long persevered while enveloped in an absolute stream of fire and bullets poured out against him by the defenders. Nicholas was the hero of the Santa Maria."

Wellington, his face sharpened and grey with anxiety, was watching the scene from an advanced battery, and he now ordered the division to fall back from the great breach, intending to re-form it, and attack afresh in the morning. But the men could not be brought to retreat. The buglers of the reserve were sent to the crest of the glacis to sound the retreat, but the men on the ravelin and in the ditch would not believe the signal was genuine, and struck their own buglers who attempted to repeat it. "I was near Colonel Barnard after midnight," says Kincaid, "when he received repeated messages from Lord Wellington to withdraw from the breach, and to form the division for a renewal of the attack at daylight; but, as fresh attempts continued to be made, and the troops were still pressing forward into the ditch, it went against his gallant soul to order a retreat while yet a chance remained. But, after heading repeated attempts himself, he saw that it was hopeless, and the order was reluctantly given about two o'clock in the morning. We fell back about 300 yards, and re-formed—all that remained to us."

A few men of the Light Division, under the leadership of Nicholas of the Engineers and Shaw of the

43rd, had found the breach in the Santa Maria bastion which their column was meant to carry. They were only about fifty in number, but Nicholas and Shaw led them with a rush up the ruins. Nicholas fell mortally wounded; well-nigh every man of the party was struck down, except Shaw. He stood alone, and taking out his watch, he declared it "too late to carry the breach that night," and walked down the breach again! Nicholas, who died of his wounds a few days afterwards, told the story of Shaw's amazing coolness.

Meanwhile Leith Hay's men from San Vincente were marching at speed across the town, through streets silent and empty, but lit as for a gala, with light streaming from the houses on either side. They fell in with some mules carrying ammunition to the great breach, and captured them, and then advanced to attack the defenders of the great breach from the rear. A battalion of the 38th, too, had advanced along the ramparts from San Vincente, and opened a flank fire on the breach. The French knew that the castle was lost, and, attacked both on flank and front, they gave way at the breach. The men of the 4th and of the Light Divisions were sent forward again. The breach was abandoned and Badajos was won!

For long, to Wellington and his staff watching from an advanced battery the fury of the assault, no cheerful news came. The red glare on the night

sky, the incessant roll of musketry, the wild shouts of the stormers, answered with vehement clamour from the walls, showed that success had not yet been won. But when the 44th had gained the ramparts of San Vincente its bugler sounded the advance. Wellington's quick ear caught through the tumult of the night that sound. "There is an English bugler in that tower," he said. This was the first hint of success which reached him; then came a messenger from the castle. It was Picton's aide-de-camp to tell of the place having been carried.

Five-sixths of the attacking party had fallen; of Picton's invincible soldiers little more than a scanty handful held the great castle, whose towering height and strength seemed to defy attack. Picton himself, after describing how his men lifted one another up till the wall was gained, added, "Yet I could hardly make myself believe that we had taken the castle." The news was sent to the men of the 4th and the Light Divisions after they had fallen back. No one at first would believe it, so incredible did it seem to the assailants of these impregnable breaches that any troops could have entered the place. The men and the officers were lying down in sullen exhaustion after their conflict, when a staff officer came up with the orders to immediately attack the breach afresh. "The men," says the "History of the Rifle Brigade," "leaped up, resumed their formation, and advanced

as cheerfully and as steadily as if it had been the first attack."

According to Costello, who took a gallant part in that wild scene, the first intimation the British stormers at the great breach had of Picton's success, was an exultant shout from within the town itself, followed by a cry in rich Irish brogue, "Blood and 'ounds! where's the Light Division? The town's our own! Hurrah!" The men of the triumphant 3rd division thus were calling across the breach to their comrades of the Light Division.

When they clambered the breach, passing over the hill of the dead, and reached the *chevaux-de-frise*, there was no resistance. There were no darting musketry flames to drive them back. Yet it was with difficulty they forced even the unguarded barrier!

When the soldiers at last broke through into Badajos, their passions were kindled to flame, and the scenes of horror and rapine which followed were wilder than even those at Ciudad Rodrigo. But there was an element of humour amid even the horrors of that wild night. "Wherever," says Kincaid, "there was anything to eat or drink, the only saleable commodities, the soldiers had turned the shopkeepers out of doors, and placed themselves regularly behind the counter, selling off the contents of the shop. By-and-by, another and a stronger party would kick those out in their turn, and there

was no end to the succession of self-elected shopkeepers."

In that wild night-struggle the British lost 3500 men, and most of these were slain within an area, roughly, of a few hundred yards square. It is said that Wellington broke into tears—the rare, reluctant tears of a strong man—as he looked on the corpse-strewn slope of the great breach.

Blakeney, who served with the 28th, describing the breach, says that "boards, fastened with ropes to plugs driven in the ground within the breach, were let down, and covered nearly the whole surface of the breach. These boards were so thickly studded with sharp-pointed spikes that one could not introduce a hand between them. They did not stick out at right angles to the board, but were all slanting upwards." In the rear of the breach thus covered with steel points, "the ramparts had deep cuts in all directions, like a tanyard, so that it required light to enable one to move safely through them, even when no fighting was going on." Only two British soldiers had actually forced their way through these dreadful obstacles, and reached the ramparts, where their bodies were found in the morning. Blakeney supplies one dreadful detail of the scene presented by the breach and its approaches on the morning after the fight. The water in the great ditch was literally turned crimson with the bloodshed of the night; and, as the sun smote it, the long

deep ditch took the appearance of "a fiery lake of smoking blood, in which lay the bodies of many British soldiers."

The siege only lasted twenty days, and its success proved more difficult of explanation to French marshals than even that of Ciudad Rodrigo. "Never," wrote Kellerman, "was there a place in a better state, better supplied, or better provided with troops. I confess my inability to account for its inadequate defence. All our calculations have been disappointed. Lord Wellington has taken the place, as it were, in the presence of two armies, amounting to 80,000 men." But the defence of Badajos was not inadequate. It was skilful and gallant in the highest degree. What explains the capture, in a time so brief, of a place so strong, and held with such skill and power, is the matchless valour of the British troops. The fire and swiftness of the siege, it may be added, outraced all the calculations of Marmont and Soult. Soult, in fact, only reached Villafranca, nearly forty miles from Badajos, on April 8, when he learnt to his amazement that the place had fallen!

CHAPTER XXIV

WELLINGTON AND MARMONT

THE capture of these two great fortresses gave Wellington an immense advantage. He was no longer dependent on Lisbon, but had secure bases on the Guadiana and the Agueda. He could, at will, smite the French armies in Spain, and menace alike the north, the south, the centre; and the French marshals stood uneasily on guard, expecting his stroke, but not able to guess where it would fall. Each marshal, too, was more concerned in guarding his own province than in assisting his neighbour. Marmont had fallen back to Salamanca, Soult was on the Guadalquiver. Wellington elected to strike at Marmont. His overthrow would lay Madrid open; and Soult, finding his communications with France threatened, must fall back in haste. A victory in Castile, that is, would deliver Andalusia.

But it was necessary to snap the chain of communication betwixt Marmont and Soult, and to isolate the latter general. The Tagus flowed betwixt these two commanders; and at Almarez was the single bridge across the Tagus by which the two French

MARSHAL DE MARMONT

DUKE OF RAGUSA

From an engraving after the painting by MANERET

armies communicated with each other. So important was this bridge that it was guarded by three forts and a fortified bridge-head, armed with eighteen guns and held by a garrison of 1000 men. Wellington despatched his most enterprising leader, Hill, to leap upon the bridge and destroy it, thus breaking the link betwixt Soult and Marmont.

It was a daring feat. Hill had 6000 men and eighteen guns; with this modest force he had to thrust himself deep into a hostile country, storm the forts that guarded the bridge without waiting to breach their walls; and fall back with light-footed speed, lest he should be cut off and destroyed by overwhelming forces.

On May 12, Hill was across the Guadiana; on the 16th he was within a night's march of Almarez. He formed his force into three columns—the right consisting of the 50th, 71st, and 92nd, under his own command; the centre under Long, the left under Chowne—and pushed forward in the darkness, intending to attack at the same moment Mirabete, a castle a league distant from the bridge, and serving as an outpost to it, and the forts guarding the bridge itself. The roads were bad, however, and day broke long before Almarez was reached. Hill found, too, the road was so completely destroyed that it was impossible to take forward his guns. He must do the work with musket and bayonet only. His troops remained in the hills till the night of May 18. On

the next day Chowne began his attack on Mirabete before Hill's column had reached Fort Napoleon—a powerful redoubt standing on high ground and guarding the southern end of the bridge.

The sound of Chowne's musketry and the sight of the eddying white smoke rising above the trees gave the alarm to Fort Napoleon. Its garrison, crowded on the parapet, were gazing eagerly towards Mirabete; when suddenly two tiny red columns broke over the crest of the nearest hill. It was the 50th under Colonel Stewart, with a wing of the 71st; and at the double, with a proud and exultant shout, the men came on. The guns of Fort Napoleon broke hurriedly into fire; all round its crest the musketry flashed. Fort Ragusa, from the farther bank, added the thunder of its guns to the tumult. Never pausing, however, the British came on at a run, the leading files carrying ladders—the very ladders that had played a part in the assault of Badajos—for the escalade. The ladders proved far too short; but half way up the face of the wall was a broad ledge. The English clambered to this, dragged up their ladders—red with the blood of Badajos—re-erected them on the ledge, and broke with levelled bayonets over the parapet, the English and French all mixed together, with a tumult of shouts, tumbling down to the floor of the redoubt.

So stern was the rush of the 50th and 71st, that the French garrison was driven across the redoubt

and through its rear on to the armed bridge-head, into which the British swept with the flying French, slaying them as they fled. In a moment the floating bridge was crowded with pursuers and pursued. The English quickly turned the guns of Fort Napoleon on Fort Ragusa across the river; that place was now firing hurriedly at the bridge to arrest the rush of the pursuing English. The bridge was broken, the farther bank was safe; but so sudden was the surprise, so fierce the onfall, so wild the panic, that the garrison of Fort Ragusa actually abandoned that strong place, and fled, and some men of the 92nd, swimming over, restored the bridge. The British lost in the fight 179 in killed and wounded, but of the French 259, including the governor and sixteen officers, were captured. The forts, the bridge, with huge supplies of ammunition and stores, were destroyed; and Hill, marching fast, reached Merida in safety, having performed the most brilliant stroke of individual soldiership in the campaign.

Marmont was now isolated. Napoleon, too, was on the point of declaring war with Russia, and was absorbed in collecting and organising that stupendous host which was to invade Russia, and perish before 1812 ended in its snows. He had no attention to waste on Spain, and no reinforcements to send to his generals there. They ought not, indeed, to have needed any. There were still over 300,000

good soldiers under the French eagles in Spain, commanded by generals trained in Napoleon's school and familiar with victory; while Wellington could only put 32,000 British soldiers in line of battle, with 24,000 Portuguese of fair fighting quality. Marmont had 70,000 troops under his command, of which 52,000 were present with the eagles, and he was able to call up reinforcements amounting to 12,000 more. Wellington had 36,000 infantry, 3500 cavalry, and 54 guns under his personal command. With this force he proposed to strike at Marmont, whose columns were concentrating on the Douro.

Marmont was not a fortunate general; but he was of a quick and daring spirit, an adroit tactician, whose swift brain could manœuvre columns and battalions on a battlefield as a fine chess-player moves his pawns and knights on a board. He was a captain, in a word, not unworthy of contending with Wellington; and, in the tangle of marches and countermarches round Salamanca, when two great armies were circling round each other like two angry hawks in mid-air, Marmont, with his lighter-footed French infantry, fairly outmarched and, for the moment, outgeneralled Wellington. It was in the thunderstroke of actual battle that the English general rebuked the genius and wrecked the art of his gallant rival.

Wellington crossed the Agueda on June 13, and began his march for the Tormes. His aim was to strike at Marmont, and crush him before rein-

forcements could reach him from the south or the north. Marmont's plan, in turn, was to evade Wellington's stroke, but cling to the Tormes, behind the screen of the forts at Salamanca, till the gathering French columns should give him a resistless superiority in numbers, and enable him to drive Wellington back in ruin to Portugal.

Wellington reached Salamanca on June 17, five days before Napoleon issued his declaration of war against Russia. Marmont fell back, trusting to the forts of Salamanca to detain Wellington at least fifteen days, by which time the reinforcements pushing on at speed from Madrid and the north would have joined him. The forts were strong and heavily armed. No less than thirteen convents and twenty-two colleges had been destroyed to supply materials for their construction. They were strongly garrisoned, and Wellington had no battering train. The men who had stormed Ciudad Rodrigo and Badajos, however, were formidable assailants. The attack on the forts was momentarily checked by failure of ammunition, but operations were urged with such stern energy, that Marmont advanced in tempestuous fashion to the relief of his sorely pressed garrison. Wellington was content with barring Marmont's advance, until, on June 29, the forts surrendered, when Marmont fell back with angry reluctance to the Douro to wait for his reinforcements.

Patience is, in no sense, a French virtue; and Marmont, sore from the loss of his forts and in a mood of battle, found it impossible to stand on the defensive till Bonnet from the Asturias and Joseph in person from Madrid, with reinforcements which would give him an overwhelming superiority, came up. He began a series of rapid movements, the aim of which was, while evading actual battle, to get past Wellington's flank, and strike at the Ciudad Rodrigo road on his rear, which formed the Englishman's line of retreat to Portugal.

The weather was fine, the country open, the rivers everywhere fordable. Marmont was familiar with every wrinkle in the face of the soil, and he began a series of fierce, swift, and exquisitely skilful manœuvres to get past his wary antagonist, yet never risking a battle except under conditions of overwhelming advantage, his hardy and active soldiers more than once marching fifty miles without a halt. Wellington had to meet these manœuvres as a cool fencer meets the keen and deadly thrusts of his antagonist. Horse, foot, and artillery were but the human pawns in this great game of chess, and the movements of the armies yielded some of the most picturesque spectacles in the whole of the war.

One such scene occurred on July 18. The two armies were racing for the Guarena. If Marmont reached it first, Wellington would be cut off from

Salamanca. The day was one of great heat; the men were marching in close order; the sky was full of the dust of their march. But war has not often yielded a stranger sight. "Hostile columns of infantry, only half musket-shot from each other," says Napier, "were marching impetuously towards a common goal, the officers on each side pointing forward with their swords, or touching their caps and waving their hands in courtesy, while the German cavalry, huge men, on huge horses, rode between in a close compact body, as if to prevent a collision; at times the loud tones of command to hasten the march were heard passing from the front to the rear on both sides, and now and then the rush of French bullets came sweeping over the columns, whose violent pace was continually accelerated."

Thus moving for ten miles, but keeping the most perfect order, both armies approached the Guarena, and the enemy seeing the Light Division, although more in their power than the others, was yet outstripping them in the march, increased the fire of their guns and menaced an attack with infantry. The German cavalry instantly drew close round, the column plunged suddenly into a hollow dip of ground on the left, and ten minutes after the head of the division was in the stream of the Guarena. Again on the 20th, the same strange scene was witnessed. The two armies were marching at speed on

close and parallel lines of hills, Marmont striving to reach the ford of Huerta on the Tormes. The eager columns were within musket-shot of each other; the cavalry was watching for an opportunity to charge; where the ground gave the chance, a battery of horse-artillery would wheel round and unlimber, and pour grape into the flank of the opposite column. But the infantry, dust-covered and footsore, never halted. With sloping muskets and swinging gait they pressed forward at speed; the officers, "like gallant gentlemen who bore no malice and knew no fear," sometimes waving their hands to each other from either column.

But time was flying; Marmont's reinforcements were fast coming up, and Wellington, who could neither escape nor grasp his agile opponent, was meditating a retreat. For the first and only time in his life he was beaten in tactics! A letter to Castanos declaring Wellington's intentions to fall back on Portugal fell into Marmont's hands. The long strife in tactics had given the French general an exultant but misleading sense of superiority over the Englishman. That he should escape by a retreat was a thought intolerable to Marmont's fiery temper; and he gave Wellington what he wanted—the chance of a fair fight.

CHAPTER XXV

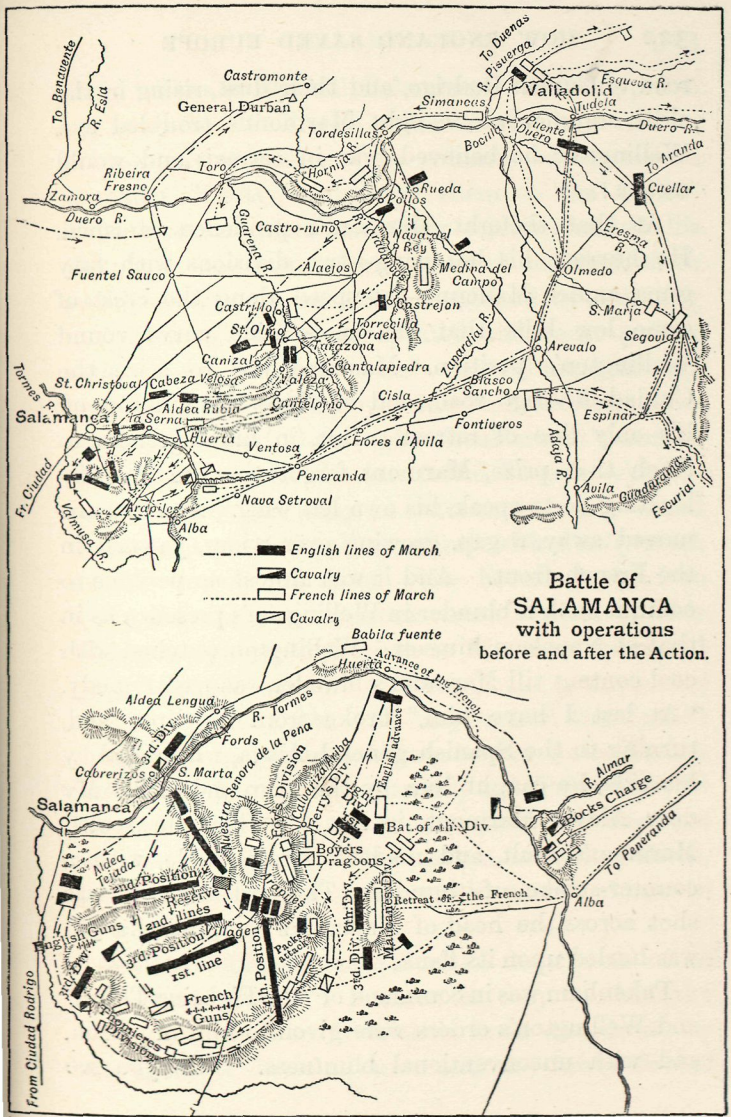
SALAMANCA

NORTH of Salamanca the Tormes forms a great loop, and on the night of July 18 Marmont had seized the ford of Huerta at the crown of the loop. He could march down either bank of the river to Salamanca. Wellington was in front of Salamanca, in a position perpendicular to the river, his left opposite the ford of Santa Maria, his right—thrust far out into the plain—touched, but did not occupy, one of a pair of rocky and isolated hills called the Arapiles. He thus stood in readiness for battle on the left bank of the river betwixt Marmont and Salamanca. On the right bank of that stream, opposite the ford of Santa Maria, was the 3rd division, strongly entrenched.

From these positions the wearied armies confronted each other for nearly two days; but on July 23 Marmont's reinforcements would be up, and Wellington decided he must retreat. This was exactly what Marmont feared, and he watched with feverish alertness for every sign that the British were falling back. On the 22nd the Frenchman made a

daring move. He marched straight down from the crown of the river-loop, seized the outer of the two hills we have described, and made a dash at the inner one. If he could seize both he would hold an almost unassailable position within easy striking distance of his enemy. Wellington, however, quickly sent forward some troops to seize and hold the nearer Arapiles. The race was keen. The French reached the hill first, but were driven from it by the more stubborn British. These rugged hills, rising suddenly from the floor of the plain, were not quite 500 yards apart: and in an instant they were thus turned into armed and menacing outposts, from whose rough slopes two great armies, within striking distance of each other, kept stern watch.

Marmont could use the hill he held as a pivot round which he might swing his army, so as to cut the English off from the Ciudad Rodrigo road. Wellington, to guard against this, wheeled his lines round—using the English Arapiles as a hinge—through a wide segment of a circle, till his battle-line looked eastward, and what had been his rear became his front. The English Arapiles, and not the ford of Santa Maria, thus became the tip of his left wing; his right, thrust out to the village of Aldea Tejada, barred the road by which Marmont might slip past to Salamanca. For hours the two armies stood in this position. Wellington's baggage and waggons meanwhile were falling back along the



Battle of SALAMANCA with operations before and after the Action.

Napier's "Peninsular War." Walker & Boutall sc.

road to Ciudad Rodrigo, and their dust, rising in the clear summer air, caught Marmont's troubled eye. Wellington, he believed, was in retreat, and would escape!

At that thought Marmont's prudence vanished. He hurried his left wing—two divisions with fifty guns, under Maucune—at speed along the crest of some low hills that ran in a wide curve round Wellington's position. Maucune was to seize the Ciudad Rodrigo road, and so throw Wellington off his only line of retreat. But, in his eagerness to reach that prize, Marmont forgot that he was dislocating, so to speak, his own left wing. As Maucune moved away, a gap, growing ever wider, yawned in the French front. And it was almost as perilous to commit such a blunder in Wellington's presence as in that of Napoleon himself. Wellington watched with cool content till Marmont's blunder was past remedy. "At last I have him," broke from his lips; and, turning to the Spanish general, Alava, who stood by his side, he caught him by the arm, and said, "My dear Alava, Marmont is lost!" Then he sealed Marmont's fault, and made it irretrievable, with a counter-stroke of thunder. The 3rd division was shot across the head of Maucune's columns, the 5th was hurled upon its flank.

Pakenham was in command of "the Fighting Third," and Wellington's orders were given to him in person, and with unconventional bluntness. "Do you see

those fellows on the hill, Pakenham?" he said, pointing to where the French columns were now visible; "throw your division into columns of battalions at them directly, and drive them to the devil!" Pakenham, an alert and fiery soldier, formed his battalions into column with a word, and took them swiftly forward in an attack described by admiring onlookers as "the most spirited and most perfect thing of the kind ever seen." His columns, as they neared the French, deployed into line, the companies bringing forward their right shoulders at a run as they marched, and the astonished French, who expected to see an army in retreat, suddenly found these red, threatening lines, edged with deadly steel, moving fiercely on them. The French broke into a hurried fire, their columns tried to deploy, their officers sacrificing themselves to win them space and time. But the advance of the 3rd was as unpausing and relentless as fate. As they neared the French the more eager spirits began to run forward: the lines seemed to curve outward, and Pakenham, in his own words, "let the men loose." The bayonets fell to the level, the English ran in with a shout, and the French formation was shattered almost in an instant.

Wallace's brigade, to quote the description of an eye-witness, halted a moment as they reached the brow of the hill to dress their lines, disordered by the speed of their advance and the heavy fire of

the French guns. Just as they paused, Foy's column threw in a deep and rolling volley, and in a moment the earth was strewn with fallen soldiers from Wallace's front. Stepping coolly over their slain or wounded comrades, however, the brigade moved steadily forward; and Wallace, leading them, turned, looked back on his own men, and with an inspiring gesture pointed to the enemy. That gesture was the signal to charge! The French themselves believed that, having caught their enemies with a fire so dreadful, they had destroyed them, and were now moving forward in triumph, when they saw through the smoke the faces of their opponents coming on with bayonets at the charge. In an instant there came from the British a prolonged and shattering volley, followed without a moment's pause by the fierce push of the bayonet. The solid French column swayed backwards, crumbled into fragments, and fled!

In this fight the 44th captured the eagle of the French 62nd, while two standards were taken by the 4th and 30th. The regimental record of the 44th says that the French officer who carried the eagle wrenched it from the pole, and was endeavouring to conceal it under his grey overcoat, when Lieutenant Pearce attacked him. A French infantry soldier came up with levelled bayonet, but was shot dead by a private of the 44th. The eagle was captured, fastened to a sergeant's halberd, the

44th giving three cheers, and was carried in triumph through the whole fight, gleaming above English bayonets instead of French.

Close following on Pakenham's charge came a splendid exploit on the part of the British cavalry. The French light horse rode at the right flank of Pakenham's division. At a single word of command the 5th fell back at an angle to the line, and one far-heard volley drove the French horse off with broken squadrons. The 5th division was by this time pressing heavily on Maucune's flank. Suddenly the interval betwixt the two British divisions was filled with the tumult of galloping hoofs. The Heavy Brigade—the 3rd and 4th Dragoons and the 5th Dragoon Guards —under Le Marchant, and Anson's light cavalry, were riding at speed on the unhappy French. Three massive bodies of ranked infantry in succession were struck and destroyed in that furious charge, and the leading squadron, under Lord Edward Somerset, galloping in advance, caught a battery of five guns, slew its gunners, and brought back the guns in triumph. Many of the broken French infantry fled to the English lines for protection from the long swords of the terrible horsemen.

That fiery, exultant rush of British horsemen completed the destruction of Maucune's division, and captured no less than 2000 prisoners.

In the last charge the three regiments had become mixed together; the officers rode where they could