

THE
 HISTORY
 OF THE
 KING'S GERMAN LEGION.

CHAPTER I.

THE possession of Badajos being now of the greatest importance to the further operations of the allied army, Lord Wellington determined upon at once proceeding with the siege. Want of time and means precluded the possibility of a regular attack being made against the body of the place, and it was, therefore, decided that simultaneous attacks should be directed against fort Christoval and the Castle.

1811.

May.

Jones's
 Journals
 of Sieges
 in Spain.

A battering train was accordingly prepared; the artillery and engineer force was increased, and on the 25th of May the seventh division under general Houston invested fort Christoval. The batteries on both sides were completed on the night of the 2d of June; and a breach in the fort having been considered practicable on the 6th, an assault was ordered to be made that night.

1811.
June. But between dark and the period which had been fixed for the attack, the garrison had cleared away the rubbish from the foot of the breach, and when the advance arrived, they found it impracticable. An attempt was then made to enter by escalade, but the ladders with which the troops were provided, having been only intended to aid in mounting the breach proved too short, and the garrison, overwhelming the assailants with various missiles, obliged them finally to retire with the loss of twelve killed and ninety wounded. A second attempt was made on the night of the 9th, when four hundred men marched to the assault, but the garrison of the fort had been considerably augmented, and they received the assailants with such resistance, aided by a mass of shells and combustibles, that after braving destruction until forty were killed, and one hundred wounded, the remainder were ordered to retire.

Lord Wellington now seeing the impossibility of obtaining possession of fort Christoval without advancing to the crest of the glacis, and having received intimation of the approach of the enemy in force, determined upon turning the siege into a blockade.

The northern branch of the allied army under general Spenser, now retired before the enemy into the Alemtejo, and Marmont was enabled to open his communications with Soult.

The officers of the King's German Legion employed

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upon these operations against Badajos were; of the engineers, captains Meinecke and Wedekind, and of the artillery, captain Cleves. The successful manner in which the latter officer conducted the operations which were committed to him on the right bank of the Guadiana, met with the particular notice of the commander in chief.*

1811.
 June.

It is here necessary to detail some changes which, about this time, took place among those regiments and brigades of the legion which were employed in the Peninsula.

The first hussars, which, since the battle of Fuentes Onoro, had been occupied with the outpost duty in front of Ciudad Rodrigo, broke up from their cantonments there on the 31st of May, and, accompanying the march of general Spenser's army, came into quarters at Portalegre on the 23d of June. Three troops of the second hussars, which had been brought from the depôt of that regiment in England, also joined the army of the Alemtejo. They were formed into two weak squadrons under captain Wiering, and with the thirteenth English light dragoons, made out a light cavalry brigade, which was commanded by major-general Long. Major von dem Bussche was afterwards removed from Cadiz to take the command of these squadrons.

Journal of
 1st Hussars
 MSS.

Journal of
 2d Hussars
 MSS.

The eleventh light dragoons took the place of the

* Captain Cleves of the Hanoverian artillery, conducted that department on the right of the Guadiana with great success."—*Lord Wellington's Despatch*.

1811. sixteenth in the brigade of general Anson, who also
 June. was relieved in his command by major-general
 Victor von Alten.

The detachments of the light infantry brigade of the legion, which, it is to be remembered, had been attached to the northern army, as an independent corps of skirmishers under major von Wurmb, were also transferred to the Alemtejo, and, after an absence of more than two years from their brigade, joined it at Campo Major on the 21st. These battalions were, soon after, brigaded with a battalion of Brunswick light infantry, and together with one English and one Portuguese brigade, placed in the seventh division under the command of major-general Sontag.* The seventh line battalion of the legion was broken up to supply the deficiencies in the three other line battalions, which were then serving in the Peninsula; and the officers, non-commissioned officers and staff, were sent to England to form a new regiment.

Journal of
 2d Hussars
 MSS.

The services of the second hussars were soon called into action; for the French were busy with the relief of Badajos, and kept a strong force of cavalry in motion in its vicinity. On the 13th the enemy were fallen in with by a patrol of this regiment under lieutenant Meister, who put the French

* English Brigade—51st, 68th, and Chasseurs Britanniques.—3 battalions.

German do. 1st & 2d light batt. K. G. L. & Brunswickers 3 do.

Portuguese do. 4th Caçadores, 7th and 8th Regiments, 3 do.

9 battalions

dragoons to flight, and brought in six men and ten horses prisoners: the lieutenant and four horses were wounded. 1811.
June.

On the following day the enemy appeared with so strong a force of cavalry and horse-artillery that general Long deemed it advisable to retire across the Guadiana, and the brigade bivouacked near Elvas, where it was joined by the eleventh English dragoons.

Lord Wellington had been attentively watching ^{Napier.} the movements of the French army, and when Soult's advanced guard had reached los Santos, leaving the third and seventh divisions to maintain the blockade of Badajos, he concentrated the covering army at Albuera, which position, expecting a battle, he had entrenched. The English commander hoped to engage Soult separately, but the cautious manner in which the French marshal moved, prevented his object from being accomplished, and on the 17th the allies passed the Guadiana, raising the blockade on the previous day.

The united French armies entered Badajos on the 19th, at a moment when the governor, despairing of success, was preparing means of escape. Lord Wellington now placed his troops on both sides of the Caya, with cavalry posts towards its mouth, and on the Guadiana, in front of Elvas. The French, driving these outposts before them, pushed their cavalry across the Guadiana on the 21st, when part of general Long's brigade was brought into an affair of more than ordinary importance.

1811.
 June. On this day the second hussars of the legion held the outposts at Quinta de Gremezia, between Elvas and Badajos; their outlying picquet, under lieutenant von Issendorf, was advanced towards the Guadiana, and their left flank was protected by a squadron of the eleventh dragoons, posted towards Badajos.

Journal of
 2d Hussars
 MSS.

Early on the morning of the 22d, soon after Issendorf's picquet had been relieved by a picquet of the same regiment under lieutenant von Stoltzenberg, and was already in march to the rear, the relief was attacked by a superior force of French cavalry and driven back. Issendorf, on being informed of the circumstance, instantly wheeled his men about, and hurried to the assistance of his comrade, and the two picquets then uniting, succeeded in keeping the enemy in check until captain Schulze with about half of the hussar detachment, was able to come up. To these lieutenant Crawford of the eleventh, who was also on his return from duty, voluntarily added his picquet, and, thus reinforced, Schulze charged two squadrons of Polish lancers, which formed the enemy's advance, put them to flight, and took three officers, and several men and horses prisoners.

Unfortunately, however, the victors were imprudent enough to follow up the pursuit; for several fresh columns of the enemy soon appeared advancing to the support of the lancers; and although captain Wiering brought up the rest of the hussars from Quinta de Gremezia, the whole were obliged to

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retreat, and in the passing of a ravine, they suffered considerably. However on reaching the village they again made front, and the enemy halted; and soon afterwards, the eleventh appearing on the Elvas road, the French withdrew altogether. In this affair, captain Wiering, lieutenants Borchers and von Gruben of the hussars were wounded, two men were killed, and about twenty were wounded and taken.

1811.
 June.

On their way back the enemy fell in with the squadron of the eleventh, which, as has been stated, was posted on the left of the German picquet, and whose commander, probably expecting that general Long would advance with the whole brigade, had retained his position. On seeing the French, he mistook them for Spanish cavalry, but soon discovering his error, gallantly charged the enemy's column, and broke through two squadrons. Here, however, his brave fellows became surrounded, and the whole squadron, consisting of about seventy men and horses, were obliged to surrender.

Notes of
 lieut.-col.
 von Issen-
 dorf.
 MSS.

The French troops were now quartered along the Guadiana, above and below Badajos, and Lord Wellington's situation became critical. The enemy were before him, with a far superior force, particularly in cavalry; the Portuguese government had utterly neglected their fortresses, and almost starved their troops; many of the British lay sick and wounded, and the military chest was empty. But the firmness of the British commander was not shaken, and notwithstanding all the complicated difficulties of his

Napier.

1811.
June. situation, he was ready to accept battle on the banks of the Caya. Soult, however, declined the risque; the defeats of Busaco, Sabugal, Fuentes and Albuera had not yet been forgotten by his troops, and although superior in physical superiority, the moral force of his army was not such as to warrant him in venturing on a pitched battle.

Lord Wellington now sought to divert the attention of the enemy from his front, by concerting with the Spanish general Blake, an irruption into Seville, with a view to the dispersion of the French army before Cadiz, and in pursuance of this plan, Blake crossed the Guadiana on the 22d. Soult hearing of his march, moved with the left of his army and some cavalry upon Seville; Marmont, also, prepared to retire; and thus, although Blake's injudicious proceedings prevented the main object of the operation from being accomplished, Lord Wellington's plan was so far successful as to break up the great army in his front.

Soult routed the Spaniards at Baza on the 9th of August, and soon after, cleared the whole eastern frontier of Andalusia; meantime Marmont retired gradually from Badajos and quartered the greater part of his troops in the valley of the Tagus. The allied army was thus relieved of the presence of the French, and having been also reinforced by detachments from England, Lord Wellington resolved to adopt a new system of operations.

Leaving general Hill with ten thousand infantry,

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a division of cavalry, and four batteries of artillery in the neighbourhood of Portalegre and Estremoz, he determined upon placing the rest of the army in quarters at Castello da Vide, Marvao, and other places near the Tagus. He hoped to find an opportunity of taking Ciudad Rodrigo before Marmont could come to its assistance, and for this purpose, caused a battering train to be secretly brought to Lamego, and necessary stores for a siege to be transported from thence to Villa Ponto near Celerico.

1811.

July.

The allies broke up from the Caya on the 21st of July, and in the beginning of August, when Lord Wellington had reason to believe that Ciudad Rodrigo was in want of provisions, he suddenly crossed the Tagus and marched towards that fortress. This march had the double object of saving Galicia by menacing the rear of an army under Dorsenne, which was then invading it, and of relieving Murcia from the operations of Soult, by drawing away part of the supporting army to the protection of Badajos.

Wellington arrived upon the Coa about the 8th of August, but found that the French had provisioned the fortress for two months, a few days before his arrival; he therefore quartered the troops 'near the sources of the Coa and Agueda, close to the line of communication between Marmont and Dorsenne.

The preparations for the siege went on briskly until the British commander learned that the disposable force of the enemy was too great to admit of

1811. his attacking the place, and he, therefore, resolved
 August. upon substituting a blockade.

Guelpic
 Archives.
 MSS.

The allied cavalry at the outposts were now kept on the alert. A picquet of twenty men, composed of equal numbers of the first hussars and eleventh dragoons, under the command of an officer of the eleventh, was surprized at St. Martin de Trebejo on the 15th, and nearly half of the party made prisoners.

On this occasion a hussar named Nebel, displayed a degree of gallantry and presence of mind that deserves notice. The officer in command of the picquet had been led by the reports of his patrols to believe that the enemy were not within six leagues of the village, and therefore allowed his men to draw their rations; but no sooner were they thus engaged when an outcry was heard signifying that the French were in the place. The men instantly hurried to their horses. The hussars, heedless of a sharp fire of musquetry which followed them into the stable, and continued to fall upon them there, bridled their horses, mounted, and rode boldly out. Their serjeant had been hit in the bridle arm, and their corporal, together with nearly the whole of the eleventh, had been taken prisoners, when Nebel, seizing the bridle of the wounded serjeant's horse, led him forward exclaiming "the first hussars don't surrender," and forcing his way through the musquetry fire, which had already wounded five of his comrades, brought off the rest of the hussars in safety!