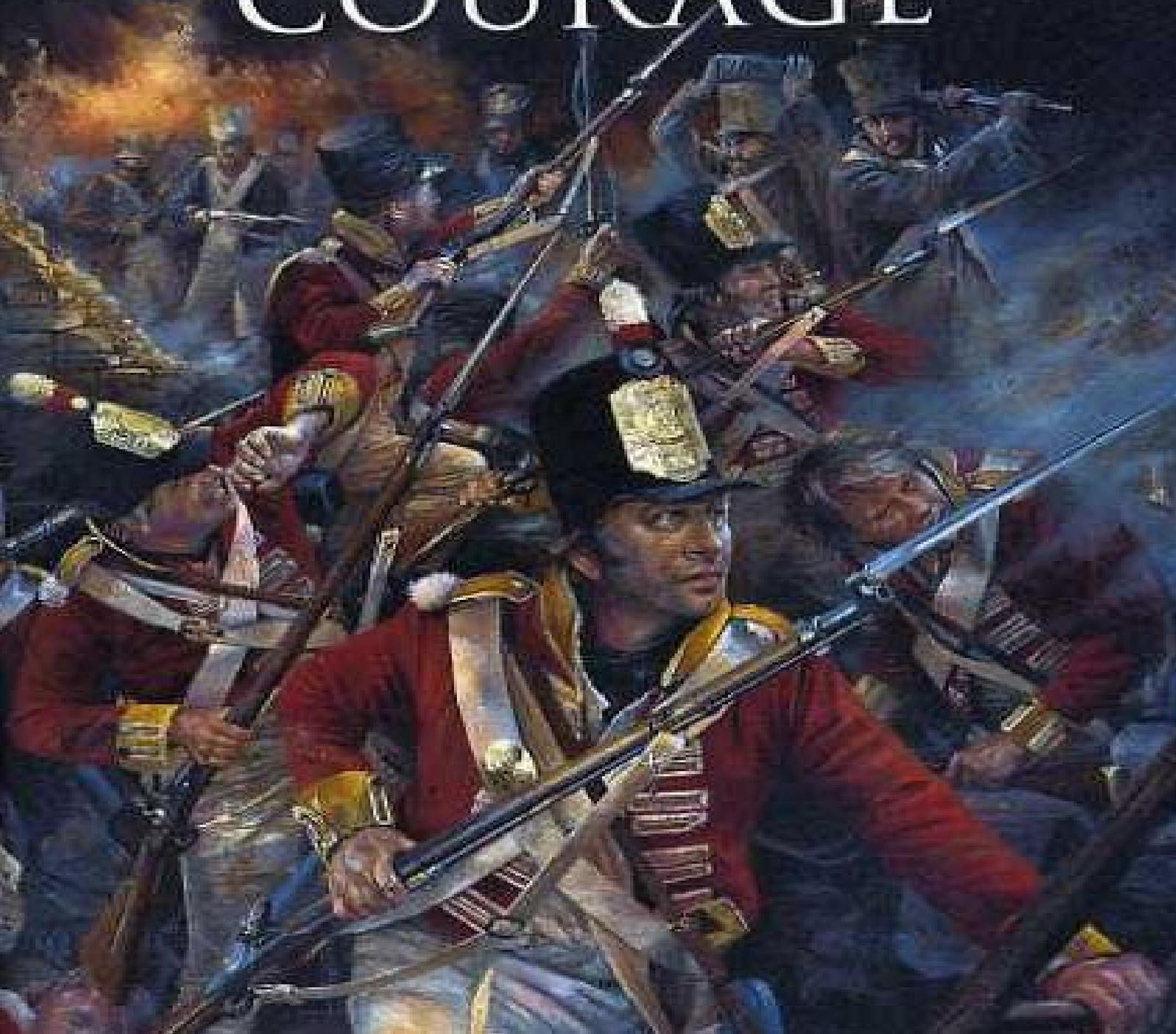


ALLAN MALLINSON

AN ACT OF COURAGE



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To

Duggie

Lieutenant-Colonel C. R. D. Gray

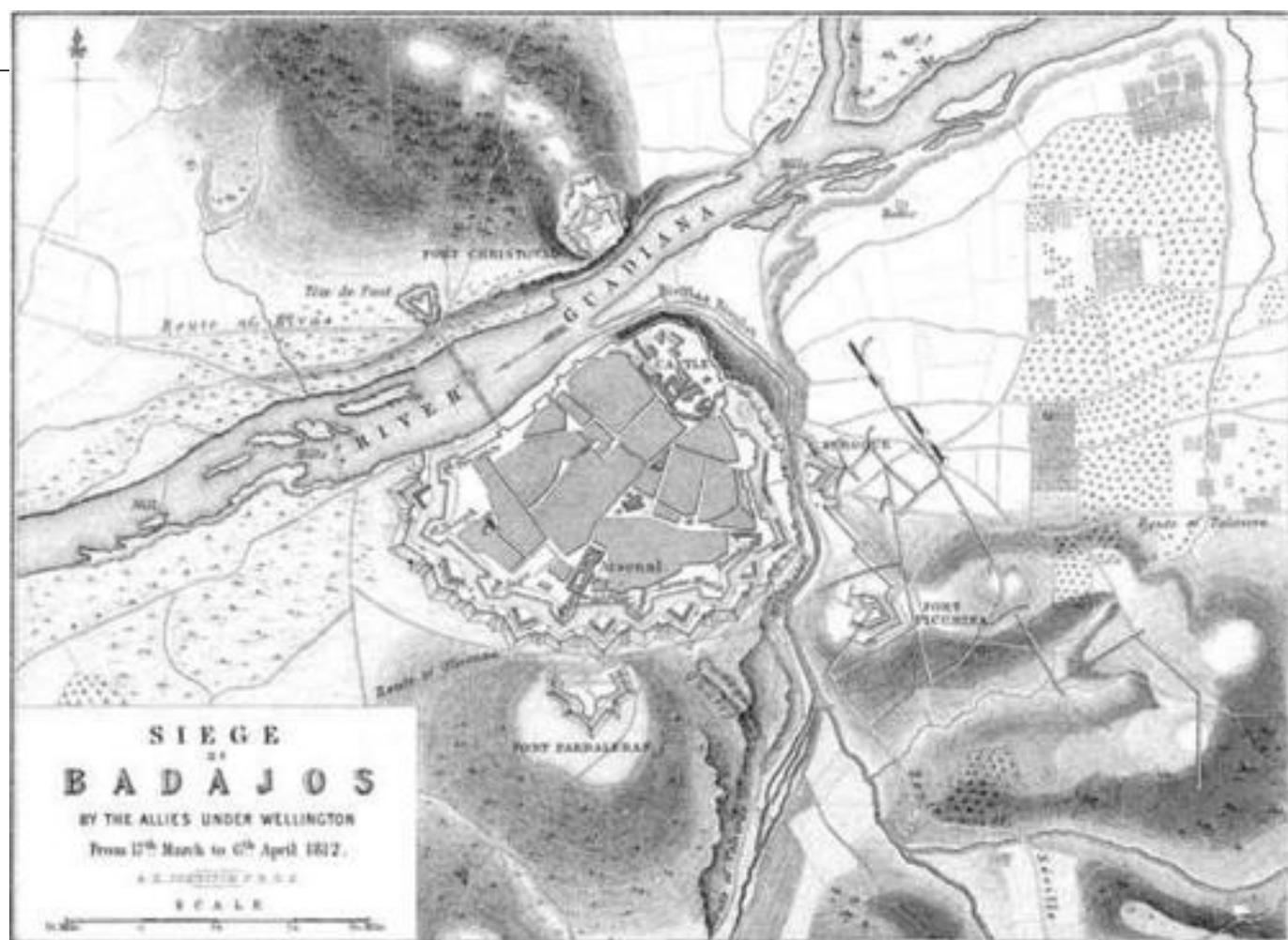
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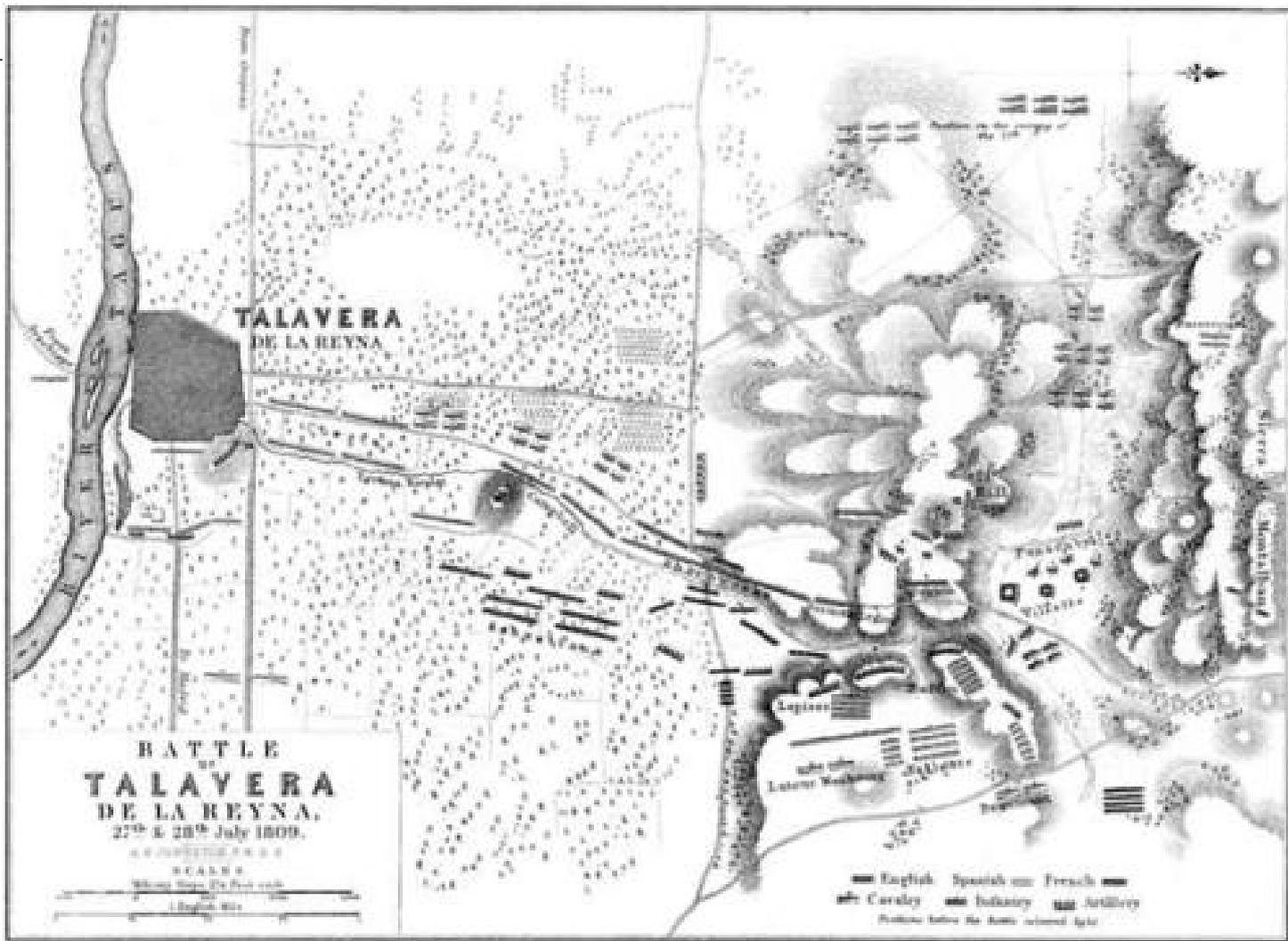
1909–2004

The Ultimate Cavalryman

A CLOSE RUN THING
THE NIZAM'S DAUGHTERS*
A REGIMENTAL AFFAIR
A CALL TO ARMS
THE SABRE'S EDGE
RUMOURS OF WAR

*Published outside the UK under the title HONORABLE COMPANY





FOREWORD

The cuts in the British infantry announced last year will change the face of soldiering for ever. Regiments whose names the Duke of Wellington would have seen each day in the ‘morning state’ during the long years of the Peninsular War and Waterloo will disappear – the Royal Scots, Green Howards, Cheshires, Royal Welch Fusiliers, Black Watch, to name but a few. No longer will a man commissioned or enlisted – join a tight-knit band of six hundred brothers, his county regiment, and stay with them throughout his service as they move as a body from post to post. Instead an infantryman will go from one battalion to another within a large ‘regional’ unit – what is known as ‘trickle posting’. It is, of course, a judgement as to what effect these cuts will have – how continuing commitments and new contingencies will be met by fewer battalions – and what effect the enormous change in regimental organization will have on recruiting, retention and cohesion, the three areas in which the county regiments have been so strong. However, from the long perspective of military history – which is the perspective of my tales – it appears there is but one unvarying lesson of war: there is never enough infantry. *Vide Iraq.*

This, I believe, is the first *lesson* of war because the man himself is the first *weapon* of war – a man too easily forgotten in an age of beguiling and expensive technology. The man and the regiment are inextricably linked: trust and cohesion in battle come from soldiers living and training together, long term, and acquiring a sense that they are part of something bigger than just the collection of individuals who answer the roll call on a particular day. It was never planned thus. Ironically, the regimental system, which the historian Sir John Keegan has called ‘an accidental act of genius’, grew out of the eighteenth century’s penny-pinching arrangements for raising more troops.

In the period of which I write, the danger in not keeping infantrymen together in the battalions in which they train is well illustrated by a letter from one of the Duke of Wellington’s generals after the Battle of Talavera (where, in *An Act of Courage*, we shall find Matthew Hervey in the thick of things, once more). Complaining of the poor performance of a ‘detachment battalion’, one in which the men were cobbled together from half a dozen different regiments, the general observes, ‘They have no *esprit de corps* for their interior economy among them, though they will fight. They are careless of all else, and the officers do not look to their temporary field-officers and superiors under whom they are placed, as in an established regiment. I see much of their indiscipline.’

So the new ‘mobility’ of infantrymen, as they change from one battalion to another, was not unknown in Wellington’s day. In Wellington’s army, too, the *officers* – both infantry and cavalry – would often move from one regiment to another as vacancies occurred, since that was what promotion by purchase required. The duke himself served in half a dozen regiments on his way to becoming lieutenant-colonel of the 33rd Foot, which was renamed The Duke of Wellington’s Regiment in his honour (and which is now also to be disbanded).

However, an examination of the annual Army Lists during the years of the Peninsular War (1808–1814), which record the name and seniority of every officer, shows a high degree of stability. Fortunately for the cohesion of the fighting battalions, officers seemed happy enough to stay with their regiments, accepting that promotion would be slow or might not come at all. Perhaps this was because many officers had little real appetite for promotion: there was, after all, no great financial advantage to it (indeed, it usually required capital outlay). Perhaps they did not see the army as

‘career’, and therefore did not have a strong commitment to the profession of arms, content instead to be in agreeable, gentlemanlike company, doing their bit to defeat Bonaparte until their share of the family fortune permitted them to retire to an equally agreeable sporting life as a country gentleman. As a rule they brought neither great intellect nor address to the regiment. But they did bring absolute physical courage. As many an old soldier would say later, ‘The NCOs showed us how to fight, and the officers how to die.’

There were, of course, exceptions to the ‘brave amateur’ rule. There were aristocrats who regarded generalship as a natural extension of their rank in life, and who applied themselves to it as diligently and effectively as they would to any undertaking touching on their fortune and honour. The Duke of Wellington is the pre-eminent exemplar. There were others of humbler birth driven – as today – by some intense professional instinct or hunger for promotion. Without money or influence, their quest was a precarious and frequently disappointing quest, especially during the long period of retrenchment after the Napoleonic Wars. Matthew Hervey is one such man, and in this latest volume we see him struggling with his ghosts and the desire for advancement – and also with the consequences of being an ambitious, capable, but relatively junior officer in a rapidly atrophying organization.

One may speculate on what might have become of Hervey, and others like him, had not the war that Bonaparte occasioned the expansion of His Majesty’s land forces and the Royal Navy in the first place. The young Master Hervey was in the classical remove at Shrewsbury when His Majesty’s government saw the opportunity to carry the war to the French on the Continent instead of just at sea and in the colonies. He would otherwise perhaps have followed his brother to Oxford (where the father had been), and taken Holy Orders as they had. Would he have enjoyed making sermons? Who knows: one of Hervey’s contemporaries in the Peninsula, Ensign George Gleig, who left Oxford to join the 85th (Buckinghamshire Volunteers), was afterwards ordained and some years later became chaplain-general. But, to begin with at least, Hervey, like Gleig, was one of those of whom Dr Johnson wrote: ‘Every man thinks meanly of himself for never having been to sea nor having been a soldier.’

And Hervey is nothing if not a thinking man – a thinking soldier. But he is also a son of the country parsonage, and alumnus of the old, if provincial, public school. His is a Tory view of history and an instinctive Tory perspective of the future. Life does not leave him untouched, however; quite the opposite. Mine are tales of regimental soldiering, but the exposure of this moral, principled, somewhat naïve, son of the minor English gentry to the reality of war, life and the march of time is the theme of this series.

All my arrangements preparatory to the attack on Badajoz are in train, and I believe are getting on well; ~~some of the troops have marched for the Alentejo, and others will follow soon; and I intend to get myself the last, as I know that my removal from one part of the country to the other will be the signal for the enemy that the part to which I am going is to be the scene of active operations . . . Pray let me have plenty of horses for cavalry and artillery, and the reinforcements for our infantry, as early as you can. If we should succeed at Badajoz, I propose to push our success early in the year as far as I can.~~

Viscount Wellington of Talavera to the Prime Minister

19 February 1812

CHAPTER ONE

HONOURED IN THE BREACH

Badajoz, 10 p.m., 6 April 1812

'Tout va bien!'

The forlorn hope, clambering in pitch darkness over fallen masonry in the dry ditch, could hear the sentries calling to each other on the walls above.

Then a shot rang out.

'Alarme! Alarme!'

A single shot: the game was up. Some movement had betrayed them, perhaps, or the clank of a scabbard – and an alert sentry.

'Aux armes!'

The storming party had known it would come, but a few minutes more and they could have gained the top of the rubble.

A blazing carcass arched over the ramparts, lighting up the breach as if full moon – seconds only but enough to give the French their mark. They opened a furious musketry. Artillery soon followed. Lead and grape cut down the struggling infantry before a man could reach the razor-sharp blades of the *chevaux de frise*, which the defenders had dragged to the rupture when the siege guns ceased firing at last light.

Cornet Matthew Hervey, standing dismounted with the rest of His Majesty's 6th Light Dragoon on the high ground half a mile east of the great border fortress of Badajoz, took a firmer hold of Jessye's reins. It had been four years to the day since he had taken an outside seat on the *Red Rover* from the Sixth's depot at Canterbury. Two weeks before that, he had sat in the upper remove of Shrewsbury School, the master still hopeful that Hervey would follow his brother to Oxford and thence take Honorary Orders, as their father before them. But the army had claimed him. It had from his earliest days; above all, the cavalry. In large measure it was Daniel Coates's doing, 'the shepherd of Salisbury Plain' – sometime trumpeter to General Tarleton and adopted master-at-arms and rough-rider to the young son of the Horningsham parsonage. Thus armed with a cradle-knowledge of his 'profession', the seventeen-year-old Cornet Hervey had sailed with the Sixth to Portugal in the summer of 1808 – only to limp home with them via Corunna six months later.

What a learning that had been. When the Sixth went back to Portugal, but three months after Corunna, he felt himself the complete troop-officer. He feared nothing, not the enemy, nor the Sixth's own dragoons, nor his own fitness for the rank. And the three years of advance and withdrawal which had followed – offensive and defensive, siege and counter-siege – had confirmed him in his own estimation. He had remained a cornet, however, for although there had been deaths among the lieutenants, the consequent free promotions had not reached down as far as him (and he could not afford to buy his promotion in another regiment even if he had wanted to). They no longer sported the mess with the old toast, 'To a short war, and a bloody one!'

There would be bloody war tonight; that was certain. He had seen sieges enough in those three years to know that this one at Badajoz would be a sight harder than the others. He knew how strong were the defences. Badajoz was the guardian of the road to Madrid; when it had been in allied hands

had been a sure guardian of the road to Lisbon. Three summers ago, the Sixth, with the rest of Sir Arthur Wellesley's army, had marched into Badajoz after the bruising victory at Talavera, and then they had stayed a full three months. And then, forced to abandon the fortress because the Spaniards could not, or would not, support them, they had crossed into Portugal. A year of covering had followed, like the wary boxer: Lord Wellington, as by this time Sir Arthur Wellesley had become, could do little more than land the occasional blow – but stinging blows, so that the French began to weaken. However, like the wounded pug fighting on with all the instinct of years at the booth, it was a slow weakening, and never so certain that Wellington dare drop his guard or overreach himself. So that, eventually, every man in the army knew there would be no knockout blow, just a fight until the French at last quit the country, and while the other allies forced the same on France's eastern borders.

But this siege was not their first attempt to dislodge the French from the great guardian of the Madrid high road: twice, the year before, Badajoz had held out against Wellington's men. And in the depths of a freezing January just past, Ciudad Rodrigo, a fortress almost as strong, had claimed a thousand dead and wounded before the Union flag was hoisted above its castle. No, Badajoz would not fall tonight without a heavy butcher's bill. The Sixth would not pay, of course. There was no job for the cavalry on a night like this. Tonight it was an affair of the bayonet.

Hervey knew what the men with the bayonets were saying, too: if the defenders of Ciudad Rodrigo had been put to the sword, in the old way, the French here at Badajoz would not be resisting for Wellington's engineers and gunners had made a practicable breach. The mood in the ranks of red was not in favour of quarter; certainly not if the French continued to put up a fight. Those were the 'rules of war'.

But above all Hervey feared for the Spanish, the civil population of the city. He did not suppose the people of Badajoz were any more or less disposed to the French than they were elsewhere. True, they had had the French in their town for a year and more, but that did not make them *afrancesados*. Yet somehow that was what the men with the bayonets thought.

He started. A great fiery flash lit the Trinidad bastion, and a second later came a terrible roar. Jessye squealed. Hervey put his left hand to her muzzle and shortened the reins as he peered at the distant fortress walls. There was smoke now to mix with the mist coming off the Guadiana river. He shivered. Poor infantry: there was no glory in this. Weeks of sodden cold in the trenches, the men consigned to oblivion in the dark of the night. Some of them would get through the breach, perhaps, if fortune favoured them and their blood boiled hot enough. And then what?

'Poor bastards, sir!'

'Yes, Serjeant Armstrong. Poor bastards.'

At that range, in the pitch darkness, they did not actually see the limbs and the guts scattered like ash from a volcano for a hundred yards about the breach, but they knew well enough what a mine did. The defenders had lost no time, evidently, counter-tunnelling under the breach.

'By God, sir, them French is putting up a fight and a half,' said Armstrong, shaking his head in disbelief. 'I wish I were down there!'

That one mine might mean another was of no consequence to either of them.

'So do I, Serjeant Armstrong; so do I.'

The whole front was now musketry. Hervey had no idea what were the plans for the assault – how many breaches or escalades, or where – but he had watched the assaulting divisions assembling late that afternoon: four of them, no small affair. If they all succeeded in breaking into the fortress there would be a desperate fight inside unless the French struck their colours at once. He did not see how the defenders could make any sortie now, with so many troops at the walls, yet that was why the Sixth and

the other regiments of cavalry were here. Only three weeks ago the French had poured out and driven off the working parties in the parallels below where they stood now. Humiliating it had been. They had filled in the trenches and carried off the picks and shovels (the French commander had offered bounty for every entrenching tool). But there was no chance of that tonight; not with musketry and cannonading so intense.

‘Hot work for our friends, Hervey.’ The voice was assured, the glow of the cigar familiar and comfortable.

‘Indeed, Sir Edward. I was just thinking that our chances of action seem small.’

Serjeant Armstrong retired a respectful distance.

Captain Sir Edward Lankester lowered his voice but a fraction. ‘You imagine the real reason we are posted thus, Hervey?’

‘I imagine as we are ordered, Sir Edward. I cannot suppose our arms will be needed in the breaches.’

Sir Edward kept silent for a moment. ‘What do you imagine will happen when the army *through* the breaches?’

Hervey sighed: cruel necessity. ‘I should not wish to be a Frenchman.’

‘Ay. You cannot contest a practicable breach and then expect quarter. There’ll be precious little of it. It was not that of which I was minded, though. What of the Spanish?’

Hervey grimaced. When Ciudad Rodrigo had fallen, it had been three hours and more before the officers got their men back in hand. The riot and destruction had been prodigious, just as the looting and despoiling on the retreat to Corunna – and a good many Spaniards abused along the way.

They stood silent the while, trying to make out the progress of the storming from the powder flashes, the rattle of small arms and the explosive roar of the field pieces. There seemed a deal to much of all three to suggest the breaches and escalades were being carried – not with the bayonet, any rate. There *should* have been a great display of fireworks and then a full-throated roar as the storming parties went to it with cold steel – and a *feu de joie*, perhaps, as they took the place. But a fire-fight like this spelled trouble. It meant the infantry could not gain a footing on the walls. And they couldn’t keep up an assault for ever: some time soon they would be exhausted, all forward momentum lost. Then the defenders would have carried the day, again – or, rather, the night.

That was how it had been the last time at Badajoz, and the first time too, by all accounts. Not that he had seen for himself any of it; only heard the course of things, and then what the survivors had told them in the dejected days that followed. A man did not like to have his friends cut down, but if the result was victory he could bear it. To be thrown off the walls of Badajoz *and* taunted by the French was not to be borne. The men with the bayonets were certain of one thing: the French could not have defied them if the Spaniards had not been helping them. A fortress standing against two assaults by Nosey’s men – what else could be the explanation?

The walls of Jericho – that was what Cornet Hervey was minded of, detached from the bloody business of the breach. How had the walls of Jericho fallen to Joshua’s trumpets? It was allegorical surely, as his brother suggested? In a thousand years they would speak of the walls of Badajoz falling to Lord Wellington’s bugles (he fervently prayed). Had the Israelites undermined the walls of Jericho as he supposed the engineers had here? And did Lord Wellington do at Badajoz as Joshua had at Jericho? Did he send spies into the city? Joshua’s spies had found the Canaanites terrified of his army after its victories on the other side of the Jordan. A terrified people – perhaps the sound of the trumpets alone induced them to surrender? But Joshua’s spies had nearly been captured; they would not have escaped without the help of Rahab. Was there a Rahab in Badajoz to harbour Lord

Wellington's spies? Hervey smiled. Rahab the prostitute: there would be Rahabs aplenty in Badajoz and they would take in men right enough *after* the place had fallen.

He shivered again. If there were prayers to be said for any tonight but the poor devils with bayonets, it should be that Badajoz did not meet the fate of Jericho: *And they utterly destroyed all that was in the city, both man and woman, young and old.* Except that Joshua saved Rahab the prostitute alive, and her father's household, and *all that she had.* Could he hope that Lord Wellington's orders would save the Rahabs in Badajoz when blood was running hot among his redcoats? Could he even hope that Wellington's orders would save the *Susannas*, for virtue had not always been sufficient protection against the heated blood of the best-regulated men in this campaign. Exactly as at Jericho.

Indeed he could hope, for after Badajoz there was Madrid to relieve, and the fortress at Burgos. Lord Wellington would brook no check to progress, unlike the Israelites after Jericho: the Lord God of Israel, angered with the looting of the city, had punished Joshua at the siege of Ai. Lord Wellington would not want such a punishment; Lord Wellington was an upright man, and he would waste not a day in his zeal to eject the French from Spain (word was that he had not spent a day but at his duty since coming to the Peninsula). He would not contemplate a defeat at Ai; there must be no riot in Badajoz, no regiments incapable through drink of continuing the advance. He had given strict orders to that effect. Who would dare defy them?

'By God, sir, they'll be hotted up after this!' said Serjeant Armstrong, a furious musketry now the length of the walls.

Hervey woke to the grim truth before them. 'Let's hope their blood's boiling this minute,' said Serjeant Armstrong, for those walls will not be theirs without it.'

Armstrong knew it better than most. He had been in the trenches that afternoon, volunteering for the working parties taking grenades forward. 'Never saw men writing their wills like that, sir,' he had told him afterwards. 'They were giving me letters and all sort o' things to send for 'em. But by heaven they'll go to it tonight! Never seen men as hotted up. And them without a drop inside 'em yet!'

Hervey hoped for their sakes they had rum inside them now. It fired the belly and dulled the pain. 'It is the very devil to stand and watch. I don't think I ever had more feeling for a red coat.' But too many of Serjeant Armstrong's letters would be read by widows, or mothers bereft of a son, he reckoned. It was beginning to look as if the third attempt on Badajoz would go the same as the other two, for all the infantry's ardour.

Another mine exploded, a galleried one, big and deep, so that the earth trembled even where the Sixth stood.

'Jesus!' gasped a dragoon.

'As you were!' growled the serjeant-major.

He disapproved of profanities, especially in the face of the enemy. But in truth, he only silenced the cursing; he did not stop it. In the next hour there were a dozen more earth-shaking explosions, so that there could not have been a man in the Sixth who did not curse with his teeth clenched, thankfu deep down at least, to be standing-to his horse rather than in the breaches below them.

At eleven o'clock a galloper came, almost taking the videttes by surprise. 'Sixth Light Dragoons?'

'Ay, sir.'

'Lord George Irvine, please.'

Hervey heard the exchange well enough: the videttes were but fifty yards in front, and the galloper shouted (no doubt he was deafened if he came from the trenches).

'This way, sir.'

They peered to see who he was, for they might then have some idea what he brought.

~~‘Here!’ called the adjutant, as galloper and guide approached the line.~~

‘Lord George?’ called the galloper again as he slid from the saddle. If he was deafened by the explosions, he was equally blinded by the flashes.

‘Yes, Pontefract, before you!’ Lieutenant-Colonel Lord George Irvine had the advantage of a orderly with a torch.

Lieutenant the Earl of Pontefract threw his cloak back over his shoulders and saluted as another orderly took his reins. ‘Good evening, Colonel. Sir Stapleton Cotton’s compliments, and would you have one squadron dismount and come up to the trenches in support of General Picton’s division once.’

Hervey’s ears pricked, as did everyone’s that heard. The orders were precise, yet their purpose unclear. What kind of support did ‘the Fighting Third’ Division have want of ?

‘Sir Stapleton suggests you may stand down the remainder until dawn.’

That settled one thing at least, thought Hervey: Wellington must be sure there could be no sortie.

‘Very well, Pontefract,’ replied Lord George Irvine resolutely. ‘Is there a guide?’

‘I will take them to the rendezvous myself, Colonel.’

Lord George Irvine did not hesitate: unless there were good reason otherwise, First Squadron would do duty, its captain being the senior. ‘Sir Edward?’

‘Colonel!’

‘One to three, then.’

‘Very good, Colonel. Sar’nt-major?’

‘Sir!’

‘Squadron will dismount, every third man horse-holder.’

It was not a very practised drill. However, the ranks numbered off in threes at stand-to morning and evening, so there should be no untoward confusion now, even in the dark.

Private Jewitt, Hervey’s groom, took Jessye’s reins from him. ‘Will you take my carbine, sir?’

‘No, just my pistols I think, Jewitt.’ Hervey had no more idea than the next man what their duties would be, but if they were going to scramble into a breach or attempt an escalade, he would be better unencumbered. It was the first time they had been called forward in a siege. He had to be ready for anything.

CHAPTER TWO

PRISONER OF WAR

Badajoz, 20 December 1826

Hervey pulled his cloak about his shoulders. It was more than the damp cold of his quarters – *prison* quarters – that troubled him. The remembrance of that night at Badajoz, though fifteen years gone, was enough to chill the blood of any Christian, let alone one now confined within the very walls the French had breached that day. And if he could no longer hear the screams (at first of the men in the breaches and then of the wretched Spanish civilians), he could picture the night well enough. The night *and* the days that followed. In everything he had seen since, even in India, nothing quite had the power to make him shiver, and boil, as did the name Badajoz.

But when he had passed through those walls on that infernal night, it had at least been his choice, choosing. Or rather, he had followed orders willingly. This time he had done so anything but willingly. His *ruse de guerre* had almost come off, but when discovered, he had seen no alternative but to surrender his sword. Fearing the very worst, he had even contrived to set down the circumstances of his writing – for the benefit of the one person to whom he felt true obligation to justify himself *post mortem*. It had not been easy, for that person had neither knowledge of the soldier's art nor of the world in general.

*Badajoz
Spain
19th December 1826*

My dearest Georgiana,

if by mischance I am not able to return to you ever, I must trust to this letter to give the fairest account of the circumstances, for it may not be expedient to those in authority to have the truth set out at once, and perhaps for good reason since affairs of state are never straightforward.

I was sent to Portugal to assist with the making of plans in case a British army was sent here to the aid of the young princess who would be the new Queen (she is but your age) and her father Dom Pedro who wishes to abdicate in her favour and of the new 'Constitution', which is a covenant giving certain rights to the people which they had not previously enjoyed. You may read that some in England are opposed to such an intervention, for they believe that the young Queen's uncle, Dom Miguel, should be Regent, certain as they are that his principles of upholding the old order of things are in the best interests of the country. Those who would overthrow the Queen in favour of Dom Miguel have gathered about them officers in the army who with whole regiments now take up arms against the Queen, and in this they are assisted by Spain and, perhaps, by France.

When our little party began its work, at the beginning of the month, it was at once plain to me that our colonel was of too cautious a view, and I determined to go to the frontier with Spain. In this I was supported by His Majesty's envoy in Lisbon. Upon arriving in Elvas, a great fortress

~~which stands only a few miles from the equally great Spanish fortress of Badajoz, across the Guadiana river, I learned that the Miguelite forces had made attacks into Portugal from Spain where they had been given arms and provisions, and that an attack at Elvas was imminent. Although the fortress at Elvas is a great one, no fortress will stand if it does not have sufficient men to repel an attacker.~~

So it was that I found the defences at Elvas, with few men, although good, especially the general who is called Dom Mateo de Braganza. He and I devised a scheme which we supposed might trick the Miguelites into believing that English troops had already come to Portugal, for the Miguelites would not then have the nerves to continue their attack. However, by a stroke of misfortune, the ruse was discovered, and in circumstances which allowed but one means of escape for the loyal Portuguese, which was that I myself should surrender to the Miguelite commander, thereby gaining the time for the safe withdrawal of the loyal troops (which, as I write, I must believe was accomplished).

I was then conducted to the fortress at Badajoz, where I am now held prisoner, though in comfortable quarters, and here await my fate. It is a consolation to me to know that my actions may have so disconcerted the Miguelites that, if His Majesty does send troops here, they will find a part of Portugal at least in loyal hands, a part which is of the first importance in defending the country, lying as it does on the direct route from Madrid to Lisbon.

It is a great comfort to me, too, that I have a daughter with the spirit of her mother, who will understand now why I act as I did, in spite of what she may hear to the contrary. My only regret is that it has parted me from she who is dearest, and from your loving aunt, my sister, and all your people.

Your ever loving father.

Hervey had woken early, his second reveille as a prisoner of war. The first morning, he had sprung from his bed, the daylight streaming through the high, barred window, rebuking him for sleeping beyond the customary dawn stand-to. There had been no Private Johnson to wake him, and the body left to its own devices, took liberties, not caring for the customs of the service, for field practice. Weary, it had wanted only repose, and perhaps, too, the mind had craved oblivion. But this morning he had woken before first light, and now the awful truth – that it did not matter whether he stood-to or not – bore on him like a great weight, like his big black charger at Waterloo, stone dead, pinning him in the mud so that he lay like a stunned bird while the French went from man to man despatching the wounded.

He cursed, and sat up. No, he had not lain still under the dead weight of his charger; he had fought his way free. He cursed because he was losing his resolution. He was angry again – with his captors and even more with Colonel Norris. If Norris had not been so cautious it would never have come to this. Above all he was angry with himself. But it was no good his fighting himself, and he could not fight Colonel Norris. He had to fight the Spaniards, or the Miguelites, or both – whoever it was that had incarcerated him here. He might not be able to fight in the usual way, but there were others. It was unthinkable that he remained passive, simply waiting for rescue or release. That way lay ruin to his self-esteem. And he was in trouble enough with Lisbon, likely as not.

Any pretext for a fight would do, just something to show resistance (show to *himself*, to begin with). His Prayer Book, for instance: he could not claim that he needed it, but he saw no reason why he should not have it back. How long could it take the authorities here to establish that Cranmer spelled no danger? What else was he supposed to read, for the books in his room were hardly diverting? What

should he test his Spanish? In any case, it had been too long. There was a Greek New Testament, but that would only exercise rather than engage him. The usual Articles of War required that the personal possessions of an officer were not to be denied him insofar as they did not aid him in escape; he would therefore demand his Prayer Book at once. They would have to give it to him, and he would be the victor.

The trouble was (he saw well enough) that the Spaniards were embarrassed by his capture. No Spanish officer had so far spoken directly to him, perhaps so as to be able to deny all knowledge of his nationality. The Miguelites, too, were treating their unexpected and unwelcome prisoner with a degree of circumspection. He was a Portuguese – a Miguelite – prisoner, but Badajoz was, after all, a *Spanish* fortress.

It was at least a comfortable confining, however, as he had conceded in Georgiana's letter. That he could neither sleep nor eat well (even his sleep beyond first light yesterday had been fitful) was not the fault of his jailers. If *only* he could stop thinking of Colonel Norris and the prospect of the officer's delight in the news of his capture, for Norris would, no doubt, see it as a vindication of his own prudent proposal to stand only as far east as the lines of Torres Vedras. No doubt, too, Norris would be reminding the chargé d'affaires in Lisbon of the grave embarrassment to His Majesty's ministers. Would Lisbon know, yet, of his capture? How could they not? For hadn't his last words to Dom Mateo de Braganza, as he surrendered his sword to the Miguelite general, been that he should inform the legation? He wished now they had been otherwise, but in that crucial moment his words had been instinctive, the duty of an officer to report the situation to his superior. Only now did he think in terms of his own best interests. But would not Dom Mateo, a brigadier-general, act on his own cognizance? Perhaps, in the security of the fortress of Elvas once more, Dom Mateo had judged it best *not* to alert Lisbon, sure in the knowledge that he could effect an escape soon enough. Corporal Wainwright might have acted on his own initiative, too. But his coverman had no access to the telegraph or a courier (was the telegraph even working yet?), and Wainwright would be strongly averse to galloping to Lisbon when his principal was captive in Badajoz, especially if Dom Mateo advised against it.

But early release, he had to conclude, did not look likely. The Spaniards might wish that he were not incarcerated at Badajoz, but that was not the same as wanting him let free with a story to tell in Lisbon, especially at such a difficult time in the affairs of their two countries. Certainly the Miguelites would have no wish to antagonize His Majesty's ministers at the very moment parliament debated intervention. Opinion was divided in Britain: Whigs for Pedro, the infant-queen and the constitution; Tories for Miguel and the old order. This was no time to stir John Bull when he might otherwise be content to doze.

A manservant brought hot water, and breakfast, which Hervey tackled dutifully rather than with relish. Later he heard the bolt on his door being drawn again, and then a knock – a fine point of courtesy, he noted wryly. He turned, half rising, saw the same benevolent features of the day before, and of the day before that, and rested easy. Only the physician. But today he was unaccompanied, no guard to defend him against assault by the prisoner. What was to be gained in overpowering such a man, however even if he had the inclination to? The physician carried no sword, and Hervey did not suppose a pistol was usual about his person either. He rose and acknowledged the bow. They spoke in French again.

‘Good morning, monsieur. May I enquire of your condition today?’

Hervey was mindful of the civilities, however hard it went with him. ‘Well enough, monsieur. But I should be much the better were my few necessaries returned to me.’

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