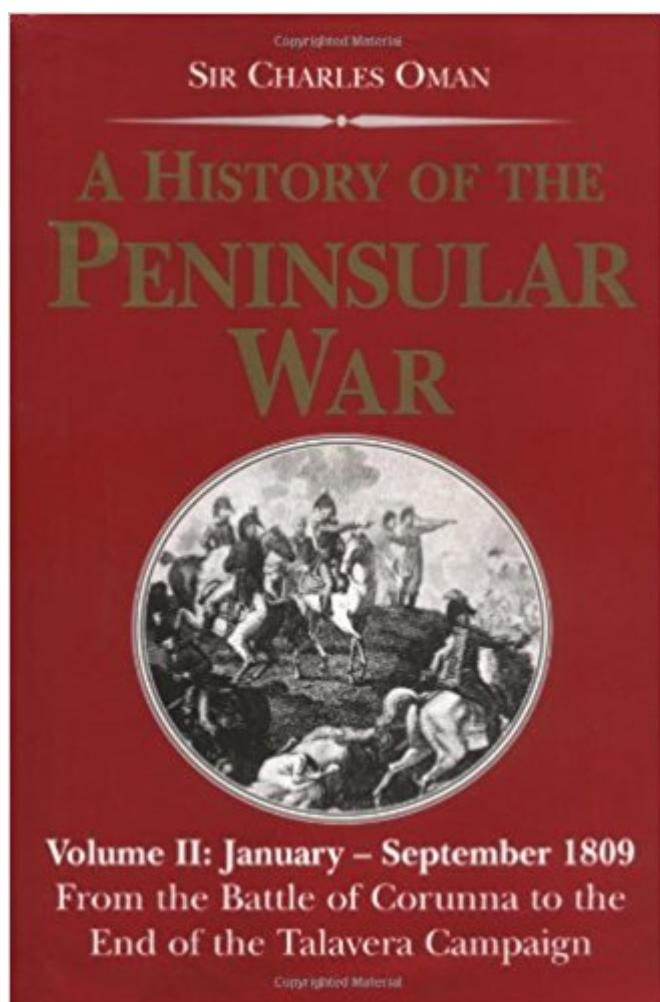


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January To September 1809: From The Battle Of Corunna To The End Of The Talavera Campaign (History Of The Peninsular War)



Synopsis

The fate of the Iberian Peninsula was very much in the balance during the period January to September 1809, when it seemed all too possible that Napoleon would achieve control over Spain and Portugal. This volume covers the continuing Spanish resistance to French occupation, the renewed French invasion of Portugal, and the return to the Peninsula and subsequent victories of Sir Arthur Wellesley, including his outmanoeuvring of the French from Oporto and culminating in the hard-fought victory at Talavera.

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The fate of the Iberian Peninsula was very much in the balance during the period January to September 1809, when it seemed all too possible that Napoleon would achieve control over Spain and Portugal. This volume covers the continuing Spanish resistance to French occupation, the renewed French invasion of Portugal, and the return to the Peninsula and subsequent victories of Sir Arthur Wellesley, including his outmanoeuvring of the French from Oporto and culminating in the hard-fought victory at Talavera.

Despite the 1903 publishing date, Oman is still the last word on Peninsular War history due to the granular detail that he includes in his works. This is one of the very few sources for battles between the French and Spanish or Portuguese that are often neglected by English language historians. In volume 2, these include the battles of Ucles, Cardadeu, Molins de Rey, 1st Zaragoza, Ciudad Real,

Medellin, Braga, 1st Oporto, Alcaniz, Maria, Belchite, Arzobispo and Almonacid. Since it involved the British, Talavera is covered in great detail.

This is volume two of Sir Charles Oman's masterful seven volume history of the Peninsular War. Oman spent thirty years researching and writing his history; it remains the starting point for research into the war and a highly readable example of the best in narrative history. Volume Two picks up the narrative of the war in the wake of the Battle of Corunna and the evacuation of Sir John Moore's small British army from the Peninsula. With Britain's brief foray into Spain forcibly terminated, Napoleon turned the attention of his Imperial Armies to securing his grip on Spain, and to another French invasion of Portugal. Oman closely follows the fighting in Spain and the French invasion of Portugal under Soult, which reached the city of Oporto. The British Government made the difficult decision to remain involved in the conflict, returning General Wellesley, the future Duke of Wellington, to Portugal to command a British expeditionary force. By a surprise river crossing, Wellesley turned the French out of Oporto and ultimately out of Portugal. In a daring gamble, Wellesley and his British army followed the retreating French into Spain. Once there, he hoped to cooperate with a Spanish Army under Cuesta to defeat one or more elements of the scattered French Imperial forces. They were able to cooperate just long enough to meet a major French army in battle at Talavera. A hardfought two-day battle turned into a precarious tactical victory for the Anglo-Spanish force, but only at great cost. The French would promptly rally more troops in an attempt to trap Wellesley's battered army... This is a still an excellent read. Oman's analysis of the tactical and operational-level decisionmaking by the combatants remains insightful and educational about the challenges of expeditionary warfare. Highly recommended to students of the conflict.

Sir Charles Oman's comprehensive seven volume history of the Peninsular War is the yardstick by which any other history of this theatre must be measured. It is exhaustive in detail and in breadth of coverage. If it happened, it is in one of these volumes. Napoleon may have considered Spain a side show, but as results turned out it was a bleeding ulcer. French losses here, combined with the 1812 campaign, placed a strain on the Empire which could not be overcome by even the best generalship. Any true student of the Napoleonic Wars should find these books and read them. They are essential to a complete understanding of the conflict.

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