

about a mile in length along a range of tabular heights; his right, under Reillé, resting on them upon the high road to Dax, and occupying the village of S. Boes; the centre, under Drouet, taking the bend of a sickle, as the hill formed a cove, and being thus protected by the flanks; the left, under Clausel, resting upon the town and the heights above it, and defending the passage of the river from Sir Rowland. Villatte's and Harispe's divisions, and Paris's brigade, were formed in reserve on high ground upon the road to Sault de Navailles. "Thus," in the words of a French historian, "from 35,000 to 40,000 French troops were collected at a point as favourable as the most skilful commander could have chosen for resisting the advance of an invading army." Lord Wellington's arrangements were, that Beresford, with the 4th and 7th divisions, and Colonel Vivian's brigade of cavalry, should turn and attack the enemy's right; while Picton, with the 3rd and 6th, supported by Sir Stapleton with Lord Edward Somerset's brigade of horse, should move along the Peyrehorade road, and attack their centre and left. Baron Alten, with the light division, kept up the communication, and was in reserve between these; and Sir Rowland was to force the passage of the Gave, and turn and attack their left.

The action commenced about nine in the morning. The 4th division, under Sir Lowry Cole, carried the village of S. Boes, after an obstinate resistance. Beresford then directed his efforts against two lines of the enemy formed on the heights above it; but the troops had not room here to deploy for the attack, the only approach being along a narrow tongue of land, which had on either side a deep ravine, and was completely commanded by the enemy's guns. Sir Lowry's division led the way; 15 pieces of artillery played on them diagonally with full effect; in front they were opposed by the main line of the

CHAP.  
XLVI.

1814.

February.  
Battle of  
Orthes.

Feb. 27.

Beau-  
champ's  
Narrative  
of the In-  
vasion, 2.  
p. 52

CHAP. French infantry, and strong bodies were formed in the ravines  
XLVI. on their flanks. Repeated attempts were made by Major-General  
1814. Ross, and by Vasconcellos's Portuguese brigade, till at length  
*February.* that brigade was completely broken, and the remainder of the  
division, with a brigade of Baron Alten's that hastened to their  
assistance, with difficulty covered their retreat: thus on this  
point the attack totally failed.

Lord Wellington saw that it was impossible to turn this wing of the enemy by their right, without extending his line too far; he therefore ordered the immediate advance of the 3d and 6th divisions, and the 7th, with a brigade of the light division, to support them by attacking the height which the enemy occupied at the point of junction between their right and centre. The 52d regiment, under Colonel Colborne, led up the hill, supported closely by the other troops both on the right and left; and the artillery gained a knoll from whence it swept the whole line of the enemy's centre. It made such havoc among their reserve masses, that the French 21st hussars were provoked to a most daring movement for seizing it; they galloped round the hill, and, under a heavy fire of musquetry, charged and drove back one of the supporting battalions; then with equal courage fell upon the 42d Highlanders, but the Highlanders received their charge firmly, and the hussars suffered so much in it, that they gave up this brave though unsuccessful attempt. Meantime the allied troops were advancing steadily, under a destructive fire: Major-General Inglis's brigade distinguished itself now, as it had done on all occasions, and made a successful charge on the enemy's left; every regiment in the 3rd division was hotly engaged, they drove the French from every height where they attempted to make a stand, and in spite of all resistance gained at length the summit of the main position. There a severe struggle ensued; on no former

occasion had the enemy fought so well when opposed to British troops; it was the only action in which they came fairly to the bayonet; but the determination which brought them to that sure trial could not support them in it, and, giving up all hope now of a successful resistance, they began to retreat over the level ground in their rear in good order, by *echellons* of divisions, each successively covering the other, and supported by their cavalry, which, by a gallant charge on the 6th division, endeavoured, but in vain, to check the pursuit. The infantry rallied upon some rising ground, and attempted again to make a stand: the 9th hussars, under Colonel Vivian, made them again give way. They then formed into squares, and continued to retire still in admirable order; and, though warmly pursued, and suffering heavily from the British guns, they took every advantage of the numerous positions which the ground afforded.

Marshal Soult, in whom nothing was that day wanting which could be required of a commander in the field, was compelled to withdraw his wings when the centre had thus been forced, and to order a general retreat. The wings had comparatively suffered little; and this movement was as well conducted as all his former ones had been. But meantime Sir Rowland had forced the passage of the Gave above the town; and, seeing the state of the action, he moved, with the 2d division and with Major-General Fane's brigade of cavalry, for the great road to S. Sever, keeping thus upon the enemy's left, but in a direction toward a point in their rear which would have cut off their retreat on Sault de Navailles. Their movements quickened as soon as they perceived this danger; and as their march was accelerated, Sir Rowland quickened his, till the retreat became a flight; they ran, and the allies ran also, and the race continued till the French broke so completely, that no resemblance of a column was remaining.

CHAP.  
XLVI.

1814.

February.

CHAP.

XLVI.

1814.

*February.*

It was the lively expression of an officer there present, that “ in the battle they met the charge like lions, but that the pursuit was like hare-hunting ;” prisoners were literally caught by the skirts as they ran. Could the cavalry have acted sooner off the great road, the French army must have been almost destroyed. They suffered greatly where any obstacle impeded their flight ; the enclosures and ditches were thickly strewn with their killed and wounded ; 2000 fugitives were picked up by the infantry, and 12 pieces of cannon taken, and many more prisoners upon the only opportunity which was offered for the cavalry to charge, when the enemy had been driven from the high road by Sir Rowland. The victory, complete as it was, might have been followed to more advantage, if Lord Wellington had not been struck on the pommel of his sword by a musquet-shot, and bruised so severely by the blow, that he was unable to cross this intersected country on horseback time enough to direct the farther movements of the divisions in pursuit : the most decisive victory would have been dearly purchased by his loss. When it became dusk, the army was halted in the neighbourhood of Sault de Navailles. The loss of the allies, in killed, wounded, and missing, was somewhat less than 2300, of whom about 600 were Portugueze ; no Spaniards were engaged that day. That of the enemy was estimated by one of their own writers at from 14,000 to 16,000, very much the greater part being by desertion after the rout ; for the conscripts threw down their arms, and took the opportunity of escaping from compulsory service. Foy was severely wounded, General Bechaud killed, and another General mortally wounded.

*Beau-  
champ, 2,  
p. 55.*

*Feb. 28.*

The main body of the French army continued its retreat during the night, and was joined at Hagetman by the garrison of Dax, and by two fresh battalions of conscripts ; it then halted behind the Adour, near S. Sever, to re-organize itself : the

allies followed them to S. Sever on the day after the battle, and the centre advanced in three columns with the hope of enveloping them. That which marched on the *chaussée* arrived at the appointed moment; but the flank columns could not proceed upon the unpaved roads at the pace which was required; and thus the enemy had time to move off in the direction of Agen, escaping an attack which they were in no condition to have withstood. Beresford then with the light division, and with Colonel Vivian's brigade, passed the Higher Adour, and occupied Mont de Marsan, the principal town in the department of the Landes, where he took a very large magazine of provisions. Here no resistance was attempted; but at Aire, where the enemy had other magazines, a corps was collected with the intention of making a stand to protect their removal. Against this place, which is on the left bank of the Adour, Sir Rowland moved upon the 2d of March; and when his advanced guard arrived within two miles of the town, the French were discovered strongly posted on a ridge of hills, with their right upon the river, thus covering the approach. Notwithstanding the strength of the post, Sir William Stewart was ordered to attack them with the second division along the road, and Brigadier-General Da Costa's Portuguese brigade about the centre of their position. The French force consisted of two divisions; and the Portuguese, when they forced their way up and gained the summit, found, which had not been expected, an extent of flat ground on the top, and a strong body of the enemy completely formed there to resist them; the Portuguese were so broken and confused that they could regain no formation, and must have suffered accordingly, if Sir William Stewart, having beaten back the enemy on his side, had not dispatched his first brigade under Major-General Barnes to their timely support. The enemy were then in their

CHAP.  
XLVI.

1814.

March 1.

*The French  
driven from  
Aire.*

CHAP.  
XLVI.

1814.

*March.*

turn thrown into confusion by a vigorous charge, nor could they after many attempts recover the ground, but were driven from all their positions, and finally from the town, where the magazines fell into the conqueror's hands. Two divisions of the French were engaged in this affair, one of them was Harispe's, which had not been at Orthes; their loss was very considerable: that of the allies amounted to 20 killed and 135 wounded; among the former was the Honourable Lieutenant-Colonel Hood, of the general staff, an officer of great merit and promise.

*Soult draws nearer the Pyrenees.*

At this time the French were once more favoured by the weather. Heavy and continued rain fell during the beginning of the month, swelling all the rivulets so as materially to impede the progress of the allies, increasing in proportion the Adour, which was so rapid that pontoons could not be laid upon it, and rendering it more difficult to repair the numerous bridges which the enemy had destroyed in their retreat; yet till this could be done, the different parts of the army were without communication. Lord Wellington was therefore compelled to halt; and Marshal Soult, who after his defeat at Orthes had been forced by the movement of Sir Rowland's corps to retire in the direction of Bourdeaux, had leisure and opportunity to choose his course. The divisions which had been driven from Aire retreated up both banks of the Adour toward Tarbes, with a view, as Lord Wellington perceived, of being reinforced by farther detachments from Marshal Suchet's army. This direction Soult had resolved to take, because it was only from Suchet that he could look for any efficient aid; though it appears that there was not that concert and clear understanding between the two Marshals which might have been expected in men of such experience and great ability. By thus approaching the Pyrenees he left the way to Bour-

deaux open to the allies; he, however, supposed that Lord Wellington would not venture to advance upon that city, but of necessity must follow his movements. In the latter conclusion he was not mistaken; but he greatly mistook the disposition of the French people, who now looked to the English as their liberators, a disposition that was increased by his own conduct, and by the licentious habits of his troops. The loss of his magazines compelled him to impose heavy requisitions, as far as his power to collect them extended, to the ruin of the inhabitants, while their countrymen in other parts were enriched by the presence of an invading army, paying for every thing at the exorbitant prices that its own demand occasioned. His troops, therefore, in their own country were in want of every thing, and the English were abundantly supplied. The depredations and the enormities which his men committed, though not aggravated by that fiendish cruelty which had characterized the French in Portugal, were yet such, that they were execrated wherever they went; and the allies, in every town and village where they entered, were welcomed as deliverers and protectors. Many instances occurred in which our sick soldiers were taken in by some hospitable family, and nursed with the greatest kindness.

One of the enemy's columns having been cut off from the Adour by Sir Rowland's rapid march upon Aire, retreated in disorder toward Pau, the men throwing away their arms, the better to effect their escape and facilitate their desertion. The few who reached that place were driven out by a detachment which Lord Wellington sent thither under General Fane to occupy it; and there the allies established a hospital in which the *Sœurs de la Charité* attended upon the sick and wounded soldiers, after the manner of their exemplary order. Travellers are still shown at Pau the chamber in which Henri IV. was

CHAP.  
XLVI.

1814.

March.

*Beauchamp,*  
2. 61.  
*Batty's*  
*Narrative,*  
139.

*The allies*  
*enter Pau.*

CHAP. born, and the tortoise-shell in which he slept as in a cradle.  
 XLVI. The gardens which had been his delight were remaining at the  
 1814. close of the 17th century; and the walks overarched with  
 trees, the arbours, and the evergreens, though all neglected  
 then, bore testimony still to the care with which they had  
 formerly been dressed, and to the topiary skill which had been  
 displayed there. Bearn, of which Pau was the capital in  
 former times, was one of the most favoured parts of France,  
 and indeed of the world, before the French revolution cut  
 up the well-being of a whole generation by the roots; for the  
 division of property, and the industry and manners of the  
 people had combined there with all fortunate circumstances of  
 soil, surface, and climate, to render the inhabitants contented  
 and happy.

*Deputies  
 arrive from  
 Bourdeaux.*

When the news of the battle of Orthes reached S. Jean de Luz, two deputies arrived at the same time from Toulouse, to assure the Duc d'Angoulême that the inhabitants of that city eagerly desired the restoration of the Bourbons. The Duc upon this repaired to Lord Wellington's head-quarters at S. Sever; Rochejaquelein followed him, and they were joined there by M. Bontemps Dubarry, who came from Bourdeaux, charged by the better part of the citizens to invite the Duc, and to assure Lord Wellington that a British force would be received there as friends. Lord Wellington no longer hesitated; and as soon as Freyre's Spanish corps, which had been stationed in reserve near Irun, could be brought up, and every disposable body was closed to the right, he dispatched Marshal Beresford with three divisions toward that important city, to drive out its inconsiderable garrison, and give the inhabitants an opportunity of declaring for the exiled family if such were their wish, and they chose to venture upon a measure which might be so injurious to themselves, if Buonaparte should accept of the

*The Duc  
 d'Angou-  
 lême pro-  
 ceeds thither  
 with Mar-  
 shal Beres-  
 ford.*



peace that still was offered him. Lord Wellington still doubted of this, even after he had determined upon making the trial; and Rochejaquelein, when he went to receive the Duc's last order, before he set off with the advanced guard, found that the Duc himself seemed to entertain the same discouraging opinion. Upon this he requested permission to precede the English by six-and-thirty hours, and declared that if Bourdeaux did not declare itself, his head should be responsible for the failure. "You are certain then of your grounds," the Duc rejoined. "As certain," replied Rochejaquelein, "as one can be of any earthly thing!" The Duc then expressed his full confidence in him, and bade him go.

The sandy tract which extends from Bayonne to Bourdeaux is well known by the name of the Landes; so called, it has been supposed, because all other ground in the adjacent country had its proper appellation of field, meadow, marsh, wood, or other such terms according to its produce and uses; but this region was mere land and nothing else; it is a vast plain, perfectly level, in some parts covered with pine forests, in others only a wide waste of sand, where the trees are so thinly scattered in the sea-like circle, that in hot and hazy weather they have the appearance of ships at sea. The peasant stalks over the loose sand upon high stilts, which are found as useful here as racquets for the snow in Canada. Uncultivated, however, and thinly peopled as this extensive tract is, the pine forests yield a considerable revenue; the trees are regularly tapped for turpentine, pitch is extracted from them, and candles made from resin are in common use. While Marshal Beresford advanced without opposition over this remarkable country, Rochejaquelein having proceeded with the light troops as far as Langan, made his way to the house of one of his confederates at Preignac; and from thence was safely conducted, though the avenues were

CHAP.  
XLVI.

1814.

*March.*

*Memoires de  
la Marquise  
de la Roche-  
jaquelein,  
p. 529.*

*The Landes.*

*Gallia  
Christiana,  
T. 1. Gloss.*