year eddies round the great frontier fortresses of Ciudad Rodrigo, Almeida, and Badajos. Wellington was resolute to capture these, the French generals were keen to hold them. If strongly held, Badajos would stand as a rocky bar betwixt two great French armies of the north and south, and make any concert betwixt them impossible. Almeida and Ciudad Rodrigo stood in the path of any invasion of Portugal from the north.

Massena guarded Almeida. Soult had charge of the defence of Badajos. Wellington was now blockading Almeida; twice he attempted to besiege Badajos, but each time the attempt drew upon him some overwhelming combination of French armies, and the two great battles of 1811, Fuentes d'Onore and Albuera, were part of the price the British troops had to pay for the explosion which threw Almeida into the hands of Massena, and the treachery of the Spaniard who sold Badajos to Soult.

Wellington on April 21 put Beresford, with 20,000 infantry, 2000 cavalry, and eighteen guns, in charge of the operations for the capture of Badajos. As a preliminary he had to relieve Campo Mayor, then besieged by Mortier. Campo Mayor, as a matter of fact, had surrendered on March 21, and Beresford only reached the place four days after its fall, on

March 25. It was promptly recaptured, the fighting round the place being made noteworthy by a memorable charge of the 13th Dragoons under Colonel Head. A French convoy, with battering train, had just moved out of Campo Mayor on its way to Badajos, under the guard of a strong cavalry force; and the 13th, with some Portuguese squadrons under Otway, were launched at the convoy. The French horsemen gallantly turned on them. The squadrons met at full gallop with loose reins and raised swords, and neither side flinched. The English, riding more compactly, broke through the French, wheeled, and once more rode through them. The French finally gave way and scattered, and the 13th, with the rapture of battle in their blood, galloped on, cut down the riders of the battering train, and rode up to the very bridge of Badajos. The French lost 300 men and a gun. A corporal of the 13th slew the colonel of the 26th French dragoons in single combat, cleaving his head in twain.

Had the furious ride of the 13th been adequately sustained, the French would have lost their entire battering train, and the defence of Badajos would have been almost destroyed. Wellington displayed sometimes a curious impatience with exploits of this character; they won from him nothing but acrid and mis-timed rebuke. "The conduct of the 13th," he wrote, "was that of a rabble, galloping as fast as their horses would carry them over a plain after an

enemy to whom they could do no mischief when they were broken." "If the 13th Dragoons," he added, "are again guilty of this conduct, I shall take their horses from them." "The unsparing admiration of the whole army," Napier says significantly, "consoled them for that rebuke." Beresford, as a matter of fact, lacked exactly that element of fiery dash which the 13th displayed so magnificently at Campo Mayor, and his slowness enabled Philippon, who was in command of Badajos, to close its breach and repair its defences, and so made possible the bloodiest and most disastrous siege of the Peninsular war.

Wellington was now blockading Almeida and besieging Badajos at the same moment. It was certain that Massena would march to the relief of Almeida, and Soult strike hard in defence of Badajos. To maintain his attack on these two fortresses, Wellington must fight; and so there followed the two great battles of Fuentes d'Onore and Albuera.

Beresford opened his trenches before Badajos on April 21, and Wellington reckoned that he had three weeks in which to carry the place. By that time Soult would certainly appear to relieve it. But before that period expired Massena was moving from Salamanca in order to raise the blockade of Almeida, and Wellington marched to meet him. Drouet had joined Massena with 11,000 infantry and cavalry, and he had now a force of 46,000 good soldiers, including

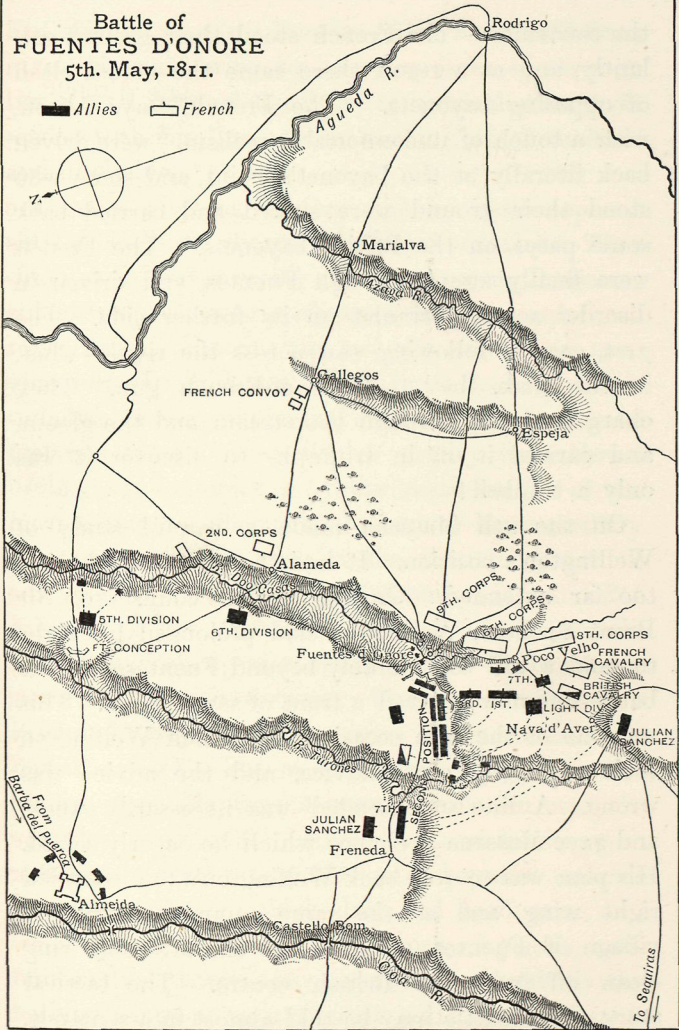


5000 cavalry. Wellington, on the other hand, had only 32,000 infantry, 1500 cavalry, and 42 guns. On May 3, Wellington took up a position on a tableland in front of Almeida, his left resting on Fort Concepcion, his right being behind the village of Fuentes d'Onore, with the Coa in his rear. This was the weak point in his position. If driven back, all his guns must cross by a single narrow bridge—a perilous operation with a victorious foe hanging on his rear. Massena's plan was to turn the British right by carrying the village of Fuentes, seize the only bridge across the Coa, and then fling his overwhelming cavalry strength on the British centre and left, and drive Wellington's broken army into the Coa.

Fuentes was held by some light companies from the 1st and 3rd divisions, and on the evening of the 3rd Loison made a desperate attempt to carry the village. The attack of the French was urged with such fire, and was so overpowering in strength, that the light companies holding the village were driven, stubbornly fighting, through the streets to its very skirts. Then the 24th, the 71st, and the 79th regiments, coming down swiftly from the high ground above Fuentes, drove the French in turn from the village. The 71st was largely a Glasgow regiment, and its colonel, Cadogan, as he took them forward to the charge, shouted, "Now, my lads, let us show them how we can clear the Gallowgate." The sound of that homely name, with all its associations, kindled

Battle of FUENTES D'ONORE 5th. May, 1811.

■ Allies □ French



the Scotsmen. The French stood their ground gallantly, and as a result there came the actual clash of opposing bayonets. "The French," says Alison, with a touch of uncomfortable realism, "were driven back literally at the bayonet's point, and some who stood their ground were spiked and carried back some paces on the British bayonets." The French were finally swept through Fuentes, and driven in disorder across a rivulet on its further side. The 71st, eagerly following, saw across the rivulet what, in the dusk, they took for a French gun. They charged eagerly through the stream and the gloom, and carried it off in triumph—to discover it was only a tumbril!

On the 4th Massena made a careful study of Wellington's position. It had the weakness of being too far extended. On the urgent counsel of Sir Brent Spencer, Wellington had prolonged his right to hold a hill considerably beyond Fuentes, and his battle-line now covered a front of seven miles. This was one of the rare occasions on which Wellington took somebody else's advice, and the advice was wrong. A line so extended was necessarily weak, and gave Massena a chance which he eagerly seized. His plan was to roll back Wellington's too-extended right wing, and at the same moment carry the village of Fuentes, so as to cut the attacked wing clean off from the British centre. The tactical story of the battle may be told almost in a sentence.

The attempt to carry Fuentes failed, and Wellington saved his right wing by swinging it back, through the central fury of the fight, to a position at right angles with his line—a memorable feat of coolness and discipline.

On the morning of the 5th the battle opened with a brilliant charge of French cavalry. They came on in overpowering strength, lancers, dragoons, cuirassiers, glittering with steel and gay with tossing plumes. The English had not more than 1000 sabres on the field, while the French had 29 squadrons of cavalry, including 800 horsemen of the Imperial Guard. The British cavalry were thrust back, gallantly fighting, by the mere weight of the French masses. Ramsay's battery of horse-artillery disappeared in the rush of the French squadrons, and the shout was raised, "Ramsay is cut off!" Montbrun's fiery horsemen, riding fiercely but in somewhat broken order, swept onward to the steady ranks of the 7th division. They had captured a British battery, and they were eager to break a British square! But as they rode, to quote a fine passage from Napier, "a great commotion was observed in their main body: men and horses were observed to close with confusion and tumult towards one point, where a thick dust and loud cries, and the sparkling of blades and flashing of pistols, indicated some extraordinary occurrence. Suddenly the multitude became violently agitated, an English shout

pealed high and clear, the mass was rent asunder, and Norman Ramsay burst forth, sword in hand, at the head of his battery; his horses, breathing fire, stretched like greyhounds along the plain, the guns bounded behind them like things of no weight, and the mounted gunners followed close, with heads bent low, and pointed weapons, in desperate career." Ramsay, in a word, at the sword's point, and by sheer hard fighting, had broken loose from his captors and brought off his guns.

Wellington had quickly realised that his position was too extended, and he had to take in hand the perilous task of swinging his right wing back, using Fuentes as a pivot, across the plain, now practically held by the triumphant French horse, to a ridge that ran back at right angles from Fuentes. The ridge was pierced by a streamlet called the Turones, which ran across the plain to the rear of the position, at that perilous moment held by the two divisions—the 7th and the Light—forming the British right. The 7th division had to ford the Turones and march along its farther bank to the ridge. The Light Division had to move across the open plain, and occupy, in line with the 7th, that part of the ridge betwixt the streamlet and Fuentes. Thus the two divisions, throughout this most perilous manœuvre, were divided by the Turones.

The task of the 7th division was comparatively easy, but that of the Light Division was one of the

most perilous ever attempted in war. The plain was crowded with camp-followers, baggage-carts, &c. It lay open to the charge of the exultant French cavalry, and Montbrun's horsemen—some of them cuirassiers of the Imperial Guard—were riding fiercely beside the steady formation of the British, watching for an opportunity to charge. The Light Division squares in that confused scene appeared, says Napier, "but as specks," and these moving "specks" of dogged, disciplined infantry were swallowed up in a mass of 5000 horsemen, "trampling, bounding, shouting for the word to charge." But nothing shook the steady ranks of the Light Division. "The squares of bayonets," said one who watched the scene, "were sometimes lost sight of amid the forest of glittering sabres;" but onward they moved as steady as fate. Repeatedly Montbrun's dragoons galloped almost to the very points of the steady bayonets, but fell back before the rolling musketry volleys. Alternately halting and firing, the disciplined squares marched on. A rallying square of skirmishers, who had not had time to reach the regiment, was indeed broken by the French cavalry, but the lines of the Light Division were not even shaken. Massena ordered up the artillery of the Guard, but some delay occurred, and the French guns only reached the scene in time to open a distant fire on Houston's regiments.

Napier, who was an eye-witness, declares the French never came within sure shot distance of the