



GENERAL CRAUFURD

*From a drawing in the possession of* LIEUT.-COLONEL R. HOLDEN



the bridge, and he held that perilous and absurd post in front of the advancing enemy for two hours, till, when he did fall back, he had to pass the defile in all the confusion of a retreat, and pressed by an eager enemy five times as strong as himself.

The French came on with loud beating of drums and shrill clamour of voices. The converging columns quickened to a run as they saw the scanty British force before them; 4000 horsemen were sweeping up; white puffs of smoke shot thick and fast from the advancing guns. Ordinary troops caught in such a trap might well have broken, and a moment's failure in steadiness would have been for the English destruction. But the men of the Light Division were not ordinary troops. Craufurd's scanty cavalry met the advancing French with resolute charges, while the great body of French cavalry under Montbrun, who was not under Ney's orders, hung back, though Ney sent five officers in succession urging them to charge. Etiquette for Montbrun was more than victory!

Simmons describes the French as "coming on again and again with drums beating, French officers, like mountebanks, running forward, placing their hats on their swords, capering about like madmen, and crying 'Come on, children of our country! The first that advances Napoleon will reward him.' But nothing shook the order, or the obstinate courage, of the slowly retiring British." A body of hussars in bearskin caps

and light-coloured pelisses got amongst a broken group of Rifles, says Simmons, and began to sabre them; but the stubborn Rifles fought man to man, meeting the horsemen's sabres with their bayonets.

The Light Division fell back with dogged steadiness through nearly a mile of broken country, seamed with ravines and tangled with vineyards, before they reached the bridge. Nothing could surpass the cool soldiership of the British. They held each point of vantage stubbornly, checked the too vehement French with stern counter-charges, filed with adroit speed over the bridge, and instantly lined the farther bank to cover the passage with their fire. To gain time for the last files to cross, M'Leod of the 43rd, waving his cap, and calling on his men to follow, rode straight at the foremost French column; his soldiers, not waiting to form up, ran, an angry cluster, with threatening bayonets, at their officer's call. The French halted in doubt at that disquieting spectacle, and before they could advance again, the last British were across the bridge!

William Napier gives us a pen-picture of Craufurd during this stage of the fight. Napier was holding the road with desperate valour to cover the passage of the broken troops over the narrow bridge. His force consisted of some 300 men of various regiments, whom he had collected. "He (Craufurd) came upon me upon the road," says Napier, "and seemed overwhelmed with anguish at his own rashness in fight-

ing on that side of the river. I have always thought he was going to ride in amongst the enemy, who were close to us, but finding me with a considerable body of men in hand whom he had given up for lost, he changed his design. He was very wild in his appearance and manner." Napier's company alone lost in this bitter fight nearly half its number in killed and wounded. Craufurd, it must be remembered, had suffered the most shameful experiences a soldier can know under Whitelocke at Buenos Ayres. He had seen a fine army destroyed, a great enterprise wrecked, and the military honour of his country stained, by mere failure of fighting impulse in the general. That memory stung Craufurd's fiery nature to yet new fervours of daring. It predisposed him to fight always, on all occasions, and against all odds. Craufurd might not have shown such rash audacity on the Coa in 1810 if he had not witnessed, and suffered from, Whitelocke's helpless cowardice at Buenos Ayres in 1807.

Craufurd's six guns were now barking angrily across the river, from the farther bank, at the French as they came on at the quick-step to carry the bridge. An officer in a brilliant uniform led them, a drummer beating the *pas de charge* at his side. But so fierce and swift was the fire of English muskets and artillery, that no living man could cross the bridge. Rush after rush was made, and the pile of slain on the bridge rose till it was level with the parapet.

The French are adroit soldiers. They could not come to the river's edge without coming under the fire of the British Rifles on the opposite bank; "but some of them," Simmons records, "held up calabashes as if to say, 'Let us get some water to drink.' They were allowed to come down to the bank, when they instantly dropped flat amongst the rocks on its edge, and opened a deadly fire across the stream." George Napier of the 52nd was holding part of the river-bank against the French, and he describes another incident of the fight. "Where I was," he says, "the French only came half-way down to the bank of the river from the opposite height, and then a fine dashing fellow, a French staff officer, rode down just opposite my position to try if the river was fordable at that part. Not liking to fire at a single man, I called out to him, and made signs that he must go back; but he would not, and being determined to try it, he dashed fearlessly into the water. It was then necessary to fire at him, and instantly both man and horse fell dead, and their corpses floated down the stream!"

It is both asserted and denied that Picton refused to advance to Craufurd's help on the day of the combat of the Coa; but the evidence of Campbell, Craufurd's brigade-major, seems decisive. Campbell was present at the interview betwixt the two generals, both of them fine soldiers, and both too self-willed and fiery to make co-operation easy. "Slight was

the converse," says Campbell, "short the interview, but it was hot as short. Craufurd asked Picton if he did not consider it advisable to move out something from Pinhel to support the Light Division; and in terms not bland, Picton declared he would do no such thing; and with high looks and fierce words the two British generals parted."

General le Marchant draws a vivid picture of these two equally gallant but strangely contrasted soldiers. "Picton," he says, "when wrapped in his military cloak, might have been mistaken for a bronze statue of Cato; so staid was he, so deliberate and austere. Craufurd, of a diminutive and not imposing figure, was characterised by a vivacity almost mercurial both in thought and act; his eager spirit and fertile brain ever hurrying him into difficulty and danger. Craufurd had the faults natural to a hasty temper, Picton those belonging to a morose nature. With all his faults, Craufurd was unquestionably the finest commander of light troops the Peninsular War produced."

Napier says that it was the fine training which Moore had impressed on the Light Division which enabled them to evade Massena's stroke on the banks of the Coa. Their matchless discipline was their protection. "A phantom hero from Corunna saved them." But that is scarcely fair to Craufurd. He was an unrivalled master in outpost warfare; and, to quote Kincaid—a quite competent authority—"To

Craufurd belonged the chief merit of making the Light Division the incomparable fighting instrument it became."

Craufurd held the bridge till night, and then fell back in the darkness with a loss of nearly 300 killed and wounded. But of the French a thousand had fallen. Craufurd's own summary of the day's operations is expressive. "A corps of 4000 men," he says, "remained during the whole day in the presence of an army amounting to 24,000, performed in the presence of so superior a force one of the most difficult operations of war, a retreat from a very broken and extensive position over one narrow defile . . . and in the course of the affair this corps of 4000 men inflicted upon this army of 24,000 a loss equal to double of that which it sustained."

Almeida, which should have held out for weeks, fell by an accident in four days. On August 27, when the trenches had been only open three days, the great magazine and the fortress were blown up by mischance. Night was falling on the town; the fire of the guns had ceased. Suddenly a deep sustained blast of sound rose in the darkening sky and swept over the landscape. The great castle crumbled like a pack of cards. A column of smoke and fire shot up into the air; 500 of the garrison were slain almost at a breath, and with such completeness was the town destroyed, that only six houses were left standing.

The frontier fortresses had thus fallen with un-



expected haste, and Massena as he crossed the border issued a sonorous and very French proclamation. He called on the Portuguese to turn their arms against the English who had supplied them. "The English," he declared, "were their only enemies." Resistance was vain. "Can the feeble armies of the British general," asked Massena, "expect to oppose the victorious legions of the Emperor?" The trembling Portuguese were exhorted to "snatch the moment that mercy and generosity offered."

Napoleon himself shared Massena's confidence. "Wellington," he wrote, "has only 18,000 men; Hill has only 6000. It would be ridiculous to suppose that 25,000 English can balance 60,000 French, if the latter do not trifle, but fall boldly on." Massena, it must be confessed, did in a sense "trifle." He lingered for two months after Ciudad Rodrigo had fallen. He was old; he was in an idle mood; he was amusing himself with a mistress when he should have been pushing on his battalions with breathless speed.

Wellington, meanwhile, had framed his plans for the defence of Portugal with the sagacity of a statesman and the warlike skill of a great captain. Since Portugal was to be the battle-ground against Napoleon, and all its resources were to be employed in the strife, he urged that England must sustain the public finances of the country. A subsidy of £300,000 a year was granted towards the civil expenses of Portugal, another of £150,000 to enable

the Portuguese Regency to adequately pay its officers, bringing up the total English subsidies to more than £1,000,000 per annum. The different financial methods of the opposing armies illustrate their separate ideals. The English, with a force of only 30,000 men in the Peninsula, expended £376,000 monthly in maintaining the campaign. Napoleon, with more than 350,000 troops in the Peninsula, limited the charges on their account on the French Treasury to £80,000 per month. England, that is, spent in the Peninsula £11 per month for every soldier under her flag there. Napoleon, for the same purpose, spent only four shillings per man. Spanish or Portuguese pockets—as far as the French were concerned—had to supply the balance.

Wellington accepted the office of Marshal-General of Portugal, and practically took the whole civil and military administration of the country into his own hands. The ancient military law, which made the whole able-bodied population liable to military service, was revived. Beresford had by this time created a Portuguese army with British discipline and British officers; and that curious genius for the leadership of other races which has made British rule in India—and, indeed, the whole modern British empire—possible, had already transformed the shambling inert Portuguese private into a soldier not unfit to meet even French veterans in battle.

## CHAPTER XVI

### BUSACO

THE strategy on which Wellington depended for baffling the French rush on Portugal may be told almost in a sentence. He had created a great natural fortress—the far-famed lines of Torres Vedras—which could be held against the utmost strength of France. He would fall back on this, wasting the country as he went, so that Massena would find himself stopped by an impregnable barrier, and in the midst of a wilderness where his great army must starve. Meanwhile, on the rear and along the communications of the enemy a tireless guerilla warfare would be kindled. Massena, under these conditions, must either retreat or perish.

It was a great scheme, planned and executed with the highest genius. As a matter of fact, within the sweep of Wellington's great hill-fortress the liberty of Europe found its last shelter. And the moment when Massena fell sullenly back from the lines of Torres Vedras marks the decisive and fatal turn of the tide in Napoleon's fortunes.

But Wellington's designs were little understood

either in England or by his own forces; and, at the very moment when he had shaped this great and triumphant strategy, destined to achieve such memorable results, he was the subject everywhere of the despairing doubts of his friends, as well as the loud-tongued criticisms of his enemies. "It is probable," Lord Liverpool himself said, "the army will embark in September." "Your chances of successful defence," he wrote to Wellington in March 1810, "are considered here by all persons, military as well as civil, so improbable, that I could not recommend any attempt at what may be called desperate resistance." Wellington's own officers wrought great mischief by their indiscreetly uttered doubts. Wellington complained of this with a vigour which has all the effect of wit. "As soon as an accident happens," he said, "every man who can write, and who has a friend who can read, sits down to give his account of what he does not know, and his comments on what he does not understand; and these are diligently circulated and exaggerated by the idle and malicious, of whom there are plenty in all armies."

When Wellington's friends in the English Cabinet, and the members of his own staff in Portugal, were of this temper, it may be imagined how loud and angry were the criticisms expended on the unfortunate general by his political enemies everywhere. The Opposition in the House of Commons moved for an inquiry into the conduct of the campaign. The

Common Council of London, mistaking themselves for a body of military experts, solemnly accused Wellington, in an address to the King, of "ignorance," of "an incapacity for profiting by the lessons of experience," and of having exhibited in the Talavera campaign, "with equal rashness and ostentation, nothing but a useless valour." The spectacle of a group of London aldermen, newly charged with turtle-soup, rebuking the military "ignorance" of Wellington still has an exquisite relish of pure humour. One orator in Parliament declared it to be "melancholy and alarming" that Wellington should have "the impertinence to think of defending Portugal with 50,000 men, of whom only 20,000 were English. The only British soldiers left in the Peninsula before six months were over," this writer added, "would be prisoners of war"—a singularly bad prophecy!

The attacks of English newspapers and the criticisms of English orators did not shake Wellington's steadfast temper, but they curiously deceived Napoleon. He was persuaded that he read the mind of England in the leading articles of the Opposition papers. He reprinted most of them, indeed, in the *Moniteur* for the consolation of French readers; and his belief that the English Cabinet must soon withdraw Wellington or itself be overthrown, made him regard the Spanish war as a trivial thing which could be safely neglected. So he left that conflagra-

tion unextinguished. He undertook the struggle with Russia while Spain was still unconquered, and thus made that fatal division in his forces which ultimately ruined him. The writers and orators attacking Wellington at this stage of the conflict did not in the least intend it, but, as a matter of fact, they rendered his plans a great service. They helped to keep Napoleon from coming himself to Spain!

On September 15 Massena set his huge columns in movement, and began what he fondly hoped was his march to Lisbon. His troops carried seventeen days' rations; communications with Spain were abandoned, and Massena believed that within those days the campaign would be over.

Never was a more mistaken calculation! Massena blundered at the outset in his choice of road, taking that along the right bank of the Mondego to Coimbra, fretted with every kind of difficulty. His Portuguese advisers had misled him. "There are certainly," said Wellington, "many bad roads in Portugal, but the enemy has taken decidedly the worst in the whole kingdom." And into that worst of all Portuguese roads Massena poured cavalry, infantry, artillery, and baggage, in one vast and confused mass. Wellington fell steadily back, wasting the country as he went, and compelling the entire population to fall back with him. The clamour and discontent thus kindled may be guessed. Wellington's cool purpose was unshaken; but to steady the courage of the

wavering, abate the too eager spirits of the French, and satisfy the temper of his own troops, growing angrily impatient of retreat, Wellington turned at bay at Busaco, and fought what was really a political battle.

Busaco is a wild and lofty ridge, stretching for a distance of eight miles across the valley of the Mondego, and thus barring Massena's advance. With its sullen gorges, its cloven crest, the deep, narrow valley running along its front—a sort of natural ditch, so narrow that a cannon-shot spanned it, so deep and gloomy that the eye could not pierce its depths—Busaco was an ideal position for defence. "If Massena attacks me here," said Wellington, "I shall beat him." The single defect of the position was its great size. Some portion of its rocky face or of its tree-clad heights must be left uncovered. The French van, indeed, came in sight of Busaco, and saw its ridge sparkling with bayonets, before the British were all in position, and Ney was keen for instant onfall. But Massena was loitering ten miles in the rear; no attack could be made till he came up, and the opportunity was lost.

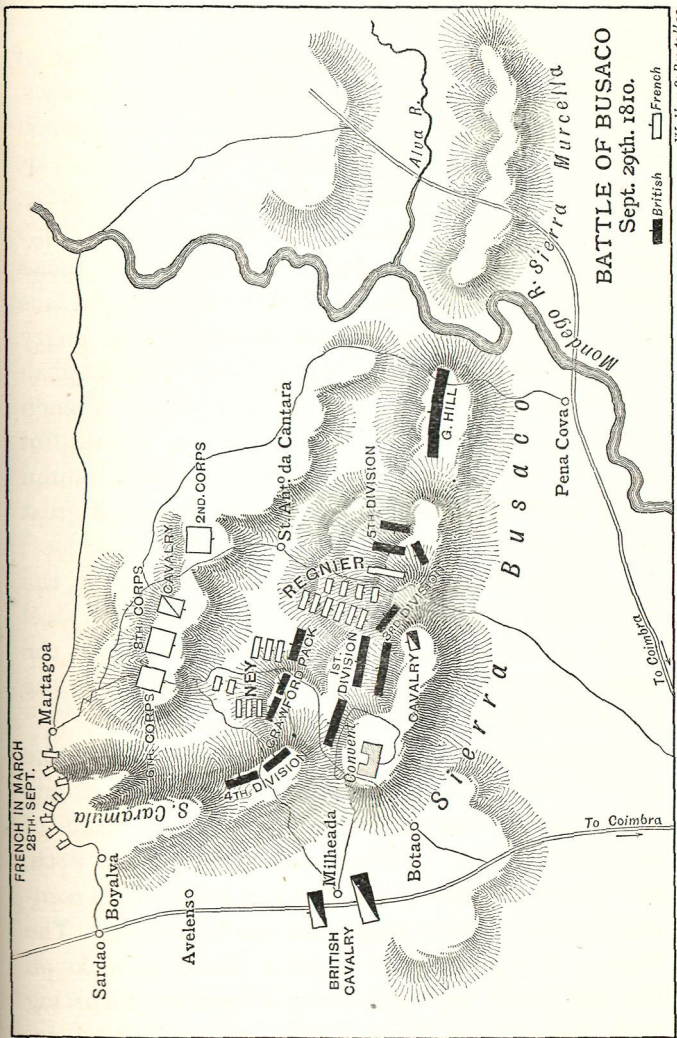
On September 27, the British troops watched from the steep ridge of Busaco the great French host coming on. It seemed like the march of a Persian army or the migration of a people. The roads, the valleys, the mountain slopes, the open forest intervals, glittered with steel, and were crowded, not merely with guns and battalions, but with flocks and waggons;

while over the whole moving landscape slowly rose a drifting continent of dust. Says Leith Hay: "In imposing appearance as to numerical strength, I have never seen anything comparable to that of the enemy's army from Busaco. It was not alone an army encamped before us, but a multitude. Cavalry, infantry, artillery, cars of the country, horses, tribes of mules with their attendants, sutlers, followers of every description, crowded the moving scene upon which Wellington and his army looked down." It was nightfall before the human flood reached the point where the stern heights of Busaco arrested its flow. Then, in the darkness, innumerable camp-fires gleamed, and the two great armies slept.

It is always difficult to crystallise into lucid sentences the incidents of a great battle, and Busaco, if only by reason of the wide space of rugged and broken ground on which it was fought, easily lends itself to mistake. But the chief features of the battle are clear. Ney, with three divisions, was to attack the English left, held by Craufurd and the Light Division; Regnier, with two columns, was to fall on the English right, guarded by Picton and the third division—"the Fighting Third." The two points of attack were three miles apart.

Regnier's troops were a real *corps d'élite*, and included the 36th, a regiment specially honoured by Napoleon. It was still grey dawn, cold and bitter,





**BATTLE OF BUSACO**  
 Sept. 29th. 1810.

■ British □ French

Walker & Boutwell sc.

with the mists clinging to the craggy shoulder of Busaco, and the stars shining faintly in the heavens, when Regnier put his columns in motion. French troops, well led, excel in attack. At the quick-step, Regnier's gallant columns plunged into the ravine, and with order unbroken and speed unchecked, with loud beating of drums and fierce clamour of voices and sparkle of burnished steel, they swept up the face of the hill, their skirmishers running in an angry foam of smoke and flame before them. The English guns tore long lanes through the dense French column; but though it left behind it a dreadful trail of wounded and dying, the charging column never paused. The 88th, an Irish regiment of great fighting fame, waited grimly on the crest for their foes; but the contour of the hill, aided, perhaps, by the spectacle of that steadfast red line sparkling with steel on its summit, swung the great French column to the right. It broke, an angry human tidal wave, over the lower shoulder to the left of the 88th.

Four companies of the 45th held that part of the ridge. From the dip in the hill came the shouts of contending men and swiftly succeeding blasts of musketry volleys. Wallace, the colonel of the 88th, sent one of his officers running to a point which commanded the scene to learn what was happening. The French, he reported, had seized a cluster of rocks on the crest, while, beyond, a heavy column was thrusting back the slender lines of the 45th. Wallace de-

livered a brief address in soldierly vernacular to his men. "Now, Connaught Rangers," he said, "mind what you are going to do; and when I bring you face to face with those French rascals, drive them down the hill. Push home to the muzzle!" Then, throwing his men into column, he took them at the double along the crest of the hill. The 45th, at that moment, was pouring quick and rolling volleys on the French, but the great column came on without pause. It was evident that in another moment the thin line of the 45th would be broken, and Wallace took his men into the fight at a run, striking the French column on its shoulder. An officer of the 88th describes the scene: "Wallace threw himself from his horse, and placing himself at the head of the 45th and 88th, with Gwynne of the 45th on the one side of him, and Captain Seton of the 88th at the other, ran forward at a charging pace into the midst of the terrible flame in his front. All was now confusion and uproar, smoke, fire, and bullets; officers and soldiers, French drummers and French 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!—at the head of his devoted followers, and calling out to his soldiers to 'press forward!' It was a proud moment for Wallace and Gwynne when they saw their gallant comrades breaking down and trampling under

their feet this splendid French division, composed of some of the best troops the world could boast of. The leading regiment, the 36th, one of Napoleon's favourite battalions, was nearly destroyed; upwards of 200 soldiers and their old colonel, covered with orders, lay dead in a small space, and the face of the hill was strewn with dead and wounded."

Wallace, with fine soldiership, halted his men on the slope of the hill; and as he dressed his line, Wellington rode up and told the panting colonel of the 88th that he "had never seen a more gallant charge." Wellington, with Beresford by his side, had seen, from an eminence near, the 88th running forward in their charge, a regiment attacking a column, and Beresford had expressed some uneasiness as to the result. Wellington was silent; but when Regnier's division went reeling down the hill, wrecked by the furious onfall of the 88th, he tapped Beresford on the shoulder and said, "Well, Beresford, look at them now!" Marbot says of the 88th that their first volley, delivered at fifteen paces, stretched more than 500 men on the ground.

At one point on the British right the French for a moment succeeded. The light companies of the 74th and the 88th were thrust back by Regnier's second column. Picton rallied the broken lines within sixty yards of the eagerly advancing French, and led them forward in a resolute charge, which thrust the French column down the slope; and, to quote

a French account of their own experiences, "they found themselves driven in a heap down the steep descent up which they had climbed. The English lines followed them half-way down, firing volleys—to which our own men could not reply—and murderous they were."

Ney led the attack on the British left. Three huge columns broke out of the gloomy ravine and came swiftly up the steep face of the hill. From the crest above jets of flame and smoke shot out as the English guns opened on the advancing French. A fringe of pointed musketry flames sparkled along a wide stretch of the hill below the guns, where the Rifles were thrown out in skirmishing order. But the rest of the hill above seemed empty, and the French came on with all the fire of victory in their blood. Neither the red flame of the artillery nor the venomous rifle-fire of the skirmishers could stay them. But on the reverse slope Craufurd held the 43rd and 52nd drawn up in line ready for a great and surprising counter-stroke. On came the French columns. The flourished swords of the officers, the tall bearskin hats and sparkling bayonets of the leading files, were visible over the ridge. The skirmishers of the Rifles had been brushed aside like dust. The French were already over the summit, a soldierly figure leading and vehemently calling them on. It was General Simon, and an English rifleman, falling back with fierce reluctance, suddenly turned

and shot the unfortunate French general in the face, shattering it out of human resemblance.

At that moment Craufurd sent forward his two regiments, in a resolute counter-charge. Tradition has it, indeed, that Craufurd did not "send" the regiments forward; his fighting blood was kindled to flame, and he ran in advance of them toward the charging French, flourishing his sword and shouting to them, as if by way of taunt, "Avancez! avancez!" Column and line for a moment seemed to meet. Each man in the leading section of the French raised his musket and fired point-blank into the human wall coming forward at the double. A sudden gap in this moving red wall was for an instant visible, and two officers and ten men fell. Not a shot from a French musket had missed! Then the long British line broke into a rending volley. Thrice, at a distance of not more than five yards, that dreadful blast of sound, with its accompanying tempest of flying lead, broke on the staggering French column. The human mass, in all its pride of glittering military array, seemed to shrivel under those fierce-darting points of flame. In tumult and dust, a broken mass, with arms abandoned, ranks torn asunder, and discipline forgotten, the unhappy column rolled down the steep face of Busaco, strewing its rocks with the dead and the dying. One of the Napiers—afterwards the conqueror of Scinde—shared in that fight, and fell in it, shot cruelly

