and hunger. When the allies entered Madrid, the pay of all ranks was in arrears. Yet the first thing some of the charitable officers did was to establish subscription soup-kitchens for the relief of the famishing. Nor were political animosities much less embarrassing. The sorely-oppressed patriots, driven to desperation, naturally were eager to wreak their vengeance on their weaker countrymen, who had reluctantly acquiesced in the foreign domination. But the well-balanced judgment of Wellington recognised that there was no little excuse for many of those *Juramentados*, and that if the wounds of bleeding Spain were to be stanched much must be forgiven and forgotten. He set an excellent example of toleration and oblivion by inviting *Afrancesados* and *Juramentados* to his official receptions, and in his wise liberality he was well seconded by Carlos D'España, who had been appointed to the captain-generalship of the city and province of Madrid. D'España was a poor leader, and he had lost Wellington the best fruits of Salamanca, but he was a sincere patriot and a fair administrator. The capital began to calm down as money began to flow back to it, yet it was ever oppressed by the well-grounded fear of Wellington's withdrawal and Joseph's return.

In fact the omens were all unfavourable, and the withdrawal was soon seen to be inevitable. The blame must be shared between the Spanish allies who, as always, were backward, and the British ministry, who starved the military chest and sent inadequate help to the Eastern coasts from Sicily, in place of cordially co-operating with the commander-in-chief. If Wellington's comprehensive plans broke down for the time, and if the French evacuation of the Peninsula was deferred, it was because the divisions in the north, but chiefly on

the east, were inefficient, and because his freedom of action was paralysed by insuperable difficulties of transport. He had hoped for 12,000 men from Sicily to support the Catalonians and Valencians, and give occupation to Suchet. Barely half that number was sent. Maitland, who was in command, was a gallant soldier, but no Wellington ; moreover, he was in wretched health and anxious to be relieved. He arrived off the coast on the 1st of August, and had he been more firm of purpose he might well have been puzzled by the conflicting information he received from the Spanish chiefs. Each spoke according to his hopes or wishes. One absurdly magnified the forces of the French, another more gratuitously underrated them. One said that the *partidas* and the peasants of the mountains were eager to be summoned to arms ; another declared that they were profoundly discouraged. But all agreed that the native levies must be paid and fed from the British squadron. Maitland, after exciting false hopes elsewhere on the coast, disembarked at Alicante, much in the dark, and conducted desultory operations with the languor of a confirmed invalid. The rash ignorance of the Spanish generals provoked a crushing defeat at Castallo, and the upshot of the expedition was simply to weaken Suchet, till he was joined by Jourdan with Joseph, and subsequently by Soult. The best that can be said is, that Alicante did not fall to him—a very negative gain. On the north-east Sir Home Popham's squadron which had detained troops from joining Marmont before Salamanca, had now compelled the able Caffarelli to withdraw the garrisons from Santander and other places. But the Gallician army under Santocildes, from which Wellington had hoped for efficient support, and which figured on paper for 30,000 men, could only furnish a third of

that number, and these were undisciplined and wretchedly equipped.

Joseph, Soult and Suchet had united nearly 100,000 men. Clausel, who had been reorganising his routed army, had 25,000; he was gathering in the fugitives who had scattered after the defeat, and was being strengthened by the reserves wisely provided by Napoleon against the chance of a disaster to Marmont. Clinton, who had been left to hold Clausel in check, was menaced by Foy as well. Nor in the south had Wellington's carefully-considered dispositions gone more smoothly. He had instructed Ballesteros to advance to join Maitland and threaten the flank of the French, should Joseph and Soult countermarch on the capital. But the Cortes, in an outburst of gratitude after Salamanca, had appointed the English conqueror commander-in-chief of all their armies. To which Ballesteros, in a fit of peevish resentment, responded by a violent protest, throwing up his command. So far as his forces were concerned, the French could operate in absolute immunity from danger. Knowing their dispositions, Wellington decided to reinforce his divisions on the Douro with those he had scattered, from considerations of coolness and health, through the mountains to the north and west of Madrid; to drive back Clausel; to take the castle of Burgos, and to leave Hill to hold the enemy in check till he should hasten southward again to take the initiative in person after the capture. But the obstinate resistance of that fortress upset those calculations.

On the 1st of September he departed from Madrid, leaving two divisions in garrison. Hill was to cover the capital on the side of the Xarama, and Ballesteros had been requested to reinforce him. The troops were mustered at Arevallo, and on the 6th they passed the

fords of the Douro. Thereupon the enemy evacuated Valladolid, crossed the Pisuerga, and withdrew along the right bank. Wellington, following, occupied Palencia, and there he received despatches from Santocildes. Little as he had expected from Spanish assistance, he learned then, to his surprise and disappointment, that he could have no effective assistance from Gallicia. The musters on paper were even more illusory than usual; he was only joined by 11,000 men, indifferently equipped and disciplined; and so he was compelled to abandon the idea of leaving the Spaniards to hold Burgos, while he returned to Madrid to provide against eventualities.

Meantime he had followed the retiring French up the fertile valleys of the Pisuerga and Arlanzon. Hitherto both districts had almost escaped ravage; there was a sufficiency of provisions and a superabundance of heady wine; already our soldiers, breaking into the wine shops and cellars, began to indulge in the excesses which demoralised the subsequent retreat. Clausel exhibited the genius which had asserted itself at Salamanca by again conducting a retreat in masterly fashion. He had the choice of a succession of formidable positions, and each morning found him offering the battle which Wellington did not care to accept as he could only attack in front. Clausel entered Burgos on the 17th; Marmont, who was suffering from his wounds, had left it a few days before. Thither Caffarelli hurried to confer with him, and after a council of war it was decided that Burgos must in turn be evacuated: no time was lost in recommencing the retreat, and by the following forenoon the city was abandoned.

The city had been abandoned, but the historic castle had been garrisoned by 1800 staunch soldiers under Dubreton, a general of rare skill and determination.

The allies, treading on the heels of the French, found the town in a blaze and the conflagration spreading. The garrison, to clear the surrounding space, had fired the houses adjoining the castle. The bands of *partidas* breaking in, took advantage of the confusion to plunder as if they had been sacking a hostile city. Burgos, for the time, was a veritable pandemonium, and it was only by the strenuous exertions of Alava, whose unfailing co-operation won the lasting friendship of Wellington, that some sort of order was restored.

The English general had reasonably supposed that the castle could not long hold out. It was scarcely a fortress of the third order; and it was commanded by some heights to the eastward, within short gun-range. But then began one of the most remarkable sieges of modern times, for both French and English were miserably deficient in all the scientific appliances of modern war. The French had swept the country of mules, horses and cattle; and Wellington could find no transport to bring up his siege-train. For his batteries he had only three 18-pounders and five antiquated iron howitzers. Repeatedly the supply of powder ran low, nor did he dare to expend it utterly, lest Clausel should return and challenge a battle. Repeatedly the feeble bombardment was suspended, till fresh supplies were brought up from the ships on the coast. Finally, when he fell back upon difficult and tedious sapping and mining, he had only four engineer officers to direct operations, and no regular sappers. When three of these officers had been killed or crippled, the last was carefully kept in the rear as his life was too precious to be rashly exposed.

The castle crowned a rugged hill, overhanging the town and the river beyond it. It was surrounded by triple lines of hasty construction. The first line of

defence consisted of an old wall, with a new parapet and flanking works. The second was of earth and palisaded. The innermost was likewise of earth, embracing the two commanding points of the hill, one surmounted by an old church which was entrenched, and the other by the massive keep of the castle. So solid was the ancient masonry that it bore the superstructure of a casemated work, armed with heavy guns. The battery on the keep dominated everything except the hill of San Miguel to the east, one of the eminences already mentioned. San Miguel was defended by a horn-work, as yet unfinished and only closed by palisades, but commanded by the heavy guns on the keep, and flanked besides by the other defences. The French batteries opposed to Wellington's antiquated battering train were armed with nine heavy guns, eleven light field pieces and half a dozen of howitzers, and as the reserve artillery of the army of Portugal was in the fortress, they had the means of remedying any casualties. Where they came short was in powder and projectiles.

Four assaults were successively delivered on the fortress. The first was directed on the heights of San Miguel. It was admirably planned, but indifferently executed. The covering party, advancing on the front, began to fire far too soon; when they reached the ditch, many had fallen and the rest were demoralised. The simultaneous attacks on the flanking bastions failed, owing to the shortness of the scaling ladders. But Major Cocks, although he had lost half his stormers, found the gorge of the work undefended; with the survivors he clambered over the stockade, and the French, suddenly stricken by panic, fled back into the castle.

The works had been won 'by a fluke,' but the con-

fidence of the allies had been dashed. Moreover, San Miguel, though raking the castle from its narrowest point, was commanded and out-flanked by the castle terrace. The assailants had lost 400 men, the defenders little more than a third of that number. But Wellington could now study the defences. They were weak, but his means of assault were yet more feeble, and his best hopes were in the current report that the garrison was short of water and provisions. He resolved to press the siege by the slower approaches of sap and mine. When the first mine was completed, his batteries on San Miguel were to open, and an assault was to be delivered on the foremost line; if successful, it was to be followed up by another on the second. On the 22d he had changed his plan. He determined to attempt an escalade on the first line, without waiting for the breaching. For some unexplained reason the Portuguese were told off to lead, and they fell back in utter confusion before the desultory fire of the common guard. The British scrambled down into the ditch and planted the ladders, but the officers who mounted were unsupported by their men. The French, manning the parapets, poured down a deadly fire on the soldiers crowding in the ditch; and the commander-in-chief, who had been watching the attack from San Miguel, with the bullets from the castle flying all around him, had the signals sounded for retreat. Altogether, it was a discreditable affair and indifferently planned; the British were infected by the panic of the Portuguese, and both were humiliated and discouraged by their failure.

Again Wellington fell back upon his former plan of sapping up to the walls and mining them. As he had neither sappers nor pioneers, his four engineer officers were compelled to face the hot fire of the enemy while

personally directing the unskilled soldiers. Then it was that three of the four were killed or placed *hors de combat.* On the evening of the 29th the mine was sprung and the wall breached. The leading party of twenty stormers mounted without meeting opposition, for the French were taken by surprise, but as the handful of assailants was left unsupported, the defenders rallied and hurled them down. The leader of the supporting company had missed the breach in the black night; he returned to report the failure. In consequence of his mistake the stormers were withdrawn, and Wellington determined to risk no more night attacks.

Yet the fourth assault, undertaken in daylight, was no more successful than its predecessors. The preparations had been delayed owing to the lack of powder, but were resumed when a supply was sent up from the fleet. On the 4th October the batteries on San Miguel had cleared away the obstructions on the old breach. A second and more formidable mine was ready for explosion, and orders were issued for a double assault. The explosion of that mine was tremendous. It blew many of the garrison into the air, and crumbled thirty yards of the solid wall into fragments. While the report was still echoing between the castle and San Miguel, one column of the 24th had rushed up through the clouds of smoke and stone dust, while another had scaled the debris encumbering the old breach. Both points were carried and so far secured by imperfect lodgments formed in the darkness. But the success, such as it was, was of no long duration. The French, with indomitable courage, had only been waiting for their revenge. On the afternoon of next day they charged down the hill with irresistible force, and sweeping labourers and guards from the old breach, recovered the works and carried off the tools. They did

not attempt the second breach, but the advantage encouraged them and disheartened the besiegers. Officers and soldiers began to feel that they were contending against exceptional disadvantages, with means entirely inadequate. Moreover, not a few of the most intelligent were inclined to suspect that for once the general did not know his own mind. Then the rain had fallen in torrents, swamping the trenches and parallels. Meantime the garrison had been indefatigably active, breaking out besides in furious sorties, which were only repulsed with severe loss. The batteries on San Miguel were silenced by the overwhelming fire from the fortress. And the death of Major Cocks was no slight loss, for he was one of the most able of the British officers, with a long and distinguished record of service. After the defences had been breached in a third place, the fifth and final assault came off. It was also delivered in the daytime, but was as unfortunate as all the others. And then Lord Wellington's tenacity yielded to circumstances which compelled him to think of securing his retreat.

# CHAPTER XV

## THE ALLIES FALL BACK ON THE PORTUGUESE FRONTIER

October—November 1812

MASSÉNA had been offered the supreme command, but had declined. Had he been younger and less indolent, he might have been more eager to retrieve the reputation he had seriously impaired by his failure in Portugal. Souham had been preferred to various claimants, although Clausel might have naturally been retained as the chief of the army he had handled so well. In Clausel, Maucune and Foy he had admirable lieutenants, and the discomfited army of Portugal, reinforced by 12,000 men from France, now mustered 35,000 under arms. Burgos was within the command of Caffarelli, and that general had assembled at Vittoria 9000 men for its succour. Caffarelli urged Souham to fight, and Souham would have willingly consented, had he not greatly overrated Wellington's strength. As matter of fact, Wellington had barely 20,000 English and Portuguese, for the 11,000 of the Gallician levies could not be reckoned on seriously for a pitched battle. Souham, on better information, had at last made up his mind to a grand effort for the relief of the castle. The chances were in his favour, and if he were worsted, he could lose but little, for his positions were good

he was strong in artillery and an easy line of retreat lay behind him. But on the 19th, when on the eve of setting his forces in motion, important despatches reached him. Hitherto they had been delayed or intercepted by the guerrillas. Joseph announced that he was advancing on the Tagus with 70,000 men. He ordered Souham to co-operate, and forbade him in the meantime to engage the enemy. Souham, though on the spot and acquainted with the circumstances, reluctantly and, perhaps, weakly obeyed. On that very same day Hill had communicated with Wellington. He sent similar intelligence; he announced the untimely defection of Ballesteros, and said he was forced to fall back on the Tagus, when that river was becoming everywhere fordable, after weeks of drought. Consequently Wellington's position had become untenable, and though loath to abandon a siege which had cost him such heavy losses, he was constrained to withdraw without hazarding battle when defeat would have been ruinous.

The movement was executed in a manner as masterly as the passage of the Douro when Oporto was surprised. He had a choice of roads and of two bridges, but he determined to retire by that of Burgos, for time was of supreme importance. But Burgos bridge was beneath the castle, and enfiladed by the fire of the batteries. The operation resembled that of Napoleon when taking his cannon past the fort of Bard in his passage of the St Bernard. The army quitted its positions after dark, leaving the camp fires burning, and stole away in absolute silence. The wheels of the cannon had been muffled. All would have passed off well, for Dubreton suspected nothing, had not the guerrillas lost their heads and set spurs to their horses. Then the castle batteries opened, and the first discharge was murderous. But the artillery-

men seem immediately to have lost the range, and the rest of the allied troops crossed without further casualties. Souham did not begin the pursuit till late on the next day, and the time gained by the more direct passage was turned to good account. That same afternoon the allies were over the Pisuerga, and on the 24th the march was continued towards the Carrion.

Behind the Carrion Wellington halted in a strong position, where he was joined by a regiment of the Guards and other detachments. The delay was needful to restore discipline. On the advance the army had indulged freely in wine; on the retreat they set all discipline at defiance. The hill country was undermined by caves, and these cellars were overstocked. The soldiers broke into them during the night, and in the morning it was almost impossible to withdraw the drunkards. Napier asserts that at one time 12,000 men were to be seen in a state of helpless inebriety. Measures were taken to check the pursuit. At Palencia they failed, owing to the promptitude of the pursuing French, but elsewhere the bridges were mined and blown up.

The passage of the enemy at Palencia compelled Wellington to change his front, and threatened seriously to aggravate the danger of the situation. Consequently an attack was made on those who had crossed, and they were driven back with considerable loss. On the 26th the retreat was resumed, and the allies passed the Pisuerga at Cabezon del Campo, where they rested behind the bridge, which was hastily mined and barricaded. When the mists cleared next morning, Souham with his whole army was seen encamped on the slopes of the opposite bank. Wellington, surveying them from a rising ground, could realise how greatly he was out-

numbered, and had good reason to congratulate himself on having avoided a battle at Burgos. Souham made no attempt on our front, but extended his army for flanking operations on the right. It then became a race for the bridges of the Douro at Simancas, Valladolid and Tordesillas. Colonel Halkett blew up the bridge at Simancas, and that at Valladolid was held by Lord Dalhousie. At Tordesillas the enemy, thanks to a feat of daring gallantry, were more successful. It is true that the bridge there had been broken down in time, and was held by a regiment of Brunswickers ; but sixty of the French constructed a raft, on which they placed their arms and accoutrements, and swimming across the broad and rapid river, scrambled ashore under cover of the fire of their field guns. They surprised and stormed the tower commanding the bridge, and compelled the Brunswickers to abandon their positions. It was a gallant exploit, but it led to nothing, except, indeed, that it inspired the sharp counter-stroke of Wellington. He had destroyed the bridges at Cabezon and Valladolid, and now, having learned the loss of the passage at Tordesillas, with amazing rapidity he marched by his left, resuming his former positions between Rueda and Tordesillas, where, confronting the French right, he anticipated the arrival of their main body. There he remained till the 6th of November, having destroyed all the bridges down to Zamora, giving much-needed rest to his own army, and leaving time for Hill to carry out his instructions. For now that he was aware of the strength of Souham, it became urgent to bring that General back from the Xarama in order to assure his own safety.

Hill, with his 40,000 men, had withdrawn his whole forces behind the Tagus. His own right was resting

on Toledo, and with the Spanish and Portuguese he commanded the course of the river from Talavera down to Fuente Dueñas. But as the fords were falling, he became anxious about his position, and, as it chanced, on the very day on which he received Wellington's last orders, Soult's columns showed on the banks of the river. He was ignorant of the numbers of the advancing armies, but, in fact, he was confronted by nearly 60,000 seasoned veterans. He had received his orders on the 29th, and would have marched on the following morning, but was delayed till evening by the failure of a mine, which enabled the French to pass the Xarama and attack his posts there. The attack was repulsed by Colonel Skerrett, who had joined him with a Portuguese corps, and no further attempts were made to molest him, for Soult, who was always at issue with Joseph, was conducting the campaign with almost excessive caution. He said that a defeat meant the French evacuation of Spain, whereas a victory would only throw the English back upon Portugal somewhat sooner. Hill pressed his march through the night, and reached Madrid in the morning. He found the capital in excitement bordering on despair, for it was known he would only make it a halting place. What the inhabitants dreaded most was the temporary occupation by the guerrilla bands, whom they feared even more than the French. By what appears to have been a culpable oversight, no precautions had been taken for emptying the great magazines of provisions which had been collected, although the populace was starving, and Hill's army on its march to the Tormes had to live on the fallen acorns, or maraud among the herds of swine. The municipality asked that the stores should be sold, but red tape interfered. Some say that the people were

permitted to help themselves; others that there were scenes of violence, and that the magazines were sacked by the mobs. Be that as it may, all bear testimony to the admirable bearing of the better classes of the populace in circumstances which tried them to the uttermost. Napier's description of the scenes—and the stern military historian has no great tenderness for the Spaniards—is touching and pathetic. He tells of men, women and children crowding round the troops, bewailing their departure. For more than two miles they followed them, leaving their houses empty, while the French scouts were already at the eastern gates. Many of the English partisans, who had committed themselves too deeply, were compelled to accompany the retreat, as the Afrancesados had fled south with King Joseph. The works at the Retiro had been destroyed and the guns spiked; on the 1st November the French entered.

On the 6th Hill was at Arevalo. His march had been delayed by the incompetence of the staff officers and the miserable mismanagement of the commissariat, from which Wellington was to suffer equally. There he found himself in communication with the commander-in-chief, and received orders to march on Alba de Tormes. Wellington had been impatiently expecting him, in the hope of attacking Soult with their united forces. But now that hope had failed. For Souham, having seized Toro and Tordesillas, was menacing his rear, while he dare not bring up Hill to the Douro lest Soult, in their absence, should establish himself on the Tormes. So, directing Hill to occupy Alba, he fell back himself, on the 6th, upon Salamanca.

For the third time he was in position on the familiar heights of San Christoval. What his sagacity had foreseen had come to pass. As the victory of Salamanca had

forced the French to evacuate Andalusia, that evacuation had now brought their united armies upon him, for Spanish co-operation had failed him again. Allowing for deductions for garrisons, etc., the French still numbered 90,000; all were reliable soldiers, and they were exceptionally strong in horse. Wellington, with Spanish and Portuguese had barely 70,000. Again he was reduced to the old choice between abandoning Salamanca and making sure of his communication. Trusting in the strong positions from San Christoval to the Arapiles, which he knew so well, he would willingly have fought, with circumstances in his favour. But these did not depend upon him, and, as usual, there was disunion in the hostile camp. Drouet, always a favourite with Joseph, had superseded Souham in command of the army of Portugal, and that did not tend to smooth matters over with Soult, who had ever found Drouet insubordinate. Joseph, strongly supported by the veteran Jourdan, and relying, with reason, on the quality of his superior forces, was eager to bring the English to a battle. But his dispositions included the disruption of the army of the south, and that Soult resolutely opposed. He had brought his fighting machine into perfect order and would not consent to break it up. Moreover, he still held to his opinion that it would be folly to risk a defeat which might be fatal. He had his way, because without his hearty concurrence no scheme of strategy could have succeeded. Then began on a greater scale, and with more guarded caution, the manœuvres which had preceded the battle of Salamanca. Marmont had carelessly attempted his turning movement with an unsupported column at the very bases of the heights held by the British. Soult swept round in a far wider semi-circle, and left Wellington time to withdraw, after his position had