CHAPTER XVI.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE CAMPAIGN OF 1812.

BETWEEN the 25th of April and the 13th of June no important operations were entered upon by the French and English armies. Both required rest; and both were glad, during the continuance of the heavy rains which fall at that season and flood the rivers, to remain quietly in their cantonments. The English lay partly in Beira and along the frontiers of Castile, partly to the left of the Tagus, between that river and the Guadiana. It was there that Sir Rowland Hill, with his head-quarters at Merida, kept watch; at once protecting the Spaniards while they restored the fortification of Badajoz, and alarming Soult for the safety of Andalusia. Lord Wellington, on the other side of the Tagus, busied himself in providing against the wants of the hour, and making complete his preparations against the future. "That future," General Jomini says, "offered him a free choice of three courses. He might advance against Soult on his right, or debouch by the centre on Madrid, or operate on his left against Marmont." Lord Wellington himself appears never to have contemplated a march upon Madrid as a primary movement. And his correspondence shows that after well weighing the subject he came to the conclusion that Marmont ought in the first instance to command his attention.

It was while thus taking breath, so to speak, after exhausting labour, that Lord Wellington, on the 26th of May, wrote to Lord Liverpool, now First Lord of the Treasury, one of the

most remarkable letters which is to be found in his published correspondence. It explains not only all that had been done in the previous campaign, but all which the writer proposed to do in the next; and without seeking to disguise his own inferiority in many respects to the enemy, breathes a confident spirit as to the issues of the coming struggle. "I purpose," he says, "as soon as ever the magazines of the army are brought forward, which work is now in progress (the troops continuing in dispersed cantonments for that purpose), to move forward into Castile, and to endeavour, if possible, to bring Marmont to a general action. I think I can make these movements with safety, excepting always the risk of a general action. I am of opinion, also, that I shall have the advantage in this action, and this is the period of all others when such a movement should be tried. Your Lordship will have observed that General Hill's recent operations give great security to our right. The enemy have, in truth, now no good communication across the Tagus, excepting the bridge of Toledo.* * * It is not very probable, therefore, that we should be turned by our right; and if reinforcements should be drawn from the north to press upon our left, we shall always have our retreat open, either by Ciudad-Rodrigo or by the valley of the Tagus."

Two points touched upon in this extract require to be explained. With a view to shorten the distance from his own base, Lord Wellington caused the channels both of the Tagus and of the Douro to be deepened, so that the one became navigable as high as Melpica, near Alcantara, the other to Bacca de Alba. He repaired the bridge likewise at Alcantara, rendering thereby easy and direct his communications with Hill; and he established at Caçeres a large dépôt of provisions. These were the works in which his scattered divisions employed themselves; but Hill had a more dashing enterprise entrusted to him, and it was the only one which for 50 days broke what may be called the uncovenanted truce between the belligerents. The enemy had placed a bridge of boats upon the Tagus at Almaraz, of which they were extremely jealous. It afforded the only means of direct communication between Soult and Marmont, and was on that

account a special eye-sore to Lord Wellington. He determined to destroy it, and directed Sir Rowland Hill to effect that object. A rapid night-march brought Hill with 6000 men in front of the French *tête de pont*, at a moment when no danger was apprehended. He carried the work by escalade, turned next upon the forts which commanded the bridge, and took them all. The bridge, with an immense accumulation of stores lying near it, was immediately burnt, and Hill was in full swing towards his cantonments in Merida, before Foy, D'Armagnac, and Drouet, all of whom clustered, so to speak, round the scene of action, became aware of what was going on.

It may well read like a tale twice told, when I say that all this while Lord Wellington was engaged in a voluminous, and for the most part unsatisfactory, correspondence with the Spanish and Portuguese authorities, and with the English Government. The latter continued to starve him in men and stores, and above all in money, though he warned them that the paper currency which had heretofore kept him afloat, would cease to be of value as soon as he passed the Portuguese frontier. The two former either evaded his requisitions or acted in opposition to them. The Spanish Cortes indeed evinced manifest tokens that the burden of the war was becoming intolerable, for while they despatched every effective battalion and battery to South America, they opened a correspondence with King Joseph. As to the Portuguese Regency, its members no longer took the trouble to disguise the personal antipathy which they entertained towards Lord Wellington. It seemed as if, in their eagerness to thwart and annoy him, they were prepared to sacrifice the country itself. They neither filled up the vacancies which war had occasioned in the ranks, nor kept their skeleton regiments fed or clothed, or even sufficiently armed. As usual, Lord Wellington reasoned with them, expostulated, and threatened. As usual, too, he prevailed, and then he took a survey of the entire theatre of the war, which presented to his gaze the following features.

He found, when all was reckoned up, that in April, 1812, he had under his orders a force of 56,000 British and Portu-

guese troops. Of these, 15,000 were with Hill in Estremadura, 5000 detached at Cadiz and elsewhere, and 36,000, of whom 3500 were good cavalry, so placed that in two marches they could all be assembled in and about Fuente Guinaldo. A small Spanish corps, numbering about 3500 men, having Don Julien de Sanches and the Conde d'Espani at its head, was likewise at his disposal: the whole constituting the largest and most effective army which he had yet commanded. He urged the English Government to help him, by throwing 10,000 of the troops which they kept shut up in Sicily upon the coast of Calabria, and a promise was given that by the first week in June this should be done. That promise, only partially fulfilled so far as the numbers of English troops were concerned, was not kept at all in the matter of time. The Sicilian expedition never reached Spain till the evil had befallen which its presence was intended to avert; and the consequence was that a campaign, brilliantly begun, ended, as I shall have occasion presently to show, in something like failure.

So matters stood on Lord Wellington's side. His strength for active operations was all told, for the Spanish armies were quite broken up, and the Portuguese militia, however capable of annoying the enemy's convoys, could not be employed in the business of a campaign. Looking at the other side we find, that though the Russian war was begun, an enormous superiority of force still rested with the enemy. Marmont lay in and about Salamanca with 52,000 men; Cafferelli kept open the communication between France and Burgos with 32,000; Joseph was in Madrid with 22,000; Soult in Andalusia with 56,000; and Suchet, for whom Lord Wellington was anxious to find employment in his own province, held Calabria with 60,000. Over the whole of this large force, Napoleon had at length conferred upon Joseph absolute authority. But Joseph's military abilities were held in small repute by his marshals, and one and all they exhibited a settled determination to bring themselves as little as possible within the reach of his influence. Lord Wellington therefore calculated that by cutting in between Marmont and Joseph, he might be able to dispose of both separately;

while Suchet, having his hands full with the Anglo-Sicilian expedition, would hardly care to abandon his own province in order to bring succour to the King. As to Soult, Lord Wellington knew his man. With Hill in his rear and Cadiz before him, the Duke of Dalmatia was little likely to relinquish his own purposes. And so the way seemed open for that course of action on which, when the proper time came, the English General entered. Thus much for his plans in the mass: now a word or two illustrative of his manner of doing business.

There never lived a more rigid economist of time than Arthur Duke of Wellington. While commanding armies in the field, he rose seldom later, often earlier, than six in the morning. If nothing called for special attention abroad, he then sat down to his desk, and continued to read and answer letters and despatches till nine or ten. Immediately after breakfast he received the Heads of Departments, one by one, the Adjutant-General, the Quarter-Master-General, the Chief of the Medical Staff, the Commissary-General, and the Head of the Intelligence Department. If they had papers for him to read or to sign, it was expected that, besides being written in legible hands, these should all be very clearly expressed. If they had suggestions to make or points to argue, all must be done *di viva voce*. He never made notes himself of subjects requiring discussion; he was intolerant of notes if others produced them. After dismissing these gentlemen, he usually mounted his horse and rode sometimes to the outposts, sometimes to one or other of the more distant divisions, as circumstances seemed to require. If he got home in time to devote an hour or two to writing, he resumed his place at his desk. For all his more important epistolary communications were written in his own hand. Matters of mere detail, such as orders and replies to official notes, his secretaries or their clerks drew up from memoranda with which he supplied them. But his correspondence with Ministers of State and with the Governments of Spain and Portugal was entirely autograph.

At six he dined, never alone, nor with the members of his personal staff exclusively about him. Everybody in the

most remote degree recommended to his notice, every officer of rank, passing through and leaving his name at head-quarters, was sure to receive an invitation; and making fair allowance for the measure of restraint which seems to be unavoidable at the tables of royalty and commanders-in-chief, the conversation was, for the most part, both interesting and lively. The Duke himself spoke out upon all subjects with an absence of reserve which sometimes surprised his guests. Whether the matters under discussion were foreign or domestic politics, he took his own view of each particular case, and stated it broadly. He was rich in anecdotes, most of them taking a ludicrous turn, and without any apparent effort put the company very much at their ease. About nine o'clock he would order coffee, which was accepted as a signal for breaking up, and then he withdrew again to his own room, where he resumed his correspondence and carried it far into the night.

I have specified the Head of the Intelligence Department as one of those who used to attend at Lord Wellington's daily *levées*. The Duke had taken infinite pains to organize and arrange that department, and placed at the head of it one of the most remarkable men in the army. Colonel Colquhoun Grant, a relative of the late Sir James McGregor, possessed the talent of acquiring languages to a marvellous degree. He spoke Spanish, Portuguese, and French with a facility and correctness to which Englishmen rarely attain, and with the use of the language he put on the manner and well-nigh the appearance of Spaniard, Portuguese, or Frenchman, as the case might be. Observant, pliable, apparently frank, yet withal close and circumspect, he won the confidence of all whom he was desirous of searching out, and being true to his word, he never threw away a useful confidence which he had once acquired. He had emissaries everywhere; in all the towns and villages in or about which French troops were quartered, and if common rumour might be trusted, some even at the head-quarters of the French armies themselves. With not a few of these he used to hold personal communication, passing round for that purpose, and sometimes even through the French camps. How

he contrived so long to escape detection it is hard to say, for he never in these excursions laid aside his English uniform, though he managed to conceal it from the vulgar gaze by a cloak or a blue pellisse thrown over it. In this respect he differed from another Colquhoun Grant, also a Colonel, and also a collector of intelligence, to whom I have elsewhere alluded, and who coming nearer to the character of a mere spy, was at once less trusted and less esteemed than his namesake, by Lord Wellington.

The adventures of the head of the Intelligence Department, if related at length, would read like a romance. I shall content myself with briefly alluding to them. Venturing rather too far in front of the advanced sentries, one day, he was taken by the enemy, and carried before Marmont, then on the frontiers of Portugal. There was great rejoicing in the French army when he confessed himself to be Colquhoun Grant. The name was well known at head-quarters, and Marmont, mistaking him for the other Colquhoun Grant, exclaimed, when he made his appearance, "It is well for you, sir, that you wear that bit of red rag; but for that, I should have hanged you on the spot." The treatment he received was at first harsh, and being hopeless of making his escape, he agreed to give his parole. He was then sent, still under charge of a guard, to Salamanca, where Dr Curtis, late R. C. Archbishop of Tuam, and at that time head of one of the colleges in the city, found him out. Dr Curtis's visits to a prisoner so much dreaded gave great offence to Marmont, who met the worthy Canon's excuses by reminding him that Grant was neither an Irishman nor a Roman Catholic. But Dr Curtis was not to be deterred, either by threats or blandishments, from doing his duty, and stoutly denied that Grant had any secrets to be betrayed.

Lord Wellington was much grieved at the loss of Colquhoun Grant, and the more so, that day by day the prisoner contrived to send him scraps of important information. These, written upon small rolls of paper, were carried in the ears of priests and peasants to the English head-quarters. "What an extraordinary fellow that cousin of yours is," said Lord Wellington one day to Sir James McGregor; "I wish

he had not given his parole, for I had promised large rewards to the Guerilla chiefs if they could bring him back, and we should have had him before now."

"But I thought, sir, that you had arranged for his exchange?"

"So I had, and here is Marmont's answer." The answer was as compliant and civil as could be. It promised all that Lord Wellington required, and expressed the gratification which the writer experienced in being able to oblige so illustrious a General. "I suppose you believe all that?" said Lord Wellington; "now look at this." Thereupon he handed Sir James a copy of the *Moniteur*, containing a despatch from Marshal Marmont to the War Minister, which was entirely occupied with an account of Grant's capture, and of the extreme delight of the writer at the circumstance. "He is a most dangerous fellow," the despatch went on to say, "of whom I shall not lose sight till he is safe in France, and there you must be equally vigilant in watching him." The despatch bore exactly the same date as the letter to Lord Wellington.

Grant was sent under escort to Bayonne, where he arrived safely. For a moment the escort left him alone in the square of the city, and Grant availed himself of the opportunity by taking his seat in a diligence which was just about to start for Paris. He entered the French capital as an American, and made his way at once to the shop of a Scotch jeweller named McPherson, who had lived through all the horrors of the French Revolution, and now drove a thriving trade. McPherson procured for him an American passport, under the protection of which he spent several weeks in Paris, never omitting all the while to communicate with his old chief. At last the suspicions of the police were awakened, and under the protection of a fresh American passport, he travelled to the coast. But his funds were now failing, and as a last resource he threw himself on the generosity of a retired French General, the son of a Scottish exile, and on the mother's side not distantly related to himself. The Frenchman behaved well on the occasion. He gave the fugitive shelter, and supplied him with money,

which enabled him to secure the services of two French boatmen. Not even now, however, were his perils at an end. The boat had scarcely cleared Calais harbour in order to reach an English cruiser, which lay a few miles off, when a coast-guard cutter bore down upon it; and the boatmen had barely time to make Grant stand upright against the mast and to wrap him round with the sail which they suddenly took in. The cutter passed on, and they held their course towards the frigate. But not the least curious part of the story, as Grant used to tell it, is this,—the unfortunate boatmen were carried to England, where orders were given to treat them as prisoners of war. With some difficulty, and after considerable delay, Grant succeeded in getting these orders cancelled; and the poor reward of 100 guineas which he had promised to his liberators, was not wrung out of the English treasury except after an acrimonious and protracted correspondence.

CHAPTER XVII.

OPENING OF THE CAMPAIGN—SALAMANCA TAKEN—BATTLE OF SALAMANCA.

HAVING settled his plan of campaign, and completed all his preliminary arrangements, Lord Wellington, as soon as the rain ceased, broke up from his cantonments. He passed the Agueda on the 13th of June, and on the 17th reached the Tormes. This he crossed by two fords, above and below Salamanca, and after driving away some cavalry, and occupying the town, which the same evening was illuminated in his honour, he proceeded to invest the fortified convents. His Spanish correspondents had misled him in regard to these convents. They described them as enclosed by a wall, so inartistically constructed, that a few rounds from a field battery would knock it down, and Lord Wellington, to whom time was of the utmost value, attacked it with his light artillery. After expending as much ammunition as he could spare, and finding that no progress was made, he sent back to Almeida for a fresh supply, and for a battering train. Meanwhile Marmont, who had quitted Salamanca as the English army approached, succeeded, by great exertion, in calling his scattered divisions together. He advanced on the 20th with 25,000 good troops, and on the 23rd 10,000 more overtook him. A series of movements followed, with some sharp affairs of cavalry and a little infantry skirmishing. Both armies threw corps across the Tormes; one seeking to communicate with the convents, the other to prevent it; till by and by the English battering train came up from

Almeida, and the siege began in earnest. On the 27th, one of the convents was breached and another in flames. The commandant requested two hours to arrange terms of capitulation. Lord Wellington allowed him five minutes. The five minutes passed without an answer, and the convents were stormed and taken.

The fall of these convents warned Marshal Marmont that he had no longer any business where he was. He wrote to Joseph and Caffarelli begging them earnestly to come to his support, and began immediately to retire. His retrograde movement was made in the night, between the 28th and 29th of June. He took the direction of the Douro, and moved by the two roads which conduct to Tordesillas and Toro. Lord Wellington followed. * But again his spies brought him false intelligence, and he just missed striking a heavy blow at the enemy while in the act of crossing the Douro. With the river between them, the two armies halted and faced one another. Both were willing to receive, neither desired to deliver a battle. For finding that with numbers so evenly balanced, the chances were against him who should take the initiative, each General had his own reasons for desiring to postpone the crisis. Marmont waited for Caffarelli and Joseph. Lord Wellington expected that, through mere lack of provisions, Marmont would be obliged, before many days passed, to shift his ground. Besides, he learned at this time that the co-operation from Sicily, on which he had counted, was not forthcoming. The English Government, as if on purpose to show that it was incapable of being taught, even by experience, had suddenly changed the direction of the Sicilian army. It was sent not to Catalonia but to the north of Italy, thus uncovering, so to speak, Lord Wellington's flank and deranging thereby his whole plan of campaign. A victory over Marmont would under the circumstances be of little real value to him. It might add lustre to his personal renown, and produce a moral effect elsewhere, but no advantage could be taken of it upon the spot, because a further advance into the heart of Spain would only expose him to be beset by overwhelming numbers. He contented

himself therefore with abiding where he was and waiting the course of events.

Well nigh a fortnight so passed. Marmont and Lord Wellington faced each other, the Douro flowing between. Sir Rowland Hill kept a steady eye upon Soult from his head-quarters at Merida. Joseph, troubled by many rumours, and the exploits of Guerilla bands, stood fast in Madrid. Suchet clung to Catalonia, while Caffarelli was restrained at Burgos by exaggerated accounts of the strength of Castaños's army then engaged in the siege of Astorga. At last however, in consequence, as subsequently came out, of peremptory orders from Madrid, Marmont assumed the offensive. On the evening of the 16th two French divisions crossed the Douro at Toro. After remaining in sight of the English all day, they withdrew again in the night, and marching rapidly towards Tordesillas, were there with the rest of the army carried over the river. An affair of cavalry followed, in which the enemy had the advantage, and their march was continued towards the Guarena. It was Marmont's object to throw himself between Lord Wellington and Ciudad-Rodrigo, and he well nigh succeeded. Indeed, for several days such a succession of movements took place as put the two armies on their mettle, without either offering to the other the opportunity which both desired of striking home, at an advantage.

Marmont moved all this while towards a ford on the Guarena, over which the castle of Alba de Tormes dominates. It was a point about which Lord Wellington was not anxious, because he had himself placed in the castle a Spanish garrison, strong enough to meet and repel a coup-de-main. But in this he deceived himself. The garrison, without any communication made to him, had been withdrawn, and Marmont gained his end. Lord Wellington, seeing that an advantage had been gained for which he could not account, put his columns in motion to counteract it, and throughout the whole of the 20th the two armies marched in parallel lines, within easy cannon-shot of each other. There was a race between them for the village of Cantalpino, which lies at the foot of a commanding eminence. The French, having got the start, won the race, and

bivouacked for the night on the high grounds of Aldea Rubea, while Lord Wellington fell back to the position at San Christoval from which he had covered the siege of the fortified convents of Salamanca.

Thus far the advantage in the campaign of marches rested with Marshal Marmont. He had command of the Tormes river, and could push on to interpose between Lord Wellington and his communications, or he could fight a battle, or remain in comparative security where he was till Caffarelli should join him from Burgos. Lord Wellington's only course was to fall back at once upon Ciudad-Rodrigo; and with excellent judgment he resolved to do so, leaving Salamanca to its fate.

It was necessary to let General Castaños know what was proposed, so Lord Wellington wrote to him. The messenger fell into the enemy's hands, and Marmont became aware of Lord Wellington's intentions. He immediately crossed the Tormes at a ford between Huerta and Alba de Tormes, and between Salamanca and the latter place. This was on the 21st, and on the same day the English passed the bridge at Salamanca. The two armies thus came into presence the same afternoon.

At midnight information reached Lord Wellington that Caffarelli's troops were beginning to arrive. He made arrangements for a rapid march upon Ciudad-Rodrigo, but he delayed beginning that march till long after dawn on the 22nd, in the hope that Marmont, from over anxiety and undue confidence, might commit some blunder. It is in such situations as this that military genius of the highest order finds its proper field of action. A great General calculates on the temperament of his adversary quite as much as upon the strength of battalions and the positions which they occupy; and Lord Wellington had seen enough of Marmont to arrive at the conclusion that, skilful as he had shown himself in handling troops, he was not unlikely to be run away with. No great while elapsed ere Lord Wellington's anticipations were fulfilled. Seeing the English still before him, Marmont made a dash to anticipate them in their designs. There were two hills, called the Arepiles, on the plateau

about which the hostile armies were ranged, one of which crossed in some measure the French line of march. Lord Wellington detached a Portuguese brigade to seize that hill; but the movements of the French were more rapid than those of the Portuguese, and after a brief contest the former crowned the height. A battery of guns was immediately run up, and Marmont, believing that he had blocked the great road to Ciudad-Rodrigo, proceeded to make the most of the advantage which he had won.

On two hills, each commanding a full view of the field of operations, the English and French Generals had taken post. How Marmont conducted himself and what he said or did I am not informed, but Lord Wellington looked round with a clear and unembarrassed gaze, and issued, in his usually quiet tone of voice, such orders as were necessary. While the troops on both sides shifted their ground as if on a field-day, he and his staff sat down to breakfast. Not one of Marmont's objects seems to have been mistaken by Lord Wellington. He saw that already the French order of battle was too diffuse, and he anticipated from what was going on that it would soon be interrupted altogether. He was correct in that conjecture. About three in the afternoon two divisions, one of infantry and one of cavalry, which formed the left of the French line, began suddenly to step out. They moved in the direction of some high ground, and of a village which lay about half a league in advance of them, and were far on their way towards it before troops from the centre arrived to fill the void. The blot was seen and hit on the instant. General Pakenham, with his infantry division supported by two batteries and a brigade of cavalry, was launched upon the rear of the French left. Cole and Leith, having Clinton and Hope in reserve, threw themselves upon the head of the centre, and Pack's Portuguese rushed at the hill, from which in the early part of the day the enemy had driven them off. A fierce battle ensued, of which the issues were not for a moment doubtful. Marmont, galloping to bring up support, was struck by a round shot and carried off the field. General Thomiers, on whom the command devolved, received a wound at

the same time, which disabled him. Bonnet, the next in point of seniority, fell likewise; and before General Clausel could arrive at the extreme right, all was confusion.

It was well for Clausel and the wreck of his army that the force which held the hill against which the Portuguese were sent fought so stoutly. They were powerful in artillery, and repulsed the assailants more than once; indeed, it was not till Lord Wellington brought up the 6th British division that the enemy gave way. Time was thus afforded, of which Clausel made good use, to organize a strong rear-guard, under cover of which he drew off his fugitives, and restored some order among them. But, after all, the French owed their escape from total destruction to the closing in of night. It was dusk before Lord Wellington, after mastering the hill, could fall upon the French rear-guard, and quite dark ere the wood under cover of which the enemy fought could be cleared. Even under such circumstances, however, escape would have been impossible but for the evacuation of Alba de Tormes by the Spaniards, of which Lord Wellington was still kept in ignorance. While therefore he pressed forward, expecting to find the enemy crowded about the ford at Huerta, they stole away by the road which leads to Alba, and were across the Tormes before the fact became known, all except a rear-guard of infantry and cavalry, which was charged and cut to pieces by Bock's brigade of heavy German dragoons.

The battle of Salamanca was by far the most decisive which had been fought since the commencement of the war. There were engaged, on the side of the English, 46,400 men, of whom 3500 were Spaniards. The enemy brought into the field 43,000 of all arms, so that in point of mere numbers, Lord Wellington was superior to Marmont. But when we look to the composition of their respective armies, this advantage, not very great in itself, sinks into nothing. The killed and wounded amounted to 6000, or thereabouts, on the part of the French, and to 5220 on the part of the allies. The English found at the close of the day 74 men missing, the Portuguese 184. The number of prisoners taken from the enemy amounted to between 6000 and 7000. Of the

3500 Spaniards in the field, only two were killed and four wounded; a pretty sure index of the amount of service which they had been able to render. The rout was complete; and its consequences were felt and acknowledged all over Europe. Napoleon heard of it on his march to Moscow, and accepted it as an omen of evil. It encouraged the Russians to make fresh sacrifices, and called up in Germany dreams of approaching deliverance. It put a stop, also, to those negotiations with Joseph which members of the Spanish Cortes were carrying on, and it knit the English and Portuguese armies into one. To Lord Wellington himself it brought an accumulation of honours from all the Governments which he served. Created an Earl after the capture of Badajoz, he was now advanced by the Prince Regent to the dignity of a Marquis. Spain gave him the Dukedom of Ciudad-Rodrigo, a Knighthood of the Golden Fleece, and the rank of Generalissimo of her armies: while Portugal conferred upon him the Marquisate of Torres Vedras, together with a palace in Lisbon. These dignities and marks of popular favour he received neither with unbecoming elevation nor with affected indifference. They added nothing to his real greatness, and he knew it; but they testified to the gratitude of the countries which he served, and on that account he prized them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

LORD WELLINGTON IN MADRID—SIEGE OF BURGOS—RETREAT TO THE PORTUGUESE FRONTIER.

Two courses were now open to the Marquis. Either he might follow the wreck of Marmont's army, driving that and Caffarelli's corps beyond the Pyrenees, or he might turn round upon Joseph, and, with or without a fresh battle, deliver Madrid. He chose the latter alternative, partly because a long march to the North would endanger his communications; which Joseph, Soult, and Suchet were all in a condition to threaten; partly because he persuaded himself that if anything could re-awaken the old spirit of Spain, the thought that the capital was wrested from the invader would do so. He contented himself therefore with seeing Clausel across the Douro, and with placing a Spanish corps in Valladolid; while one of his own divisions, with two brigades of cavalry, observed the course of the river. He then faced about to meet Joseph, who had for some days been upon the march, hoping to join Marmont before he came into collision with the English. Joseph heard of Lord Wellington's approach in good time. He declined to measure swords with him, and, covered by his cavalry, in which he was strong, retreated through the passes of the mountains to Madrid. There he waited only to collect his enormous baggage and retinue, and then fell back leisurely towards the Tagus. Lord Wellington has been blamed by military critics, first, for quitting Clausel as soon as he did, and next for allowing Joseph, encumbered with booty, to escape across the Tagus.

The censure, as applied to the former of these proceedings, appears to me to be unjust. I cannot quite see my way to a satisfactory vindication of Lord Wellington's policy in the second instance. Had he left Madrid on one side and pursued Joseph he must have overtaken and destroyed him. But the greatest generals who ever lived have sometimes erred, and Lord Wellington, were he now among us to plead his own cause, would probably be able to show that not his policy but our judgment upon it is in fault.

Lord Wellington entered Madrid on the 12th of August. The reception awarded to him was enthusiastic in the extreme. At Strathfieldsay there is a painting which describes this scene pretty nearly as it occurred, — the great commander, on horseback, with only one English officer, the late Lord Raglan, in his train; while Spaniards of all ranks and conditions, grandees, hidalgos, priests, soldiers, citizens, are crowding round him and ladies clinging to his stirrup-leathers in a state of the highest excitement. Carpets cover the pavements, and rich tapestry floats from every lattice, while windows, balconies, and the very tops of the houses, are alive with human forms. It was indeed the welcome of an ancient capital to its deliverer, of which the expression was continued after night-fall by illuminations, and carried on through successive days by fêtes, carousals, and theatrical representations.

There is an old Moorish castle called the Retiro, which dominates over Madrid. It was begirt at this time with a triple wall, and a French garrison held it; a most unwise arrangement on the part of King Joseph, though not, perhaps, greatly to be wondered at, seeing that the place was full of military stores. Before the Retiro, the British army immediately sat down, and in 24 hours the castle, with its defenders and stores, surrendered. And then came a pause, for which I confess myself unable to account. Lord Wellington's correspondence throws no more light upon the subject than this, that he himself, having achieved a great moral triumph, could not see, in the wretched state into which Spain had fallen, how it was to be turned to account. For 17 days, therefore, he gave his troops

rest, hoping against hope that the Spaniards would do something, and vainly urging the Government to concert with him a plan of operations, and adhere to it. The result is best shown in the subjoined extract of a letter addressed by him, on the 23rd of August, to his brother: "What can be done for this lost nation? As for raising men or supplies, or taking any other measure to enable them to carry on the war, that is out of the question. Indeed, there is nobody to excite them to exertion, or to take advantage of the enthusiasm of the people, or of their enmity against the French. Even the guerillas are getting quietly into the large towns and amusing themselves, or collecting plunder of a better and more valuable description; and nobody looks forward to the exertions to be made, either to improve or to secure our advantage."

If Lord Wellington was baffled on one hand by the supineness of Spain, the French Marshals began to suffer on the other from the continual draughts which Napoleon made upon them for reinforcements to his army in the North. Day by day heavy detachments took the road to France, till by and by, after providing garrisons for fortified places, they could not reckon on being able to bring into the field more than 120,000 or 130,000 men. To meet these Lord Wellington had under his own immediate orders at Madrid about 45,000, of whom 15,000 were Spaniards, while General Hill, with 14,000 or 15,000 more, was in Estremadura, keeping Soult in check. One division of infantry, perhaps 5000 strong, with two brigades of cavalry, say 2000, were on the Douro; and now, at length, the arrival of the expedition from Sicily was reported. But besides that the strength of that corps never exceeded 6000 men, the officer in command (General Maitland) committed the twofold mistake of landing at a wrong place, and entering upon his work in a spirit of despondency. Lord Wellington made haste to apply, as far as circumstances would allow, a correction to both grievances. He caused the troops to re-embark, and go round to the theatre of their operations; and he assured General Maitland that whatever the issues of the enterprise might be, he himself was prepared to assume