

various portions of the covering army well in hand. He received intelligence of Soult's advance about one in the morning, sprang out of bed, and ordered his horse. Whilst the groom was bringing it round he wrote an order for the centre of the army to move towards the right, and the left to follow the centre; and the better to guard against the risk of mishaps, he specified the valley of Lanz as the route which the troops were to follow. This done, he mounted, and set off about two o'clock in the direction of Biscaret and Olaque, where the threatened divisions were quartered.

The way was rough, and the ride fatiguing; and the divisions (the 3rd and 4th), attacked by superior numbers, had begun ere he reached them to give ground. He became in consequence anxious about the safety of other corps; and on the 27th rode forward as far as Sauroren to reconnoitre. As soon as he entered the village, he saw Clausel's division in full march along the brow of the hill from Zabaldica. It became manifest to him at the same instant, that the valley of Lanz was no longer a safe line of communication for his own troops; and equally so, that unless stopped in time, they would find themselves cut in half by the advancing column. He was quite alone, except that Lord Fitzroy Somerset rode with him. They had neither orderlies nor servants in attendance; so throwing his bridle to Lord Fitzroy, Lord Wellington leaped from his horse, and on the parapet of the bridge wrote with a pencil the necessary orders. With this scrap of paper Lord Fitzroy galloped to the rear; while Lord Wellington, waiting till the enemy's advance had well nigh reached the further end of the bridge, sprang into the saddle and rode away. He had a range of steep heights before him, which he crossed; over the valley at the further side uprose another ridge, which he ascended, and being recognized as he approached the summit by a Portuguese battalion, the men raised a cry of satisfaction. It was at once caught up by the 3rd and 4th divisions, which stood under arms not far off, and they, delighted, as in moments of danger the troops always were, to find their commander near them, rent the air with their shouts. Soult heard the

tumult, and perfectly understood what it meant. Almost involuntarily he stopped the march of his troops; and ascending a hill opposite to that on which Lord Wellington stood, the two Generals gazed at one another.

The delay of an hour or two was all that Lord Wellington desired. His orders despatched by Lord Fitzroy Somerset had changed the line of march for the 6th division, which, instead of pushing through the Lanz valley, turned aside, and came in, by a wide detour, on the interval which separated Hill from the right of the army. Had Soult attacked on the 27th he would have had only two divisions with Morillo's Spaniards to deal with. On the 28th three divisions were in line. The reason which he himself assigns for the delay is, that he expected every moment to be joined by D'Erlon. But D'Erlon was still absent on the 28th, when he did strike the blow. The French, superior in numbers, behaved with the utmost gallantry; the Allies, admirably posted, met and repelled every attack. Lines and columns were continually intermixed; indeed, Lord Wellington describes the encounter as "bludgeon work." At last the struggle ended, leaving each party in possession, pretty nearly, of the ground which it occupied ere the battle began. And both armies slept beside their dead.

The dawn of the 29th found the hostile lines under arms, but no fighting took place. It was not Lord Wellington's policy to provoke a battle, and Soult held back from forcing it on. They were equally looking for reinforcements. Those for Lord Wellington arrived first, and in greater comparative strength. He had 30,000 Anglo-Portuguese in hand before the sun went down; whereas, on the previous day, he had carried less than 16,000 into action. An hour or two later, D'Erlon arrived with 18,000 for Soult. These, added to 18,000—the remains of the 20,000 who had fought on the previous day—still left him numerically superior to his opponent. But the French were by this time a good deal demoralized by constant reverses, and their leader began to be in fear that provisions would fail him. He determined, therefore, to extricate himself from the difficulties of his situation, while at the same time he should

make an effort to raise the siege of San Sebastian. With this view he left a division to screen the movement, and turned with the rest upon Hill. It was a bold but dangerous stroke. It presented the flank of the French army on its march to Lord Wellington, who was neither slow to divine the cause of the proceeding nor backward in taking advantage of it. All the divisions were put in motion, and through every valley which bore upon the route of the French columns, fierce attacks were made. There was hard fighting, which went entirely against the French. Foy, with 8000 men, was separated from the main body. Reille and Clausel, very roughly handled, gave way; while Soult himself, driven out of Sauroren, retreated upon San Esteban by the gorge of Donna Maria. But even this expedient had been surmised, and Hill, uniting to himself Morillo's Spaniards, pushed through gorges and defiles, and headed the column. And now occurred one of those accidents which lead so often in war to great failures as well as to great successes. Lord Wellington had so timed the movements of his corps, that he was on the point of surrounding Soult with the mass of his army, when three wretched stragglers, looking for plunder in the glen into which the enemy had been crowded, fell into the hands of a patrol. They were carried before Soult, told him whence they came, and made him for the first time aware that the English were all round him, except on one narrow opening; and that even this would in the course of a few hours be stopped. He lost no time in breaking through. In haste, and some confusion, his troops threaded the interval, leaving all their baggage behind. The guns he had previously sent away by Roncesvalles and St Jean Pied-de-Port.

From that date up to the 2nd of August, all the defiles of the Pyrenees rang with a continual fire of musketry. The French in full retreat, the English in hot pursuit, scaled crags, plunged down ravines, and passed torrents. The loss to the fugitives was enormous. It amounted, throughout the operations, to 15,000 men; while on the side of the Allies, 7300 were returned as killed, wounded, and missing.

Having thus crippled Soult, Lord Wellington resumed the siege of San Sebastian, the details of which he committed, as before, to Sir Thomas Graham. The arrival from England of a fresh battering-train and a large supply of ammunition greatly facilitated this operation. The trenches had not been filled in, and the batteries were soon re-armed, so that on the 26th of August a heavy fire was once more opened upon the place. Before it old walls and recently constructed defences came down, and on the 31st the assault was delivered. A terrible combat ensued in the breaches, over the parapets, through the streets of the town, amid blazing houses and under the tumult of a thunder-storm. But this time the assailants prevailed, and the Governor, retreating to the castle which overhangs the city, held out there for a few days longer, and then surrendered.

While the assault was going on, a column of French troops, having passed the Bidassoa near Irun, and by fords higher up the stream, endeavoured to force their way through the allied lines. Their main attack was directed against some Spanish troops which occupied the heights of San Martial; but the advantages of position were so entirely with the Spaniards, that after some hours spent in the hopeless endeavour to clamber up precipices and pass through thick woods, the French abandoned the enterprise, and withdrew again across the Bidassoa. There occurred however during the combat an incident which deserves notice, because of the light which it throws upon the Duke's healthy principle of action. He had always spoken in his public despatches more favourably of the Spanish troops than they deserved, and he did so for two reasons. First, he considered himself bound to spare as much as possible the pride which enters so largely into the national character of the Spaniard, and next he believed, that to raise men generally in the scale of moral worth, judicious encouragement goes further than indiscriminate censure. On the present occasion the features of the country which the Spaniards had been appointed to hold were familiar to him. He knew that it was next to impossible for the enemy to dislodge them by fair fighting; yet scarcely was the battle begun when the Spanish Generals

sent, as usual, to entreat that English troops would come to their support. The Duke took the bearers of this message apart, reasoned with them, and pointed out that if he were to act on this suggestion, an opportunity would be lost to their countrymen of acquiring a good name, such as might never occur again. "I can easily send you English troops; and if I see that you are hard pressed, they shall be forthcoming. But you hold ground which women might keep against giants. Go back, and tell General Freyre that I won't do him the injustice to prevent his coming out of the affair of this day as a conqueror."

The Spanish officers rode back to the heights. The first English division stood to its arms in the valley below, and by and by the 85th regiment coming up from San Sebastian took ground also in support. But not one English soldier fired a musket that day. The Spaniards had all the fighting to themselves, and the 31st of August became in consequence to them one of the most glorious days in their military history.

## CHAPTER XXI.

## INVASION OF FRANCE—BATTLE OF THE NIVELLE.

THERE occurred, during an interval in these marches and battles, a little incident, which was a good deal spoken about at the time, and seems therefore to demand notice here. Lord Wellington, after directing a Spanish column to move up a glen towards a specific point, looked at his watch, and observed to those about him that it would take the men so much time to perform the journey. He added that he was tired, and dismounting from his horse, wrapped himself in his cloak, and went to sleep. A crowd of officers stood round him, and among others some Spanish Generals, whose astonishment at the coolness of their chief was expressed in audible whispers. For the very crisis of the struggle was impending, and the French being in greater strength upon the spot, seemed to have the ball at their foot. Now, among the officers of the head-quarters' staff, there were several who had never approved the passage of the Ebro. These began to speak their minds freely, and one, the bravest of the brave, the gallant Colonel Gordon, exclaimed, "I always thought it would come to this. I was sure we should make a mess of it, if we got entangled among the Pyrenees, and now see if my words don't come true." Lord Wellington happened to awake just as Gordon thus unburdened his conscience. He sat up, and without addressing himself to any one in particular, extended his right hand open, and said, as he closed it, "I have them all in my hand, just like that." Not another word was spoken. The Spaniards had

reached the top of the glen ; Lord Wellington and his attendants remounted their horses, and the battle was renewed.

And now honours began to shower upon him afresh, and so did sources of anxiety. The Prince Regent sent him a Field-Marshal's bâton, in exchange, as he stated in an autograph letter, for that of Marshal Jourdan. But the same post which brought this communication brought likewise a proposal from the sovereigns of Russia, Austria, and Prussia, that Lord Wellington should hand over his Peninsular army to somebody else, and come and put himself at the head of their troops. His answer was in keeping with his character for simplicity and truth. If the Prince Regent gave the order, he should obey. But he would never willingly withdraw from a scene where everybody trusted him, and place himself in a situation in which it was more than probable that others could do as well as he. In the same wise spirit he put aside the request of these sovereigns, backed as it was by the entreaties of his own Government, to precipitate an invasion of France. "My future operations," he wrote in reply, "will depend a good deal upon what passes in the North of Europe ; and if operations should recommence there, upon the strength and nature of the reinforcements which the enemy shall get in our front." For at the very time when he was urged to go forward, the northern powers had agreed to an armistice, and were carrying on negotiations with Napoleon. "Consider," he says in a private letter to Lord William Bentinck, "what they want me to do. To invade France where everybody is a soldier, where the whole population is armed and organized under persons not, as in other countries, inexperienced in arms, but men who in the course of the last 25 years, in which France has been engaged with all Europe, must, the majority of them at least, have served somewhere." But this was not all. The army of which he was at the head, though superior to what it had been a year or two previously, was still unfit in all its parts to be depended upon. By judiciously intermixing inferior with superior troops he rendered the whole pliable. But this was not done, except at the cost of inconveniences which would be aggravated a

thousand-fold the moment he passed the frontier. For then the Spaniards, whom their own Government habitually neglected while at home, would be left to starve, or thrown on the British commissariat. He well describes this state of things in a letter to Lord William Bentinck, dated from Lazaca on the 9th of August: "The system," he says, "is not perfect; but what is perfect with such instruments and such defective means? It would be much more easy and convenient for me, and for the British army, to join all the Spaniards into one corps, all the British into another, and all the Portuguese into a third. That would be the most simple arrangement; but one fine morning I should find both Spaniards and Portuguese surprised and defeated, and the British would cut but a poor figure alone."

One more source of anxiety presented itself at this time, which deserves, at least, passing notice. Napoleon, it was rumoured, had opened a negotiation for a separate peace with Spain, and undertook to restore Ferdinand, on condition that all the country between the Pyrenees and the Ebro should be annexed to France. There was reason to believe that Ferdinand, in his abject anxiety to reign, was willing to accede to these terms; and a party in the Cortes seemed not to be averse to them. Lord Wellington wrote strongly against the arrangement, both to his brother at Cadiz, and to the Government at home. But the project seemed to have been, at least, premature. The time was not yet come for Napoleon to concede even so much, for the sake of peace; though a constant whisper of treason, falling in with so many overt acts of ill-will, could not but occasion anxiety at head-quarters. All these doubts, and many more which I need not stop to particularize, weighed upon the mind of the English General, and rendered him less anxious than he might have otherwise been to push the war for the present beyond the Spanish border. But the tide had set in strong against the recent masters of the Continent, and Lord Wellington acknowledged its influence. War was renewed in the North of Europe, and in the South the English, after fortifying the mouths of the passes which they were about to leave behind, crossed the Bidassoa.



Meanwhile Soult's position on the further bank of that stream was strong, but like all positions in mountain-countries, it had its weak points. He regarded it, therefore, as a mere line of resistance, and carefully fortified two other lines, one in front of the Nivelles, the other along the Adour and about Bayonne. On the 7th of October he was attacked and driven back upon his second line. Pampeluna, however, still held out, and the news from Dresden proved unsatisfactory; two circumstances which operated in restraining Lord Wellington from going forward. He halted, therefore, on the ground which he had won, and for well-nigh a month the war languished. By and by, however, came tidings of the battle of Leipsic, and of the retreat of Napoleon across the Rhine. The surrender of Pampeluna followed soon afterwards, and early in November preparations were made for trying once more the fortune of battle.

The weather had been wet and blustering during the latter days of October and the beginning of November. All the lanes and by-paths in the department of the Lower Pyrenees were rendered thereby impassable, so that some portion at least of the delay, which thoughtless men wondered at, was owing to the impossibility of moving guns and even men through a sea of mud. At last the storm ceased, and an hour before dawn on the 10th the troops stood to their arms.

The position which Lord Wellington was about to attack resembled in some of its features his own famous lines of Torres Vedras. It consisted of a series of redoubts and open works extending from the sea on one flank, well-nigh to the river Nive on the other. The ground thus protected being on the left undulating rather than hilly, rose towards the right into lofty eminences, each of which commanded the valleys on either side, and was strongly fortified. The weakest point of all was in the centre, where the village of Sarre protruded beyond the proper line, standing however so awkwardly towards the adjacent hills that it could not be left unguarded. Lord Wellington saw where the chink in his adversary's armour lay, and thrust at it. His plan of operations was this. He aimed at breaking through the

French centre, in which if he could succeed, he should be able to march upon Bayonne and interpose himself between that city and one if not both of the separated portions of the beaten army. But in order to accomplish this, it was necessary to engage the enemy's attention at all points along their line. He attacked, therefore, in four separate columns. Hill on the extreme right, with the 2nd and 6th divisions, Hamilton's Portuguese brigade, Murillo's Spaniards, and a due proportion of artillery, was directed to move against Clausel's position in rear of Ainhoe. Beresford, with the 3rd, 4th, and 7th divisions, fell upon the redoubts in front of Sarre, and upon Sarre itself; while Alten, with the light division, and Longa's Spaniards, attacked the little Rhune, and co-operated with Giron in assaulting the heights behind Sarre. These several movements were supported by a body of cavalry, under Sir Stapleton Cotton, and by four batteries of cannon, as well as by Freyre's Spaniards, who, advancing from Mandale towards Ascain, would be able to hold in check any reinforcements which might endeavour to make their way from the right to the centre. Finally, Sir John Hope, who had succeeded Sir Thomas Graham in command of the left column, was to drive in the posts in front of the Lower Nivelle, to carry the redoubts above Urogne, to establish himself on the heights facing Siboure, and to act from thence as circumstances might direct. His force consisted of the 1st and 5th divisions, of the brigades of Wilson, Bradford, and Aylmer, of Vandeleur's light dragoons, the 12th and 16th, and of the heavy German cavalry.

In spite of narrow defiles and broken roads, the attacks thus skilfully arranged, succeeded in every quarter. On the right, and in the centre, redoubts and entrenchments were carried with little comparative loss. On the left, Urogne being entered at the double, a continued skirmish was kept up throughout the day, in the meadows beyond, and along the base of the hills which look down upon them. Yet so much more serious than had been anticipated were the obstacles presented by the face of the country, that daylight failed before full advantage could be taken of the successes

thus achieved. Soult, on the other hand, was not slow in perceiving that his lines had ceased to be tenable. He withdrew from such of the works as he still held when darkness set in, and before day-break on the 11th, was across the Nivelle, with his right on the sea at Bidard, and his left at St Barbe.

The battle of the Nivelle cost the Allies, in killed, wounded, and missing, 2694 officers and men. The loss to the French was much more severe; it amounted to 4265, including 1400 prisoners. They left, besides, in the hands of the victors, fifty-one pieces of cannon, six ammunition wagons, and all their magazines at St Jean de Luz and Espalette. Yet their retreat was conducted in excellent order. They broke down the bridges on the Nivelle, and their rear made a show of receiving a second action at Bidard. But the advance of the Allies was too formidable for them. As soon as light came in, Hope moved from Urogne, and passed the Nivelle by a ford, above the broken bridge at St Jean de Luz. Beresford and Hill threatened the enemy simultaneously in the centre and on the right. Soult again shifted his ground. He fell back towards Bayonne, in the entrenched camp before which he established himself, having one post at Anglette, on the great Madrid road, and others to the right and left of it, from the Adour to the Nive.

Before he crossed the Bidassoa, Lord Wellington had, in general orders, cautioned his troops against offering violence to the persons and property of the French people. It was the only answer which he condescended to make to a shower of proclamations, which, coming from the other side, threatened the Allies with war to the knife in the event of their polluting the soil of France with their presence. Lord Wellington's announcement, unlike that of Marshal Soult, was something more than a mere bit of gasconnade. He meant what he said; and during the progress of the battle of the Nivelle itself, found an opportunity of showing how entirely he was in earnest. It happened that in riding from one rising ground to another, he encountered in a valley a French peasant, whom, with a flock of twenty or

thirty sheep, a troop of English cavalry had arrested. "What are you doing with that man?" he demanded of the officer commanding the troop. "I have stopped him from driving his sheep into Bayonne, my Lord." "And who told you to do so?" Then turning to the peasant, he said in French, "You want to drive your sheep to Bayonne. I can't at present give you an escort up to the gates, but I can send you as far as your own people." "You will be good enough, sir," he continued, addressing himself to the officer, "to see this man and his sheep safe through our lines, and take care that no harm befalls him." The peasant was therefore conducted to the utmost verge of the English line of skirmishers, and there set adrift. Whether he fared as well among the French soldiers, I never heard; but it is pleasant to be able to record half a century after the event that not even the excitement of a battle in its progress caused the English General or his troops to forget what was due to the claims of humanity.

The weather, which had continued fine throughout the 10th, broke again on the 11th, and for several days the rain fell in torrents. Lord Wellington found himself constrained in consequence to halt, and by and by, as the only chance of preserving the health of his troops, to distribute them among the towns and villages near. His anxiety under these circumstances to save the people of the country from outrage, and to induce them to live in their own houses with the men whom he quartered upon them, was extreme. He invited all local magistrates to come to him, and assured them of protection. He caused hand-bills to be printed, and posted in the streets and against cottage walls, charging the inhabitants to arrest and bring before the nearest general officer any persons from whom they might suffer wrong; and he hanged upon the spot several soldiers, both English and Portuguese, who were taken in the act of marauding. With English and Portuguese this wise severity produced the desired effect. They understood the motives of their chief, and submitted to a discipline which was as politic as it was merciful. Not so the Spaniards. They asserted their right to do in France what French armies

had done in Spain; and their Generals had the folly to remonstrate against the measures taken to restrain them. "I did not come into France," wrote Lord Wellington to General Freyre, "to plunder. I have not been the means of killing and wounding thousands of officers and soldiers in order that the survivors should pillage the French. On the contrary, it is my duty, and the duty of us all, to prevent pillage, particularly if we wish that our armies should subsist upon the resources of the country."

Lord Wellington's expostulations failing to have any effect upon the Spanish officers, he at once dispensed with their services. The whole Spanish army, amounting to 20,000 men at least, was sent back across the Bidassoa. It was a strong measure, but he had well weighed the consequences before adopting it. "I must tell your Lordship," he wrote to Lord Bathurst on the 21st of November, "that our success and everything depends upon our moderation and justice, and upon the good conduct and discipline of our troops. Hitherto these have behaved well, and there appears a new spirit among the officers, which I hope will continue, to keep the troops in order. But I despair of the Spaniards. They are in so miserable a state that it is really hardly fair to expect that they will refrain from plundering a beautiful country into which they enter as conquerors, particularly adverting to the miseries which their own country has suffered from the invaders. I cannot, therefore, venture to bring them back into France unless I can feed and pay them. If I could but bring forward 20,000 good Spaniards paid and fed, I should have Bayonne. If I could bring forward 40,000, I don't know where I should stop. Now I have both the 20,000 and the 40,000 at my command upon this frontier, but I cannot venture to bring forward any for want of means of paying and supplying them."

This was the last of his proceedings in 1813, for a time. The bad weather continued intermittingly. A temporary halt was converted into an enduring pause; and the troops, conceiving that they had entered into winter quarters, began to make themselves at home.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## BATTLE OF THE NIVE—WINTER QUARTERS.

BEFORE I endeavour to give some account of life as it went on in winter quarters fifty years ago, it may not be amiss if, in as few words as possible, I tell the story here of the military operations which broke in upon the repose of the troops a month subsequently to the battle of Nivelle.

Constrained, as I have just shown, by a continuance of bad weather, Lord Wellington had quartered his people over a long line of country, measuring perhaps nine or ten miles from left to right, almost on the spots where each corps and division had halted. Head-quarters with the Guards were well disposed of in St Jean de Luz. The 5th division, with Lord Aylmer's brigade, filled all the hamlets and villages between that town and Bidard. The light division lay to the right of these in Arcanguez; and others succeeded, wending further and further to the right till they touched the river Nive. Thus all the country south as well as north of the Adour, which was remarkably fertile and rich in corn and cattle, remained, as far as the right bank of the Nive, in the hands of the enemy; who were able, likewise, to communicate through that district with certain posts which they still held in rear of the English right among the Lower Pyrenees. Now such a state of things was not agreeable to Lord Wellington, and on the 9th of December he moved out to put an end to it. While his right crossed the Nive, and closed upon the entrenched camp and the Adour, his centre and left made demonstrations, of which

the sole object was to distract the enemy's attention, and to hinder them from falling on Hill with overwhelming numbers while cumbered with the passage of the Nive.

The affair of the 9th of December was nowhere serious. The enemy fell back, skirmishing, as the English advanced, and long before dark all was accomplished which Lord Wellington had in view. Hill, with the right column, 16,000 strong, commanded the rich country between the Adour and the Nive, and the other columns returned to sleep in their old quarters. But Soult was far from being satisfied with what had occurred, and finding his opponent astride of a deep river, he endeavoured to strike him in detail. With this view he carried the great bulk of his people in the night of the 9th from that portion of the entrenched camp which faced Hill, and early in the morning of the 10th fell with extreme violence upon the left of the English army. The whole of that day, throughout the 11th, and again on the 12th, the battle raged. It was fought partly upon a plateau which intervenes between the sea and Arcanguez, partly along the ridges and slopes in which that plateau ends, and partly in and about the village of Arcanguez. The troops on both sides slept night after night upon their arms, so near the one line to the other, that the voices of men conversing round a French camp fire, and sometimes their words, could be overheard and understood by men sitting round their camp fire in the English lines.

The French fought well, but they made no progress. The ground which they gained on the morning of the 10th was wrested from them in the afternoon of the same day; and they never again recovered it. The English did not advance beyond their own plateau, because their battle was entirely a defensive one; and so, when the enemy, finding themselves foiled in their design, withdrew after dark on the 12th, and hurried off to attack Sir Rowland Hill, no attempt was made to push forward and surprise that portion of the entrenched camp which lay near Anglette. The attack upon Sir Rowland Hill failed as signally as the attack upon Sir John Hope, and a loss to the assailants of 10,000 men, in

killed and wounded and prisoners, was all that Soult took by his motion.

It was during the progress of this action that there occurred that meeting, so to speak, between Lord Wellington and Marshal Soult, of which in another work I have made mention. There lay to the English right of a wood which screened the plateau of Biaritz, a narrow valley, with steep but low hills on either side. One of these ridges was held by French troops, while along the summit of the other, but thrown back so as to leave room for the enemy, should they take courage to ascend, stood the 85th regiment in line. The skirmishers on both sides were engaged in the narrow glen between; and the main bodies rested on their arms.

About noon, or a little later, a group of horsemen suddenly arrived on the French ridge. There could be no doubt as to their quality. It was a general officer of high rank, with a numerous staff, who halted opposite to the 85th, well-nigh within long musket range, and immediately dismounted. He was a large man, and lame; and he leaned his telescope on the saddle, and closely examined the English position. While the attention of the officers of the 85th was turned towards the group, a clatter of horses' hoofs arose behind them; and Lord Wellington, also numerously attended, rode up. His glass was instantly pointed towards the opposite group, and he exclaimed aloud, "That's Soult, I recollect him perfectly. I saw him before at Sauroren." For three minutes, more or less, the two chiefs seemed to watch one another; then first one and then another French officer, and finally the whole cavalcade, put their horses in motion, and went away at a sharp pace in the direction of the English right. "That's it, is it?" cried Lord Wellington; and then addressing himself to the 85th, he said, "Now, lads, you must keep your ground; there's nothing behind you;" after which he faced about, and set off at a gallop, in the same direction which the French officers had taken. Nor were the results of these reconnaissances slow to appear. A furious fire of musketry and cannon told that Arcanguez was assailed. A wild hurrah, from the opposite ridge, served as a prelude to a rush, and in ten minutes



the battle raged again with extreme violence. But no great while elapsed ere the woods in rear of both English posts were seen to glitter with the flash of a winter's sun on the bayonets of troops arriving. Soult's object was defeated, and the dead and wounded marked where they lay the route by which his troops had come on, and had again retreated.

I saw Lord Wellington again on the morning of the 13th, after the French finally withdrew from the combat. He was riding leisurely, from the right to the left of his own line, and stopped for a moment to converse with Colonel Thornton as he passed. All crowded round to listen, and as he was in excellent spirits, he greeted everybody very courteously. "They got an awful licking," were his words; "I don't think I ever saw so many dead crowded into such a narrow space. Hill must have disposed of 5000 of them, at the least." And then he rode away.

For two or three days longer, in order, no doubt, to make all secure, the troops remained in line of battle. They then broke up, and filed off, division by division, brigade by brigade, and regiment by regiment, to such cantonments as had been prepared for them. The outposts were taken by battalions in succession, one of each brigade relieving the other at intervals of three days. These, except the pickets, slept under canvas three nights, and on the morning of the 4th day made over the tents and their responsibility to their successors. It is not, however, of them nor of the adventures which befell them that I need speak. My business lies rather with what went on in the rear of the outposts, where Lord Wellington and the head-quarters of the army had established themselves.

St Jean de Luz is, or rather was half a century ago, a town of perhaps 10,000 or 12,000 inhabitants; with its Mairie, its Hôtel de Ville, its churches, its theatre, its square, or place d'armes, and its streets, some more, some less imposing, according to the style of the houses which lined it. The river Nivelle runs through the town, ending in a harbour and a quay, and is spanned by a bridge, which the French in their retreat had broken down, but which the English engineers speedily repaired. Almost all the inhabitants fled

when the English first entered; but the fame of Lord Wellington's justice soon got abroad, and long before the 9th of December, not a few, including the Mayor and municipality, had returned. Nothing could be more satisfactory than the terms on which those functionaries and the people in general lived with the invaders. Not only was no violence offered to them, but the Mayor was a frequent guest at Lord Wellington's table; and the civil government of the town was carried on in his name, and according to the laws which he was accustomed to administer.

Three English Generals, besides Lord Wellington, occupied houses in St Jean de Luz. Sir John Hope, commanding the left column, who had been severely wounded in the battle of the Nive, was one of those, and the Generals commanding the 1st and 5th divisions were the other two. All dispensed their hospitalities freely; but the Marquis's parties were, as may be supposed, the most sought after. In the first place, he kept by far the best table. It had not been always so; indeed, during the earlier campaigns, the Duke seemed to be indifferent to this matter, almost to a fault; but latterly he took a different view of things. Not fewer than three cooks attended him; one a Frenchman, one an Englishman, one a Spaniard; and among them they certainly contrived to turn out dinners of which no connoisseur need have been ashamed. In the next place, his staff, whatever their merits as soldiers might have been, consisted of gentlemen, who lived with one another on the most affectionate terms, and were well-bred and kind to all who approached them. They had many school-boy tricks; among others, that of giving nick-names, at which nobody took offence. "Where is Slender Billy?" said Lord Fitzroy Somerset one day, looking round the table, and apparently missing somebody. "Here I am, Fitzroy," replied the Prince of Orange, "what do you want?" And so it was with Lord March, so with Lord Fitzroy, so with the Duke himself, though in this last instance it must be confessed the soubriquet was never applied, except in the absence of the object of it. Yet even when the Duke was present, these young men seldom scrupled to say and do whatever occurred

to them : unless indeed a point of duty were concerned, and then he tolerated nothing out of the straight line of obedience. No doubt, conversation at the table of the Commander of the forces laboured, like conversation at the table of the Sovereign, under some restraints. All who sat there, that is to say, ordinary guests, waited till the cue was given, and were then content for the most part to follow, not to originate, discussion. Lord Wellington himself, on the contrary, seemed to give free utterance to whatever thought happened to pass through his mind. Whether home politics, or the affairs of Europe, or the state and prospects of his own army took his attention, out came his opinions with as much freedom as if he were discussing a stage-play or events in history.

“ We were often amazed to hear you speak so freely, especially when the Mayor of Biaritz, or that other mysterious person, happened to be of the party.”

“ Oh, you took them for spies, I suppose, and thought that I ought to be very guarded before them. But why should I ? It was a matter of indifference to me what they saw or heard. I got a good deal of information out of them which was useful to me. I didn't care what information they carried back to Soult, because I knew it would be of no use to him.”

“ You think, then, that they were double spies ? ”

“ I am not quite prepared to say that of the Biaritz man, but about the other I never entertained a doubt. I knew that he was in Soult's pay as well as in mine. But I took care to let him know that I had it always in my power to test the intelligence which he brought me ; and he soon ceased to bring any that was not true. The fact is, that spies abound in every camp. I was aware of many in mine, but as to hanging them, that never entered into my head. If I could not manage at all times to render their tittle-tattle worthless to the enemy, I should have been unfit to command an army.”

I have spoken of Lord Wellington's hunting days. His dress, when he took the field, was that of the Salisbury Hunt, viz., a sky-blue coat, black cap, and buckskin breeches.