heights with his main body, to menace the French flank and the line of march to Montechique. Unfortunately at that critical moment came a frigate with Sir Henry Burrard. The victor of Roliça went on board to communicate with his new superior, who was necessarily ignorant of everything. Before leaving the Mondego, Wellington had written to Sir Henry, recommending that Sir John Moore, who was expected with the army he had saved from Sweden, should land there, and that he should operate independently on the northern bank of the Upper Tagus. Thence he could cut the communications between Lisbon and Almeida, and threaten the line of Junot's march, should that general retreat to Spain by way of Elvas. Burrard disapproved. Moore was off the coast, and should be directed to disembark at Maceira. Meanwhile the army must remain on the defensive in the positions it occupied, with Vimeiro for the pivot.

But it was Junot's intent to force the fighting, and he was determined to bring on the inevitable battle. Decisive it must be in any case. If the British were beaten, they must re-embark under the onslaughts of a triumphant enemy, with no such anchorage as Corunna, and no armed works to cover their escape. On the contrary, if the day went against Junot, there was nothing for him but capitulation or evacuation of the country. The British occupied positions on heights that were more or less commanding, and the precipitous mountain covering the left flank was further protected by a deep ravine, invisible to the enemy, which played an important part in the subsequent engagement. Junot had made a night march, intending to attack at daybreak, and the strength of his position at Torres Vedras is shown by the fact that the narrow defile by which any attack must have been delivered in his

centre had delayed his advance for several hours. The combatants were not unequally matched in point of numbers, though the English had somewhat the superiority. But, on the other hand, whereas all the French were brought into action, but a part of the British were actively engaged. Junot showed great personal courage, but his dispositions were faulty. He formed up in two columns of attack, in place of concentrating his attack upon our left. Sir Arthur had been halted in a situation where he had never intended to offer battle. For several hours the road of retreat to Lourinham was inevitably left unguarded. Had Junot occupied it with the bulk of the French, the English must have been forced back upon the sea. As it was, his right column of attack, coming on the ravine that formed the ditch of the precipitous mountain, gave the English time to strengthen the defence, and it was ultimately repulsed with heavy loss, leaving several guns behind. But the serious fighting was in the centre, and very desperate it was. The French scaled the heights, sweeping the English skirmishers before them, to face a crushing artillery fire, followed up by headlong bayonet charges. Driven down far faster than they had climbed, they rallied and returned gallantly to the attack. The copses, vineyards and ravines were filled with the dead and wounded. Guns were taken, retaken, and taken again. Finally Sir Arthur learned, to his relief, from the questioning of a general taken prisoner, that the enemy had brought his last man into action. Junot, on his side, realised that his attempt had failed; but though his troops were beaten, they were scarcely disorganised, or, at least, they rallied at once under the protection of the guns and cavalry. Moreover, the able and prudent dispositions of Kellerman, who commanded the reserves, induced Sir Arthur, dashing as he was, to decline

to listen to heated advisers, who urged him to strike again and without an hour's delay.

Yet it was his full intention to follow up his victory. It was barely noon, and the day was before him. But three of his eight brigades had borne the brunt of the battle; the others had either suffered slightly or not been engaged at all. His original superiority in numbers had been considerably increased, and his scheme was to turn Junot upon either flank, forcing him back from Torres Vedras on the Tagus, and cutting him off from Lisbon. That it would have driven the French general to a more hurried and disastrous retreat than that of Sir John Moore can scarcely be doubted, the rather that he seems to have done nothing to guard his left and observe the coast road, which, turning the lofty Torres Vedras range, would have led the English to those natural lines of defence in his rear which stretched from Mafra to Montechique. But responsibility had devolved upon Burrard, and having generously left Wellesley all the credit of winning Vimeiro, now he rightly assumed the direction. It is needless to enter into the considerations which induced him to disapprove the proposed strategy; suffice it to say that they are admitted to have been weighty and were approved by the experienced officers of his staff. Yet he would have adopted Sir Arthur's proposals, though with hesitation, and when it was comparatively too late; but by this time a third commander-in-chief had appeared on the scene. Sir Hew Dalrymple was an able general, if he had not the genius of Wellesley; he had done much to foment the insurrection in Andalusia and to equip Castaños for the victory of Baylen. But being profoundly ignorant of the position in Portugal, he had to wait to be instructed by his predecessors in command. Meantime Kellerman appeared at the outposts, under a flag of truce, with propositions from

Junot. The result was the Convention — miscalled — of Cintra, for it was really arranged and signed at Torres Vedras. Briefly, the French army capitulated. It was to evacuate Portugal with the honours of war. It was to be transported to France in English shipping, with no restrictions as to serving again. The article by which the French were permitted to carry away their personal effects gave rise to serious trouble and many misunderstandings. Unquestionably it was grossly abused, and the pillagers secured the bulk of their plunder. But, in the circumstances, exhaustive search was impracticable; the tension in Lisbon was becoming unendurable; and it was of paramount importance to get rid of the still formidable invaders on any reasonable terms. The convention was virulently abused both in Portugal and England. The Portuguese authorities, who had done nothing for their auxiliaries except draw upon their stores and decline to act with them, indignantly protested that they had not been consulted. The populace of the capital complained, with better reason, that their oppressors had been let off too easily with their booty. And in England the malice of party, acting upon popular misapprehensions and irrational annoyance, secured the appointment of a parliamentary committee to investigate all the circumstances. Dalrymple, Burrard and Wellesley were summoned home to give evidence, or, in other words, to defend themselves; the army was deprived of its chiefs; Portugal, when seething with disturbances from one end to the other, lost the benefit of their local knowledge and experience. Yet the misfortune might have been greater had not the arrival of Moore placed a capable general in supreme command.

As for the maligned convention, it was as cordially approved by Sir Arthur Wellesley as by Sir Hew Dalrymple. Both from a military and political point of view,

the gains were immense. Portugal was relieved from the firm hold of a formidable army, still strongly secured in a military sense. Not only the capital with its forts, but the frontier fortresses of Elvas and Almeida, facing Badajoz and Ciudad Rodrigo, were given over without bloodshed, and instead of Junot withdrawing to reinforce his compatriots in Spain, and transfer his energies to the ill-defended Andalusian, he was sent out of the way of doing immediate mischief. Several thousand Spanish prisoners, confined in hulks on the Tagus, were set at liberty, and given a free passage to Spain, and, moreover, there was a surrender of the Russian squadron in the river, to be held in deposit till the conclusion of a peace. The moral effect both in Spain and Portugal was incalculable. Following Baylen, it gave another blow to the prestige of Napoleon and his hitherto invincible armies, and the effect throughout the Peninsula was the greater, that the Portuguese were pleased to claim no little of the credit.

CHAPTER IV

MOORE'S ADVANCE—HIS RETREAT AND THE BATTLE OF CORUNNA

September 1808—January 1809

AFTER the battle of Baylen, and the abandonment of the capital by the usurper, the Spaniards had a great opportunity, for there were no French to the south of the Ebro. It is needless to say that they did not avail themselves of it. There was energy or rather excitement enough, but the innumerable local juntas were acting independently of each other, and often at open enmity. It would be tedious to trace the history of these miserable squabbles, nor is it necessary. The upshot was that it became evident, even to the jealous Council of Seville, which would gladly have usurped supreme authority, that something in the nature of a parliament must be assembled, which might exercise some authority over the nation. Yet it was chiefly owing to the persistent representations of the British agents that a central junta was assembled at Madrid, composed of thirty-five members from the provinces. A very mixed assemblage it was, comprising patriots of spotless reputation, such as Florida-Blanca, the superannuated president, and some men of notoriously infamous character, like the envoys sent up by Seville. The practical wisdom of the proceedings is illustrated

by the proposal that they should raise half-a-million of infantry forthwith, besides 50,000 cavalry. Had the men been forthcoming, and probably there were never more than a fourth of that number in the field, they had neither arms nor ammunition, nor clothing, and for filling the military chest they must trust to English liberality, Spaniard-like, while broaching these magnificent schemes, they did not make the most modest attempts at organisation. Throughout the course of the protracted war there never was any regular commissariat, which explains why the armies of undisciplined men, though individually brave and animated by fervid detestation of the French, often were scattered from sheer starvation. The levies were unclad in the bitter winter cold, and had to go unshod in the snows unless they found themselves in sandals. A Carnot with a free hand would have been invaluable at Madrid, but there was neither organiser, general nor statesman. Sir John Moore and the British envoys lost no opportunity of urging the necessity of appointing a general-in-chief. The junta admitted the propriety of the measure, but could never come to a decision. Blake, like Cuesta, was discredited by defeat, yet the choice lay between Cuesta and Castaños. Cuesta, though the old man's indomitable courage won the affection of his soldiers, was arbitrary, impracticable, and what may be called cross-grained. He brooked no crossing of his will, and to offer a suggestion went far towards having it rejected. At that time he had outraged the dignity of the junta by the illegal arrest of one of its most honoured members, and he was not only under a cloud, but had been ordered into a kind of honourable captivity. Castaños might possibly have obtained the post, and he had the advantage, although some con-

sidered it an objection, of being personally acceptable to the British. But he was unambitious and indolent, although it was taking a step in the right direction when he was gazetted Captain-General of Madrid.

Meantime the Junta indulged in endless talk, issued inflated proclamations, and gave orders which were generally ignored. Each local leader did what seemed right in his own eyes, when he did not take instructions from his soldiers under pain of summary execution. And Napoleon, drawing veterans and even some of the Old Guard from Germany, was preparing to send 200,000 soldiers over the Pyrenees to reinforce the French already in Spain. The conscription of two years in advance, as we said, had been anticipated—evidence sufficient of his fixity of purpose—and Champigny, who conducted foreign affairs, had avowed in State papers that State policy was synonymous with justice, and that the end justified the means.

But at that juncture, by an excellently-planned *coup*, Spain recovered some efficient defenders. According to Napoleon's system, when professing himself her ally he had drained her of the flower of the army to fight his battles elsewhere. One body was in Tuscany under O'Farrel, and there were 14,000 good soldiers in Denmark commanded by the Marquis of Romana. Thanks to British initiative and by the interposition of venturesome agents, the bulk of Romana's corps was embarked on British ships and transported from the Danish islands to the harbours of Gallicia. They were destined to co-operate with a Gallician force which was to make an effective diversion and to give the Spaniards fresh breathing time if they cared to avail themselves of it. The English Government had finally decided to follow up Vimeiro and the convention by an advance

into Spain. Nor did the enterprise appear anything but hopeful. It is evident that they persistently underrated the strength Napoleon could bring to bear, and, misled by the optimism of their subordinate agents, they still put faith in Spanish statistics and promises. On the 6th October a momentous despatch was received at Lisbon. It appointed Moore to the command of a nominal force of 30,000 infantry and 5000 cavalry. Ten thousand were to be sent from England, under Sir David Baird; the rest, it was assumed, might be drawn from the depleted army in Portugal. In what manner Moore was to enter Spain was left to his own judgment. He might take the army by sea to the northern ports, or march through the interior. The former plan would effect an immediate junction with Baird's contingent, nevertheless he elected for the latter, chiefly because Sir Hew Dalrymple had already made some arrangements for a march on Almeida. Moore's hopes were never high, as were those of the Ministry; as a soldier, he had a more lively appreciation of the French power, nor did he put implicit faith in the reports of the patriots. Still these reports were so circumstantial as to the support he would receive that he could not refuse them a certain credence. At all events, his instructions were peremptory—the difficulty was to decide on the method of the advance. Wellesley had been guided by excellent maps when marching in the Torres Vedras peninsula, but north-east of the Tagus the country was virtually a *terra incognita*. All reports agreed that the roads over the mountains to Almeida and Ciudad Rodrigo were impracticable for artillery. As it proved, these reports were fallacious, but they induced Moore reluctantly to violate a fundamental rule of war, and, separating from his heavier guns and cavalry, send them by a southerly

route, under Sir John Hope to Talavera. Thence, crossing the Guadarama, they were to meet him at Salamanca. He found the roads practicable for guns, but the difficulties otherwise had not been exaggerated. Though the army marched in three columns, it was hard to find means of bare subsistence; the baggage had been cut down to a point engendering the discontent which afterwards culminated in mutinous indiscipline, yet it was impossible to procure sufficient transport animals. As Moore wrote bitterly, 'The army runs the risk of finding itself in front of the enemy with no more ammunition than the men carry in their pouches.' Everything had to be paid for in a friendly country, but the military chest was so low that it was with the utmost difficulty that £8000 could be spared to Baird, who had landed penniless. By the way, he was detained on the transports for a full fortnight till the formalities insisted upon by our allies could be fulfilled. Yet when the British generals were in such dire financial straits, two millions of dollars were being landed at Corunna, consigned to the Gallician Junta. They were brought by Mr Frere, who had arrived with the fleet which disembarked Romana and his men. Mr Frere came to supersede Mr Stewart as plenipotentiary. He was a brilliant man of letters, the early friend of Canning, the admired familiar of Scott and Southey, yet the selection was unfortunate. Emotional, romantic and unpractical, he lost credit as a diplomatist; his despatches on Peninsular affairs fostered the illusions of his superiors at home, and impracticable suggestions in intemperate language aggravated the embarrassments of Moore when he had to come to prompt and critical decisions.

But the advance of the army was happily timed, for it arrested the French in full swing of victory, and deranged

the far-sighted calculations of the Emperor. Had he only had the Spaniards to deal with, the country would have been rapidly overrun, although the irrepressible guerrilla warfare would have gone on smouldering everywhere. All along the line, from Biscay to the Catalonian coast, discipline and skilful combinations—notwithstanding some slight and trivial successes of the patriots—had triumphed over ignorant rashness and unregulated valour. Joseph's defence had been almost as feeble and ill-advised as the Spanish attack, but all changed when Napoleon in person came on the scene. His generals forgot their jealousies under the master's immediate eye. Eight corps were actively employed in concert. The battles of Espinosa and Gamonal, in which Blake again illustrated his incapacity, subjugated the north of Spain, and assured the French communications with Bayonne, while Burgos, in place of Vittoria, became the centre of offensive operations. Thence the powerful cavalry could sweep the plains of Castille, driving back the broken bands of the patriots upon the mountains. Then Marshal Lannes inflicted a crushing defeat on the army of the Spanish centre at Tudela on the Ebro. He surprised it when the leaders were clamouring in discordant councils, much like the Covenanters at Bothwell Bridge. Castaños had been checked and overruled by the incompetent and vain-glorious Palafox. The rout was complete, yet the disaster would have been greater had not Ney been in one of the occasional fits of lethargy which sometimes palsied the indomitable energy that covered the retreat from Moscow. Castaños saved a portion of his troops, and a still more important result was that 15,000 of the fugitives under Palafox found their way to Zaragoza.

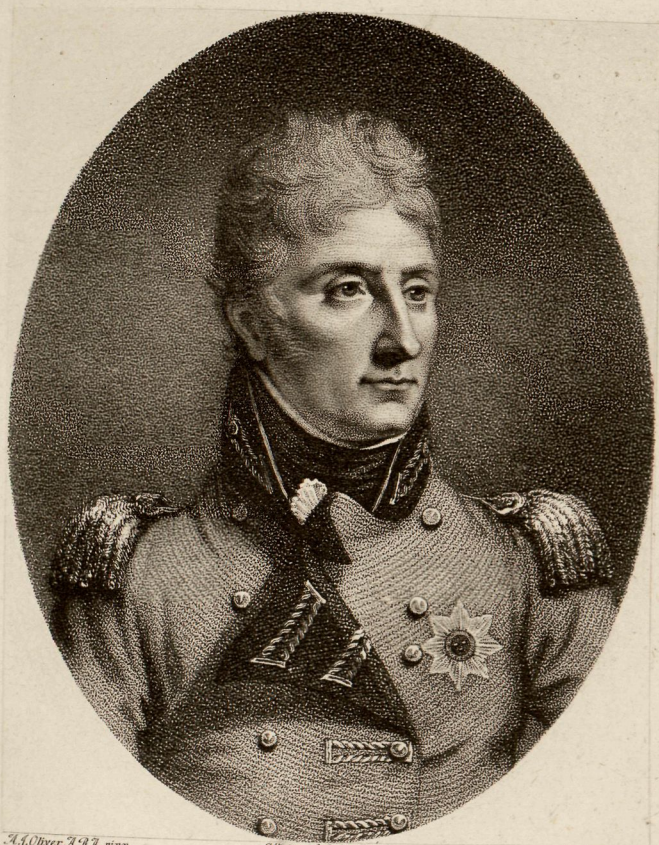
Assuming that the news of his success would induce the English to retreat, Napoleon detached Lannes to

follow up Palafox and summon Zaragoza, while he himself hurried forward to occupy the capital. The pivot of operations was to be advanced from Burgos to Madrid, for political as much as for military reasons. The short road lay over the Somosierra Pass, a formidable position at all seasons, virtually impregnable in the winter if resolutely defended. And the Spaniards for once had made due preparation. The gorge and its surroundings were held by General St Juan with 12,000 men, a battery of sixteen pieces swept the precipitous ascent, and the more open ground, above and behind, was raked by the cross fire from redoubts and entrenchments. According to all principles of war, to assail the pass was to invite disaster. The French column of attack was flanked and preceded by skirmishers on either side; it was received with a warm, running fire of musketry, and the battery of guns was there in readiness to pour showers of grape on the head of the column. Napoleon rode up to survey the situation. At that moment his sight was obscured by a dense fog, thickened by the powder smoke hanging over the guns. He had one of those rare and original inspirations, which only come to leaders like himself and Wellington. He ordered his Polish lancers to take the battery. The gallant Poles charged up the pass, and the leading squadron went down almost to a man. They broke, fell back, rallied and charged again under cover of the fog and smoke. The gunners were slaughtered, the guns were seized, and in another moment the Spaniards were in headlong flight, throwing away their arms and abandoning their baggage. The French cavalry followed fast in pursuit: the bulk of the runaways fled to Talavera, and there they celebrated their safety by murdering their general. In six weeks Napoleon had scattered the Spanish armies. The stroke of brilliant audacity opened the way

to Madrid, and in a few days the French cavalry were before the capital. There was a fierce attack on the suburbs, and Napoleon menaced the city with a bombardment. But he had no mind to destroy his brother's capital, if indeed he did not for a time entertain the idea of superseding Joseph and administering Spain as a depndency of France. He still hoped that by an affectation of mildness he might induce the panic-stricken people to accept his supremacy. Threats were judiciously blended with promises, and the negotiations were not suffered to drag. Madrid was surrendered by the double-minded Morla and his vacillating colleagues. Doubtless Morla had already resolved to play the traitor; but indeed the miscellaneous inhabitants of La Corte were not of the stuff to make determined resistance. The regular troops and the patriotic irregulars had time to withdraw, and on the 4th December the Emperor made his entry, to find himself in undisputed possession. Whether the Spaniards gave him further trouble or no, he had assembled an imposing force to overawe the country. His *corps d'armée*, operating in concert, had each its allotted work. But his plans were upset by Moore and Zaragoza. He learned to his disappointment that Moore, in place of falling back on the report of his victories, was advancing on Salamanca and threatening his communications. Therefore, instead of prosecuting his designs on the south, he directed every available man against the British, and hurried westward himself to direct the movements in person.

That Moore did not lack audacity, as his disparagers averred, is evident. Had the Spaniards arrested the progress of Napoleon, had they even avoided crushing defeat, he was prepared to detach himself from his base at Lisbon and throw himself into the heart of Spain. As it was, the advance from Salamanca towards Sahagun was

daring enough, for it must draw upon him all the available French forces. But his courage was largely tempered by prudence, and when his allies failed him in every respect, though his purpose was partially achieved, retreat could only be a question of time, routes and celerity. His despondency as to great results was too well grounded. Napoleon, with far superior strength, followed him up as far as Astorga. There the Emperor handed over the pursuit to Soult, chiefly because he was preoccupied by the intelligence from Austria, partly, perhaps, because he was disinclined to be present at a possible reverse in the passes of Gallicia. Moore's retreat was conducted under no ordinary difficulties. Some of the superior officers were disaffected and almost mutinous; the rank and file were discontented when ordered to turn their backs on the enemy. There were no sufficient magazines to fall back upon. Unlike the Frenchman, who is a disciplined marauder, the English, when reduced to forage for themselves, broke loose from discipline and refused to obey. The peasants drove their cattle to the hills, and the pinch of hunger became daily more severe. The wine vaults in the towns were an irresistible temptation. Villa Franca was found to be full of the rabble that was the bulk of Romana's broken army, though Moore had begged the Spaniard to avoid his line of march. Yet still, when danger pressed, the troops showed a bold front. The pursuers had a serious check at Benevente; and at Lugo, having rallied the army on the heights, for two days Moore vainly offered battle. When the precipitate retreat was resumed, it degenerated into something like flight from sheer scarcity of food. When they entered the higher mountains, in the depth of a bitter winter, the men were thoroughly demoralised. The absurd provisions of the service had cumbered them with women and



A. J. Oliver. A.R.A. pinx. Walter L. Colls. Ph. Sc. A. Cardon. Sc.

Sir John Moore.

children. The transport animals gave out, and could not be replaced. Guns and ammunition waggons were abandoned; barrels of dollars were broached and the contents started down the precipices, tempting the soldiers to fill their pockets and sacrifice their lives. All the time Soult warily followed, pressing hard on the retreat, but avoiding fighting. Moore had nothing to gain by insisting on a battle, since victory could have gained him nothing but a brief delay. Between Lugo and Betanzos disorder had come to a head, and the losses were great. After leaving the former town in a blinding tempest of rain and sleet, the landmarks were obscured, the guides lost their way, and two of the three divisions strayed from the main road. Many of the numerous stragglers never rejoined the ranks, and when the main body found shelter in Betanzos, it arrived in utter confusion. There Moore halted for a day, and when the march was resumed it was soldierlike and orderly. There were 14,000 infantry with the colours when the head of the column looked down upon Corunna. The general anxiously gazed out to sea, but no fleet was to be seen in the roadstead or the offing. Adverse winds had delayed the ships which were to come round from Vigo. That Soult would seize his last chance of striking was certain, and all preparations were made for repelling the attack. Had the British force been sufficient, it might have occupied positions almost impregnable in the semi-circular heights enclosing the rocky arena in which the battle was to be fought. As it was, that advantage had to be abandoned to the French, and on these heights they formed the batteries which raked the plain with the lower eminences on which our battalions were posted. In men, guns and cavalry, and notably in the two latter arms, the French marshal