been compromised. The French Marshal has been reproached for undue timidity, and it has been said that Wellington might have struck vigorously, as before, between the French main army and its left in the air. So far as Wellington was concerned, his habitual prudence was surely not out of place, with such vast and decisive issues at stake. As for Soult, that able general probably knew his own mind and congratulated himself on his strategy. Always averse to fighting, except with everything in his favour, he nevertheless forced the enemy to retreat, and, retaining the prestige of a successful advance, left them a golden bridge to Portugal. At the same time he had in view the other alternative of bringing on a battle with every advantage. For Wellington had waited dangerously long, and apparently was only saved from disaster by some of the innumerable chances of war. On the afternoon of the 15th, feeling himself too weak to attack, and seeing that the French cavalry were threatening his communications, he had resolved on retreat. The decision once taken, it was carried out with brilliant promptitude. The army was formed into three columns; the left flank was covered by the cavalry and guns. His movements were masked by a dense fog; he marched by the high roads, while heavy rain made the country and by-lanes well-nigh impracticable for Soult's corps; in turn, with his massed forces, he worked round the French left, and before nightfall had crossed the Vamusa river, one of the smaller affluents of the Tormes. Then began the miseries of that pitiful retreat. The men were exhausted and dispirited. The rains which had delayed the French had turned fields and olive gardens into swamps. There was no sort of shelter, nor was there a possibility of lighting fires. There was little food for the men and no forage for the horses. The horses

snatched at the boughs of trees, or cropped the bushes of wild brier. Had the French pressed the pursuit, the safety of the army might have been imperilled. But they contented themselves with harassing it with their light cavalry, and picking up the numerous stragglers. The rains continued through the next two days. The ground was a morass, and the country was thickly wooded. As in Hill's retreat on Madrid, the famished soldiers fed greedily on the acorns, and, breaking their ranks, kept up a continual running fire on the herds of swine they found ranging the forests. Even Wellington's personal authority was set at defiance, nor could the provost-marshal and summary hanging make head against hunger. But again the French failed to urge the pursuit, as they would undoubtedly have done in the earlier days of the war. Yet even the smaller rivers and gullies were so flooded that, in one instance, the men had to pass in single file over the single tree trunk bridging an abyss.

There was one somewhat serious attack on the 17th, when Sir Edward Paget, who commanded the central column, riding to the rear to ascertain the cause of a delay, was taken prisoner. The troops were halted, and formed on the heights; Lord Wellington himself rode up, and there seemed some probability of an action. But the dense fog befriended a retreat, and again the French failed to seize an opportnnity. Again the men bivouacked on the soaking ground, without rations; but they had left their bivouack long before dawn, and next night their headquarters were safely established at Ciudad Rodrigo. Southey gives the total losses in the retreat—killed, wounded and missing—as about 1300. Napier ridicules the estimate, and puts it, with much more probability, approximately at 9000, including the soldiers who had fallen at Burgos.

CHAPTER XVI

IN WINTER QUARTERS

November—December 1812

DON JOSÉ DE MIRANDA had been left in charge of the castle of Alba. Though the garrison was weak, he maintained the place with great gallantry, making frequent and successful sorties. After defiantly answering repeated summonses to surrender a post that was no longer tenable, on the 24th November he withdrew in the night, leaving his lieutenant to give over the fortress, with the sick and prisoners. The sick were well treated, for the enemy chivalrously recognised the spirit of the defence. Thereupon the French fell back from the Tormes, and when Wellington was assured of that, and had dismissed the fear of an invasion of Portugal by way of the Tagus valley, he distributed his troops in winter quarters. Hill on the right held the passes of the mountains, with the bulk of his men at Baños and Bejar. The light division remained on the Agueda. Carlos d'España, who, notwithstanding his unfortunate blunder at Alba, was the most reliable of the Spaniards immediately under Wellington's direction, was left to garrison Ciudad Rodrigo, and the rest of the infantry were scattered along the Douro. The greater part of the British cavalry were in the fertile valley of the Mondego. But, indeed, all those winter arrangements were dictated by facilities for feeding the troops, as supplies could be sent to the

cantonments by the Tagus, Douro, and Mondego. Neither side was anxious to resume operations, for Wellington's troops were worn out, and a third of the men were in hospital. As for the French, they were in worse condition. They had lost artillery, arsenals and magazines in the preceding campaign. Harassed by the guerrillas, they found extreme difficulties in feeding their armies, and though they could operate upon more direct lines, the wretched roads through the Sierras were obstructed by snow. It is significant of the apprehensive attitude of both armies that they vied in destroying all boats on the Tagus.

The disorders on the advance to Burgos and in the retreat were matters of grave anxiety to Lord Wellington. His first act, after having made his dispositions for the winter, was to issue a circular addressed to the commanding officers of battalions. He spoke with his habitual courage and candour, nor did political considerations induce him to soften his language. Admitting that discipline must necessarily be relaxed after a long and exhausting campaign, he added that 'the army under my command has fallen off in this respect in a greater degree than any army with which I have ever served, or of which I have ever read.' The officers had lost all control of their men. Outrages of every kind had been committed with impunity. Yet the army had made a leisurely retreat, and met with no disaster. He went on to say, 'I have no hesitation in attributing these evils to the habitual inattention of regimental officers to their duty.' And as an army marches proverbially as much on the stomach as on the legs, he proceeded to condemn the system of cookery, or rather the want of system. He told the regimental officers that it was not the least of their duties to overlook the comforts of the men; that

there should be organised arrangements for fetching fuel and water, and serving the meals, such as they were, with the punctuality of parade. 'So that the soldiers should not be exposed to privations at the moment when the army may be engaged in operations.'

The circular had its effect on those to whom it was addressed, but it created no little surprise and sensation at home. Yet its severity was not unjustified. The retreat had been effected with admirable skill, but the fighting reputation of the disorderly troops had only saved them from a catastrophe. It was fortunate that the French cautiously held back when the men were gathering acorns and beech mast, or had broken loose for the slaughter of the swine. It shows, besides, that the British soldier, when discipline was relaxed, was neither better nor worse than the much-abused Frenchman. Nothing could be more disgraceful than the drunken confusion on the retreat to Corunna; nothing more shocking than the atrocities at the storming of Badajoz. The difference between the armies was, that in the one pillage and rapine were too often a part of the strategy condoned by the chiefs; in the other, the criminal excesses were violations of orders from headquarters, and visited, when proved, with summary punishment. The French generals, with but few exceptions, from the intrusive King and Soult downwards, compromised their fair fame by greed and plunder; but no breath of scandal brought a reproach on Wellington or any one of his lieutenants.

The circular which sent a thrill through the Peninsular cantonments strengthened the hands of the Parliamentary Opposition at home. We mark with astonishment now the tone of some of the speeches delivered by men who were sincerely patriotic, however

much they might have been mistaken. Those pessimistic speeches were a tribute at once to the panic established by the unscrupulous genius of Napoleon, and to the self-denying determination which bore Lord Wellington up when he knew he was misrepresented at home, as he was being criticised and maligned by subordinates. Repeatedly he had to turn back and bide his time at the risk of supersession or an abandonment of the war. A change of ministry might have resulted in either. Fortunately he had a powerful and intelligent advocate in the Upper Chamber. The Marquis Wellesley, with his personal knowledge of Spanish affairs, struck the true note, and indicated the wise and safe course. After all, he addressed, on the whole, a sympathetic audience. The enthusiasm of the country had been somewhat chilled by the check at Burgos and the damnatory circular. But the nation had followed with pride and satisfaction the glorious course of the Peninsular victories, and had rejoiced in the qualities of its soldiers being rehabilitated. The Marquis demonstrated with fervid eloquence the brilliant work that had been done in face of unexampled difficulties; as fervently he vindicated the genius of his brother. He showed conclusively that any shortcomings were due to misplaced economy and ministerial hesitation. The war had been starved both in men and money; for even if the men had sufficed, the military chests were left empty, and no general could move in a friendly country when he could pay neither for transport nor provisions. The eloquent appeals of the one brother seconding the successes of the other saved England from the possibility of a humiliating surrender; both reinforcements and money were forwarded to Portugal, and the campaign was to be reopened in the spring with more encouraging prospects than ever.

Meantime the French armies were being weakened by the withdrawal of good soldiers to the frontiers of Russia. Twelve thousand had been recalled from Aragon and Catalonia. Their best officers in Spain began to misdoubt the upshot, as was learned from their interrupted despatches. While Marmont was being beaten and Madrid abandoned, the *partidas* had been more or less active in all quarters, aided by our ships and flying squadrons, which perpetually menaced the enemy's flanks. When Caffarelli returned to his command in the north, Souham had in turn been replaced by Reille as head of the army of Portugal; and those rapid changes, showing irresolution and distrust at headquarters, could not fail to be demoralising. Caffarelli had found a desultory littoral warfare going on all along the coast, from Corunna to Santander. Sir Home Popham's squadron furnished the *partidas* with speedy means of transport, and with arms and accoutrements as well. From Biscay to the Catalonian borders of Aragon, the whole country was up, and the most daring of the guerrilla chiefs were exceptionally busy. Mina had absolutely cut the communications with France, through the 'ports' of the Pyrenees in the north of Aragon. Further to the east in that province, Villa Campos did good service by harassing Suchet's rear, and preventing him from sending supports to the army of the centre. When these irregular bands were defeated, they only scattered to rally again. In New Castille, when the French armies of the south and centre followed in pursuit of Hill, Elio, Bassecour and the Empecinado had come down in force on Madrid. The apprehensions of the *Madrileños* were fully realised, for they were mercilessly pillaged by their own countrymen. But the miserable citizens, who had learned to endure, cared the less, as the re-occupation

of the capital by their French oppressors could only be a question of time. Suchet, with his outposts continually attacked, in apprehension for his communications with the coast, and doubtful of the King's plans, had remained passively on the defensive. Then the Duke del Parque with the army of Ballesteros entered La Mancha from the south, where he established communications with Alicante, through Elio and Bassecour, who had marched from Madrid to Albacete.

But on the 3d December things were changed, when the French, in turn, had decided on the distribution of their forces for the winter. Joseph, retiring to Madrid, expelled the remaining guerrillas, and Soult established his quarters in Toledo. Sending out his cavalry to scout on the plains, he obliged Del Parque prudently to re-cross the Morena. Elio was simultaneously compelled to retire; thus Suchet, relieved from pressure, was again left free to act.

Elio had some reason to complain, for he seems to have been somewhat shabbily treated by the commanders of the British auxiliary forces, detached from Sicily to Murcia and Valencia. For there the changes in the command had been as quick and as frequent as in the French army of Portugal. Mackenzie had succeeded Maitland, to be superseded by General William Clinton, and when General Campbell came with 4000 men from Sicily to relieve Clinton, he intimated that he was but the precursor of Lord William Bentinck, who was speedily to follow with another reinforcement of similar strength. Elio had urged Clinton to co-operate in an attack on Suchet. Clinton had 12,000 men, and nearly a half were British. Elio could support him with 10,000 Spaniards, and yet nothing was attempted. Campbell arrived in the beginning of December with the reinforcements. Elio

again urged the propriety of active operations, but Campbell declined to move till the arrival of Lord William Bentinck. Suchet, naturally expecting an attack, had withdrawn his outposts and concentrated at Xativa, but when he found to his surprise that no attack was contemplated, he resumed his aggressive attitude. Soult's detachments were already overrunning La Mancha; the Duke del Parque, retiring, had re-crossed the Morena; and then Elio, finding his position dangerous or untenable, withdrew into Murcia. The British soldiery found it hard to bear the sneers of the Spaniards they had so inefficiently supported; and the sickness, incompetency or timidity of the generals who had so rapidly relieved each other, irritated and discouraged the patriots who had been making head against Suchet. Yet that able leader, like his *confrères*, had begun to apprehend that the evacuation of the Peninsula by his countrymen was but a question of brief time. His sagacious and resolute administration of Aragon had hitherto been tempered by leniency and self-restraint. It was significant now that he changed his methods, and making the most of the short space that might remain to him, began to enrich himself by exactions and the pillage of church plate and pictures. Meantime there had been little activity in Catalonia. After General Maitland had gone, the regular warfare had almost ceased. The Catalonians had lost faith in their leaders; the generals of the regulars were quarrelling among themselves and with the guerrilla chiefs; no combinations were possible, and little was undertaken; and the French, who formerly must escort their smallest convoys with formidable columns, could now guard the sea-line and harbours with handfuls of men, and land supplies for their garrisons almost with impunity. British ships were still

hovering off the coast; but if the enemy eluded the blockaders they were safe. Nevertheless the French knew well the character of the country and the temper of the mountaineers. It was only owing to temporary causes that the fires were smouldering, and a disastrous conflagration might break out at any moment, on what would be their only line of communication, should Wellington, as seemed probable enough, in the coming campaign, master the western road to Bayonne and Paris. So the French action was paralysed for months to come, and though their armies still mustered 140,000 excellent troops, that formidable garrison was practically invested.

Such being the situation, Wellington had leisure to turn his attention from war to diplomacy. He went to Cadiz towards the end of the year to come to an understanding with the Spanish ministers as to the co-operation of their armies. If these armies had generally failed him in the hour of need, he had no cause to complain of his reception when it was a question of speech, state and ceremony. The Spaniard who courteously places his house and its contents at the disposal of any stranger has always been a master of meaningless magniloquence, and is more lavish of honours and titles than of things more necessary to existence. The English generalissimo of all the Spanish armies was welcomed by a deputation from the Cortes, and was subsequently complimented by the President in high-flown language, which compared him to the Cid, to St James and to the Archangel Michael. The President looked forward in full assurance to the Duque de Ciudad Rodrigo driving the hosts of his enemy across the Pyrenees, and, if necessary, following them up to the Seine. What was more to the purpose, should the promises now be kept,

50,000 soldiers were placed at his disposal. Castaños was to take the field in conjunction with him, as Captain-General of Old Castille and the adjacent provinces, with armies in reserve in Andalusia and in Gallicia. Three other armies were to act on the east under Copons, the Conde de Abispal and Elio.

From Cadiz Wellington proceeded to Lisbon. After he had passed the frontier at Elvas, his journey was one long triumphal procession. Arches were erected in all the towns, and everywhere his arrival was acclaimed by shouting mobs. The peasants crowded from their villages to see the conqueror pass. Nowhere was he received with greater honours than in the capital, though the authorities had given him infinite trouble, nor had their murmurs been without reasonable justification. But for these grievances the great captain was known to be in no way responsible, and the enthusiasm of the citizens was unbounded. For three successive nights Lisbon was voluntarily illuminated. A drama, specially composed in celebration of his victories, was brought out with brilliant *éclat* at the theatre of San Carlos, where the boxes were decorated with crowns of victory. But in all these displays of pageantry and pomp, the business of the war was never neglected, nor did compliments and flattery disarm criticism. The circular of censure addressed to the British was followed by another equally severe, in which Marshal Beresford reprimanded the Portuguese for the same faults. The Marshal could speak with the more authority, that he could honestly praise the troops under his command for gallantry in presence of the enemy as great as that of their British allies. If they had sometimes been unfortunate, as at the battle of Salamanca, it was because they had been

asked to storm impregnable positions. But, as in the British army, the regimental officers had been negligent of duty and discipline, and they had been dispirited and demoralised in retreat or by reverses. Severe examples were made, for some of the more notorious culprits were court-martialled and suspended. Lord Wellington returned to his headquarters on the frontier, to find his men in worse conditions as to health, looks and equipment than the Portuguese he had recently inspected. But from the beginning of the new year things began to brighten; with rest in good quarters the sick were reviving, and reinforcements with supplies of all kinds were continally arriving from home.

CHAPTER XVII

JOSEPH ABANDONS MADRID, AND SUCHET IS CHECKED IN VALENCIA

January—April 1813

THE year 1813 opened with some considerable Spanish successes. In the north, in the closing days of December, when Caffarelli marched to the relief of Santona, the energetic Longa had surprised General Frimont when returning to Burgos with requisitions and hostages. Seven hundred Frenchmen had fallen, and nearly as many more had been taken prisoners. He followed up that stroke by the surprise of Bilbao, and then he seized on Salinas de Anaña, which led to the abandonment of other fortresses. Caffarelli was compelled to send strong detachments against him, and he only retreated in good order when threatened by greatly superior forces.

Things were going still worse for the French in Biscay, Navarre and Aragon. In these provinces Mina was the directing spirit—as admirable a master of irregular war as Wellington was in comprehensive and scientific strategy. Seemingly omnipresent, generally eluding serious attack, always minimising defeat or repulse, the genius of the guerrilla chief resembled instinct. He had trained cautious yet dashing lieutenants in his school, and his exploits and example

had set the country on fire. The state of matters had greatly changed since Moore fell back to Corunna, after relieving Andalusia like Wellington. Then the rest of Spain was left at the mercy of the enemy, directed by Napoleon in person, with absolute freedom of action. The Spaniards only resented their wrongs or indicated their patriotism in spasmodic fits of frenzy and frequent assassinations. Now the *partidas* had everywhere become a power to be reckoned with. They were well-equipped and not badly disciplined; they had learned to co-operate, and were organised for combined aggression. On all the coasts they were in communication with British squadrons, which supplied them as they everywhere menaced the French, who were in ignorance where the next descent might come off. Mina had been gazetted a general in the regular army, and nothing is more suggestive of the new position he had asserted than the fact that Suchet and Suchet's subordinates had changed the system of ruthless repression for the usages of civilised war. When Mina made prisoners, as he did not unfrequently, their lives were spared, and they were kept for exchange. When his hospital fell into the hands of the French, the sick were kindly treated in place of being butchered. And the guerrillas of Navarre and Biscay had been reinforced in another way. Insurrectional juntas had been organised in every district, and volunteers, familiar with each nook and corner of the country, were enrolled under men of birth or position. These new corps were the more formidable to the enemy, that they were seldom guilty of violence, and assured the goodwill of their country-folk by repressing the outrages of the partisans.

Early in January Mina took the strong place of

Taffalla, having repulsed a relieving expedition from Pamplona; and then, in concert with other chiefs and the volunteers, both banks of the Ebro were occupied below Calahora and Guardia with a force of 19,000 men. Napoleon's instructions to Joseph, when he was withdrawing from Spain many veterans and good officers for service in Germany, were to hold Madrid only as a post of observation, to transfer the military headquarters to Valladolid, and to crush revolt to the north of the Ebro, employing, if necessary, the army of Portugal as well as that of the north. Thus his rear and the communications with France would be secured. But Joseph had been stiff in his own opinions, hesitating in his movements and at strife with his generals. So Napoleon's able schemes had been baffled, and the invaders were beset by the dangers which his presence would have guarded against.

Joseph was at variance with his generals; with the exception of Jourdan, a special favourite, there was none with whom he was in really cordial relations. But Soult, although after their meeting at Valencia they had established apparently friendly relations, was the object of his particular aversion. Soult had never heeded his orders. Joseph was honest, and doubtless he honestly believed that Soult was actuated by personal ambition and a traitor to the master who had made him. Be that as it may, Joseph got rid of his ablest assistant when Soult's services were most indispensable. On his return to Paris from Russia, the Emperor found letters accusing the Marshal of all manner of turpitude, and even taxing him with cowardice in his conduct on the Tormes. Napoleon valued Soult, nor did he give credence to the absurd charges. But he felt that, in consequence of the friction between them, either he or Joseph ought to

leave Spain, and as it did not suit his plans to withdraw his brother's candidature, Soult was ordered to Germany. He was destined to return to the Peninsula when Joseph had been expelled, and in the meantime, to show that he had lost no favour, he was placed in command of the Imperial Guard.

In fact, Joseph's position was becoming impossible for a man of humanity and sensitive conscience. He would have gladly conciliated his Spanish subjects, but that was out of the question while the invading armies were living at free quarters, and yet these armies were the support of his throne. Had it not been for Lord Wellington and the British assistance, the tenacity of the resistance might have been worn out, and the country bridled by garrisons. Many of the democratic members of the Cortes would have accepted peace and a free constitution even from the usurper. Napier more than suggests, though admitting that there is no written evidence, that at one time the armies of Elio and Del Parque had actually offered to go over, when a brilliant British victory made them hesitate and then draw back. He adds that, had the traitorous negotiations been carried out, Joseph might have recovered Andalusia with his Spanish troops. At least the usurper's relations with Spaniards encouraged him to hope that, with patience and leniency, he might win their toleration. But when he wrote to his imperious brother as King of Spain, he was reminded that he was a Frenchman, and a mere puppet, who must dance as military exigencies pulled the strings. So the generals knew that they had the support of their real master, and that the armies of occupation must be fed and kept contented, before any revenues were remitted to Madrid. Joseph was reduced to extreme straits, and his

unpopularity increased every day. The people were excited to fury under exactions he had forbidden. The starving citizens of Madrid were oppressed with forced loans and excessive taxes and octroi duties. His court could only be kept up on credit, and the nobles who had attached themselves to him were reduced to penury, with nothing to hope. Their worst fears were realised when the intrusive King, early in April, transferred his headquarters to Valladolid. On the 11th, General Hugo, the Commandant of Madrid, informed the municipality of the immediate departure of the troops. Art treasures and other objects of value were hastily packed up; arrears of contributions were rigorously exacted, and all the remaining horses and mules were impressed to drag the commissariat waggons and carry off the plunder.

Meantime Suchet had been hard pressed in the east, and had he been opposed by Wellington, or even by Hill, his discomfiture would have been complete, and his forces would have been driven back on the Catalonian seaboard. In the end of February, Sir John Murray came from Sicily to supersede Campbell. This fifth change of the generals in a few months was not a fortunate one. Murray was no mean strategist, but irresolute to an extreme and morally timid almost to cowardice. Suchet seems quickly to have taken the measure of the man, for he showed a contemptuously audacious front, and acted in indifference to the caution which generally guided his movements. Murray, who was in touch with Elio, was superior in numbers, and only weak in cavalry. But that inferiority was comparatively of slight importance, considering the nature of the country in which they were manœuvring. Ranges of rugged and precipitous mountains ran in parallel Sierras from La Mancha to the sea. On one of these