ridges, beyond the river Xucar, Suchet had formed a rudely-entrenched camp, covering the rich city of Valencia with its fertile *huerta* and the fortress of Murviedro behind it. Murviedro was really his place of arms, though Murray was deceived into the belief that his base was Valencia. But though Suchet could dispose of 30,000 men, they were distributed over a wide extent of country. He was watching the sea fortresses, observing the roads to Zaragoza and Madrid; and guarding specially against his right flank being turned by Elio, who might be joined by armies from La Mancha. Yet, in order to assure the subsistence of his troops, he had thrown out other detachments to occupy Alcoy and the outlying towns which covered a variety of fertile valleys. That arrangement was, doubtless, advisable or indispensable, but it invited, as it facilitated, attack. The resources of Alcoy and the produce of the neighbourhood were as desirable for the allies as for the French.

Accordingly Murray, who had done much to restore the *moral* of his troops, at length determined to force the positions of the French Marshal. On the 6th of March he moved forward in four columns. The allies took possession of Alcoy, and the French who held it were driven back on their main body; but the combinations, though well devised, partially failed, and Murray faltered when he might have pressed his advantages. Nothing of import happened for more than a fortnight, save that Murray was weakened by the recall of 2000 of his best soldiers to Sicily. But Suchet, on his side, was growing anxious and impatient. The definite withdrawal of Soult from the south had set the Spaniards in Andalusia and La Mancha at liberty. Apprehending that they would come to the assistance

of Elio, Suchet resolved to take the initiative and strike. Perhaps he was confirmed in a somewhat hazardous determination by the inaction of Murray after the occupation of Alcoy. For the character of the ground was all in favour of the defenders, and the English general was posted even more strongly than himself. In fact, as it proved, the allied positions on the right were virtually impregnable; the left was likewise situated on a precipitous Sierra, and the centre could only be approached by the narrow pass of Biar. Away to the left were Elio and his Spaniards, and owing to that general's obstinacy a mishap occurred which sacrificed the best of his battalions. He refused to listen to the advice of Murray, who urged the withdrawal of the garrison of Villena. He only consented when too late, for meanwhile Suchet had taken the place by storm.

The battle of Castalla was fought on the 13th. When it came to the point, neither general was eager to engage. Suchet, when he had forced the pass of Biar, recognised the strength of the allied positions, and yet Murray actually desired to abandon them, and is said thrice to have given orders for retiring. But the hands of both generals were forced by their skirmishers coming into lively conflict; the supports hurried up on either side, and the battle was engaged. Suchet had seen that our right was unassailable, so while opening heavy artillery fire on the allied right and centre, he directed his serious onslaught in several columns on the left. There the struggle was decided by the gallantry of the 27th Regiment. The French, notwithstanding obstinate resistance, had topped the hill, and were firing and recovering breath behind a natural breastwork. The moment was critical when the 27th dashed at them,

and they were literally hurled back again to the bottom of the steep. The repulse was felt all along their line; the enemy had been everywhere discouraged by the obstacles to be surmounted, and simultaneously they began to retreat. The converging columns with guns and tumbrils in a mixed mob got choked in the defile. The rear-guard told off to defend the entrance was fiercely pressed by Mackenzie, and it was on the point of being thrown back to confound the confusion, when Murray, in place of supporting the movement, sent order after order to recall the troops, and Suchet succeeded in holding the defile, to withdraw in the night to Fuente de la Higuera. Suchet deserved his defeat for the rash attempt to storm precipitous rocks with one narrow pass behind him, but Murray's timid abstention seems inexplicable. He risked nothing in supporting Mackenzie, and had everything to gain, for he might have changed the repulse into an irretrievable catastrophe. Yet the indirect effects of the battle were very considerable. Not only did the prestige of the French Marshal suffer seriously, but thenceforth ample occupation was found for him, as the Spanish armies were swelled from the south; and Wellington was relieved of all apprehension that Suchet could send to strengthen the enemy in the north.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ROUT OF VITTORIA

May, June 1813

THE spring saw the opening of the crowning campaign of such a series of victories won against odds, or apparently insurmountable difficulties, as is scarcely paralleled in the history of war. The more we study them the more are we persuaded that all was due to the extraordinary qualities of one who was veritably 'the man of destiny.' Secondary causes had undoubtedly come into play, and greatly favoured the final operations which swept the French out of the Peninsula. The fate of Spain was to a considerable extent decided in Russia. The destruction of the Grand Army, the defection of Prussia, the wavering of Austria, had all conspired to weaken the position of the invaders. But had it not been for the iron self-restraint and indomitable patience of Wellington, no time could have been given for those causes to come into play. It is safe to say that no other man could have kept ministers at home firm to their Peninsular policy, as perhaps no other general could have risked his reputation and faced obloquy and calumny in the trust that he would yet have opportunity to finish his work. His victories had roused the national enthusiasm, as they won him the confidence of the troops, except when demoralised by retreat and wine-vaults; and yet

a single defeat, whatever the cause, would have compromised him alike with the nation and the army. But the responsibility perpetually weighing upon him was but one source of his anxieties. He was hampered by the Portuguese Regency and their Council of Administration; he had to spur the sluggish but susceptible Spaniards to tardy co-operation; he had to smooth over the financial difficulties of both nations, while the pay of his troops was in arrear and the military chest almost empty; he had to solve the problem of feeding and moving an army when short of money and with doubtful credit. He combined a temperament of rare energy with the most imperturbable coolness, and his mind in moments the most exciting was under perfect command. There is no more striking proof of that than the fact that when in grave anxiety on the heights of San Christoval he wrote a masterly paper on the intricacies of Portuguese finance. It reminds us of Napoleon's memorable despatch on the Grand Opera at Paris, hastily dashed off during the conflagration of Moscow. For Napoleon in critical emergencies would divert his mind to trivial digressions, whereas Lord Wellington's was essentially concentrative, and never lost grasp of the business in hand. He might have to fight for existence on the Tormes on the morrow, but his future was based on Portuguese finance as much as on the fortresses of Rodrigo and Almeida. In another point he had the advantage of his great rival, inasmuch as his health had never failed, and he could always snatch an undisturbed sleep, waking up, in his own words, with five o'clock courage and coolness.

Now the vast and comprehensive schemes which even the ablest of his enemies had but vaguely penetrated, were on the verge of being brought to maturity. They

embraced the whole compass of the Peninsula, and each detail had been carefully thought out. Even allowing for the backwardness, jealousy, or over-impetuosity of the Spanish allies, they could scarcely fail of success. To the last he had been harassed by the intrigues at Lisbon; and the Portuguese levies, not without reasonable excuse, had been on the point of mutinying for the long arrears of pay. By tact and firmness, and an appeal to the patriotism of the soldiers, these troubles had been tided over and all was in readiness for taking the field. In May 200,000 combatants were under arms, and the general dispositions were as follows:—Copons, with 6000 men, was in Catalonia; Elio had 20,000 in Murcia, and the Anglo-Sicilians under Murray numbered 16,000. Del Parque with 12,000 was in the Morena. There was an army of reserve of 15,000 in Andalusia. The troops in the northern command under Castaños—which extended from Southern Estremadura to Gallicia—were estimated at 40,000. Besides these there were the detached bands of guerrillas. The force directly under Wellington himself amounted to 70,000 English and Portuguese. Beresford's severe discipline had borne excellent fruits; the Portuguese were almost as reliable as our own countrymen, and animated by a similar spirit. Either flank of the land forces was covered by the British fleets. Ample occupation was to be given to Suchet by menacing the harbours and fortresses on the eastern coast and his lines of communication with the north along the shore, while Wellington, in co-operation with the Gallicians, was left to deal with the four other French armies, the remainder of the Spaniards closing in upon flank and rear. The effective fighting force of the united French armies was estimated at about 110,000 men.

The French forces were loosely distributed from

Toledo on the Tagus to Toro on the Douro, partly from difficulties of provisioning them, for Napoleon's instructions as to forming magazines had been neglected, but chiefly because their generals were in doubt as to the line of Wellington's advance. He might either move on the central provinces or direct his attack on the north. For various satisfactory reasons he had decided against the former course. When making his dispositions for the winter, his plan had been already settled, but the enemy, to the last, was kept in profound ignorance. Nothing seemed more natural than that he should establish his cantonments in the undevastated districts of Portugal, or that he should send his cavalry to find forage in the rich valley of the Mondego. Now all the movements of Hill's divisions and the guerrillas were arranged so as to seem significant of an advance on Toledo. He had resolved to take the direct road to the Bidassoa, and to carry the war beyond the Pyrenees into France. But what was actually the shortest road bristled with obstacles. Already he had studied the ground when advancing to Burgos and returning from it; he had himself destroyed the bridges and burned the boats, thereby inspiring the defenders with false confidence. The conclusion he had come to was to turn defences which were too formidable to be cheaply forced; and while the French were fixing their attention on their right and the Tagus, the storm was gathering on their other front and their left flank, and was to burst in its violence on the Esla and Tormes.

The troops quartered in Northern Portugal were quietly directed to the Tras os Montes. The plan was to pass the Douro on Portuguese territory, beyond the observation of the French; to ascend the right bank; to cross the Esla, and to rally the Gallicians. That

left wing, forming the bulk of the army, was led by Sir Thomas Graham. Meanwhile the centre, under Wellington himself, meeting the right under Hill before Salamanca, was to force the passages of the Tormes and unite in turn with Graham. So the concentrated host, having turned the Douro and Pisuerga, would force the enemy to fall back upon Valladolid.

The concerted movement, when three armies were advancing from points widely apart, through hilly country, by wretched roads and with the rivers in flood, involved the most delicate combinations. On the 26th May Lord Wellington was looking down on Salamanca from the opposite heights. Turning his eyes to the right, beyond the familiar cones of the Arapiles, he saw the heads of Hill's two columns appearing on parallel roads. Salamanca was held by Villatte, with three battalions and some squadrons of horse. That skilful officer had taken every precaution; he had blocked the bridge, barricaded the streets and sent back his baggage. But he could do nothing against the overwhelming forces opposed to him, and his error was that he tarried too long. When he withdrew, he was sharply pressed and suffered considerable loss. Yet, if he erred, he amply redeemed the mistake by the gallantry of the well-managed retreat, when, with a relative handful of men, he repelled all the charges of the allied cavalry, and safely rejoined his supports.

On the two following days the allies marched onward with the right towards Toro and the left inclining to Zamora. But no news had come from Graham, and Wellington was uneasy. On the 28th, leaving Hill in command, he hurried off to the left bank of the Esla. Above Zamora all the bridges had been destroyed. The Douro was down in flood; at Miranda it is 100 yards

in width, and it was raging between its precipitous banks. The ordinary ferry was impracticable, and Wellington was swung across in a cradle worked by a rope, suspended 30 feet above the water. He found, as he feared, that Graham's march had been delayed by a succession of difficulties. In the rugged Tras os Montes the roads were generally so narrow that guns and waggons could barely pass between the mountain walls, and in many places they were intersected by the beds of torrents.

Now the troops were confronted by the Esla, which ought to have been passed on the 29th. Had the French realised their danger, the crossing must have been impossible. As it was, they had been more utterly taken by surprise than on the Tormes, and their preparations for obstruction were even more feeble. On the 31st the river was forded by some squadrons of light cavalry, with infantry holding on to their stirrups. The enemy's pickets and outposts were driven in; the pontoon bridges were thrown across, and the columns were passing over. On the 1st of June the allies entered Zamora. After evacuating it, the French had retired on Toro, and, destroying the bridge there, again fell back. They left the allies united on the Douro, for on the upper waters the river could be forded.

But now they were brought to the conviction that they had been out-manœuvred, and began to understand Lord Wellington's plan. It was known through our spies that they were actively concentrating, and it was possible they might force on a battle. Consequently Wellington paused and took his precautions. He halted on the 3d June for the Gallicians to come up with the rear of the left wing, which had been delayed on the Esla. The right wing passed the Douro by the bridge and the fords of Toro; and the whole army, by consum-

mate strategy, with little fighting, could show front to the enemy's flank on the northern bank of the river. The French had concentrated behind the Pisuerga, but when Wellington manœuvred to threaten their right they withdrew to strong positions behind the Carrion. Joseph hastily quitted Palencia, to be followed by his troops on the next day. Treading closely on his heels, Lord Wellington entered the town amid showers of flowers and shouts of welcome.

Even on the 30th, Joseph, in false security, was indulging in a fool's dream. Assuming that he had ample leisure, he wrote to his brother, suggesting sage schemes for administering the provinces to the north of the Ebro, and for the invasion of Portugal after the repulse of the allies. The slight delay of Graham's advance contributed to deceive him. Yet then he was in the meshes of the net which was fatally closing around him. Wellington was in his front and on his flanks with 70,000 men under British colours. The *partidas* and the Spanish reserves drawing in from all sides numbered 30,000 more. For himself, his army had been gradually swelled from 35,000 with the eagles to nearly twice that number. But when at last he took serious alarm, and ordered Foy, Sarrut and Clausel to join immediately, these summonses were sent too late. He was strong in cavalry, though scarcely more so than the allies, and as for guns, he had 100 in the field, with any number more in the arsenals of Vittoria. For in Vittoria, to his subsequent embarrassment and discomfiture, were collected all the baggage of three entire armies, with the cannon, ammunition and stores withdrawn from Madrid, Valladolid and Burgos. Moreover, there were the trains heavily laden with the loot of the King, his generals and their officers.

On the 7th June the allied army crossed the Carrion. On the 12th Lord Wellington gave some repose to his left, worn out by incessant marching, while his right felt the French positions before Burgos. These were sufficiently strong, but both their flanks being menaced, they beat a retreat with some sharp skirmishing. Burgos was protected by two swollen rivers, but in the night Joseph retreated again by the highway to Pancorbo. Not only had the castle, repaired and strengthened after the siege, been mined, but many quarters of the city. Happily the trains had been hastily laid, or were prematurely exploded. The castle blew up with a terrific report, burying some companies of the retiring troops under its ruins, and the glorious Gothic cathedral, malignantly doomed to similar destruction, only escaped through the failure of the fuses. Now the enemy hoped to make a stand on the line of the Ebro, blocking the royal road to Bayonne by garrisoning Pancorbo, and calling in their detached corps from Biscay and Navarre. But Napoleon's plans of crushing at any cost the revolt in Navarre and Aragon had not been carried out, and Wellington was ever persevering in his turning manœuvres on the left. Simultaneously with the recovery of Burgos, by a conception as daring as the execution was determined, he had turned the head waters of the Ebro, and Graham was marching eastward down the left bank. Graham, who had always the lion's share of difficulties to surmount, had been contending for six successive days with the natural obstacles on roads the French had deemed impracticable and left out of their account. Defiles were penetrated which a few men could have easily defended; guns were hauled up or lowered over precipices, and let down by ropes into flooded watercourses where a squadron

or a company might have barred the passage. As the allied forces toiled along, in each side valley they were joined by guerrillas following the mountain rills rushing to the Ebro, and it was only when bursting down on the broad plain of Vittoria that they felt the enemy for the first time.

Intelligence of Reille's first encounter with the allies reached Joseph at Pancorbo on the night of the 18th, yet neither the King nor the general had awakened to the scope of the movements which were forcing them irresistibly to destruction. Nevertheless, it was clear that their rear and right, as well as the road to Irun, were probably threatened, and no time was lost in withdrawing from Pancorbo. That night, again, the army retreated. But it was a delicate operation to pass the long and narrow defile, which was the direct access to what Napier describes as the basin of Vittoria, and Reille had orders in the meantime to maintain his positions vigorously. These orders he executed with equal science and gallantry, and the French army was formed for the final stand on heights that cross the plain and cover the town. Further retreat was impossible for strategical, political, or material reasons, and the question of the French hold on Spain must be settled by a decisive battle. For at Vittoria converge the three great roads, leading respectively from Bilbao, Bayonne and Pamplona. It is the centre of communications. In Vittoria were crowded the trains and stores, the sick and wounded, the women and children, and all the plunder. In fact the hopeless block of waggons and carriages, tumbrils and guns, put an orderly retreat out of consideration. The French were formed in three lines, behind the Zadora, which was passable by sundry narrow bridges, and again the King

sent an urgent summons to Clausel at Logroño, which is eleven leagues distant. Before Clausel could come up, the battle was decided.

Apparently Jourdan, who really commanded, had little chance, but his positions were dangerously extended. His left rested on heights facing or flanking the entrance to the defile of Puebla; the centre of his first line stretched along the hills overhanging the Zadora, and these were heavily armed with batteries, enfilading the bridges. His right was fronting the river, to defend the passage of Abechuco. But the rocks and tangled undergrowth on the south bank of the stream offered safe cover to the assailants. Above all, it was of supreme importance that Reille on the far right should hold his own, for Graham was already advancing by the high-way from Bilbao, and threatening the only road for retreat. Yet Reille, though reinforced before the battle, was virtually out of touch with the centre, and the long and somewhat attenuated line offered a skilful enemy favourable points of attack. To understand the battle the ground must be studied. To the west of Vittoria, the Zadora runs south, but subsequently it turns at a sharp right angle and, roughly forming two sides of a square, takes a course but slightly to the south of due east. D'Erlon with the army of the centre, was in the second line behind Gazan, and the great body of the cavalry, with the royal guards, were held in reserve at the village of Gomecha, situated in the valley at about half-way between the Zadora and Vittoria.

With daybreak on the 21st, in a dense mist, the allied columns were in motion. Hill, on the right, first came into action, and a Spanish corps, led by Morillo, rushed to the storm of the heights of Puebla. There the tide of battle ebbed to and fro, as supports were sent

up on either side. The defence was as stubborn as the attack was resolute, and for a time there was little lost or gained, till at last Hill, with the remainder of his corps, forced the defile of Puebla and, emerging on the plain, reunited himself to the troops on the heights, and asserted a forward position at Subijana de Alava, a village at the foot of the Eastern Sierras, and in the south-eastern corner of the basin.

Meanwhile Wellington was directing the attack on the centre in person. From the camp and villages on the Bayas he had brought the 4th and light divisions, with the cavalry, down to the Zadora. Each division was fronting a bridge, and a hot fire was exchanged between the skirmishers. But it would have been rash to send those divisions across to take ground beyond the gorge of the Puebla, for nothing had as yet been seen of the 3d and 7th Divisions. They had been told off to attack the centre and right of the enemy, but their march had been delayed by natural obstructions. While Wellington was impatiently expecting them, he was informed by a peasant that one of the upper bridges had been left unguarded. A brigade of the light division was immediately pushed across; it took up ground under cover behind the enemy's advanced posts, and later it came into the close action with decisive effect.

Towards one o'clock Joseph became seriously alarmed. Hill, on his left, was forcing the fighting at Subijana, and away to the north, on his right, the sound of guns and the smoke told that Graham was pressing the attack on Reille. Hurrying back his reserves from Gomecha to the town, Joseph gave orders to Gazan to follow. Had Gazan been inclined to obey, compliance had become impossible. For at that critical

moment, Picton and Lord Dalhousie were seen coming down at last on the bridge of Mendoza. They were received with a storm of shot and musketry fire as the French cavalry approached to oppose them. But then the light brigade, which, as we have seen, had been thrown forward, interposing between the cavalry and the river, took the enemy's infantry and batteries in flank. Under cover of the fire of the British guns, the 3d and 7th Divisions passed over by the bridge and an upper ford. To their right the French were so closely engaged that no regular retreat was possible. To our right, Hill had been urging his attack, and the French centre had been already weakened by detaching troops to the assistance of their left. As at Salamanca, Wellington saw his opportunity. He carried Picton, with all of the 3d Division that were not engaged, across the front of the hostile line to assail the denuded positions. At the same time the 4th Division moved forward on the right, supported by the masses of heavy cavalry. The French were weak in men there, but strong in guns. They opened such a deadly fire as threatened to repel the advance, but batteries on the British side were brought up to quell it. The French withdrew in the thick vapours of smoke, but they formed again on the heights before Gomecha, which had been abandoned by their reserves. Yet they still held the advanced village of Arinez on the main road, and there was desperate fighting before it was won.

They had maintained themselves at Subijana on their left with even greater obstinacy. But now that position was turned by troops descending into the plains from the eastern Sierra, and their whole army fell back, crowding together in confusion, and striving

to get out of the broken country and gain the only high road. Never was there a more sudden collapse from resolute defence to panic. Gun after gun was abandoned, and the mob went surging wildly into the city, while the shot from the English field batteries lent wings to the flight. Still Reille was manfully holding his own, and the safety of the shattered wreck depended on him, for he was fighting for the sole lines of retreat; and the artillery of the armies of the south and centre were still belching out their fire from eighty pieces on the eastern range of heights before Vittoria. For a time the allied advance was checked, but then the hills held by the French on their left were turned. Reille was now isolated, and in great danger. For Joseph had given orders for the flight, and he had little option as to the line by which he should save himself. The road to Irun was blocked by waggons and fugitives, and accordingly the flight was directed on Pamplona. The cavalry did something to protect it, but the very excess of the panic was more effective. For the road to Pamplona lay through a swamp, skirted on either side by deep ditches, and it was obstructed besides by broken-down carriages, dead horses and the encumbrances the fugitives had flung away. Then two days of heavy rain succeeded, which, though they added to the miseries of the rabble, delayed the pursuit of our light cavalry, which followed up to within gun-range of the works of Pamplona. There the governor refused admission to the runaways; he had no mind that they should either demoralise his garrison or devour his provisions. So soldiers, women and camp-followers bivouacked together on the saturated grass of the glacis, under cover of his guns.

Never, perhaps, after a battle, were the material

gains more important. Three armies, perfectly equipped, had concentrated everything and lost all; 450 pieces of ordnance were taken; only two guns were carried away, and one of these was captured on the road to Pamplona. All the stores and ammunition fell into the hands of the allies. All the plunder, so rapaciously amassed, was recovered. Some of the masterpieces of Spanish pictorial art were presented to Wellington and are now at Apsley House. By the way, when he understood their value, the Duke afterwards offered to return them to Ferdinand, an offer which the King declined. Five millions of dollars were in the intruder's military chest. All were looted; some fell to the soldiers, though these, for the most part, were too busily engaged to pick them up. The greater portion were picked up by the camp followers, enriching suttlers and Jewish traders; and the townsfolk of Vittoria, generally French in their sympathies, had excellent bargains of valuable goods. For several days an auction was held in the town, at which rich silks and valuable plate were sold for a trifle. The cumbrous dollars were at a heavy discount, and were exchanged at a premium for more portable gold coins. For once Wellington relaxed his discipline, and declined to make any of the fortunate soldiers disgorge. 'They have earned the money well,' he said, 'and they ought to keep it.' Joseph, after narrowly escaping the musket balls, had to sacrifice his coach with its precious contents. Among the trophies was the leading staff of Marshal Jourdan. It was sent by Wellington to the Prince Regent, who gracefully presented him in return with the *bâton* of a Field-Marshal of Great Britain.