

sweep the summit, but the French having discovered their error, came back at a charging pace, sustained a volley without flinching, and tried the bayonet. O'Callaghan, distinguished for strength and courage, received two strokes of that weapon, and repaid them with fatal power in each instance; then the French, nearly all conscripts, were beaten off. Twice they came back and fought until the fire of the twenty-eighth was beginning to be felt, when Harispe, seeing the remainder of the second division ready to support the attack, Le Cor's Portuguese advancing against the centre, and the Spaniards in march towards St. Palais, retreated to that town, and calling in Paris from the side of Mauleon, immediately broke down the bridges over the Bidouze. He lost nearly five hundred men, of whom two hundred were prisoners, and he would hardly have escaped if Morillo had not been slow. The allies lost one hundred and sixty, of whom not more than fifty fell at Garris, and these chiefly in the bayonet contest, for the trees and the darkness screened them at first.

During these operations at Garris, Picton moved from Bonloc to Oreque on Hill's left, menacing Villatte; but though Beresford's scouting parties acting on the left of Picton approached the Bidouze, facing Taupin and Foy, his principal force remained on the Gamboury, the pivot upon which Wellington's line hinged, while the right swept round the French positions. Foy, however, in retreating, saw the fourth and seventh divisions on the heights between the Nive and the Adour pointing their march, as he thought, towards the French left, and his reports to that effect reached Soult just as he received notice of the investment of St. Jean Pied de Port. Being thus convinced that the design was not to pass the Adour above Bayonne, but to gain the line of that river by constantly turning the French left, he made new dispositions.

His line on the Bidouze was strong, if he could have supported Harispe at St. Palais, and guarded the passage on the Soissons at Mauleon; but this would have extended his front, already too wide; wherefore he resolved to abandon the Bidouze and Soissons, to take the line of the Gave d'Oleron, placing his right at Peyrehorade and his left at Navarrens. In this view, D'Erlon was ordered to pass the Adour by the flying bridge at the Port de Landes, and take post on the left bank of that river, while Harispe, having Paris' infantry still attached to his division, defended the Soissons, and pushed parties on his left towards Mauleon.* Villatte occupied Sauveterre, where the bridge was fortified on the left bank, and from thence Taupin lined the right bank to Sordes, near the confluence of the Gave de Pau. Foy occupied the works at the

* Soult, MSS.

bridges of Peyrehorade and Hastingues, and guarded the Gave to its confluence with the Adour; his line was prolonged by D'Erlon towards Dax; yet Soult still kept advanced parties on the lower Bidouze, at the different entrenched passages of that river. One brigade of cavalry was in reserve at Sauveterre, and another was distributed on the line; head-quarters were transported to Orthes, the parc of artillery went to Aire. The principal magazines of ammunition were at Bayonne, Navarrens, and Dax; and the French general, seeing his communications with those places likely to be intercepted before he could remove his stores, anticipated distress, and wrote to the minister of war to form new dépôts.

On the 16th, Wellington repaired the broken bridges of St. Palais, after a skirmish in which a few men were wounded. Hill then crossed the Bidouze, the cavalry and artillery by the repaired bridge, the infantry by the fords; but the day being spent in the operation, the head of the column only marched beyond St. Palais. Meanwhile, the fourth and part of the seventh divisions occupied the Bastide de Clerence on the right of the Joyeuse, and the light division came up in support to La Costa on the left bank of that river. The 17th, Hill, marching at eight o'clock, passed through Domenzain towards the Soissons, while the third division advanced on his left by Masparraute to the heights of Somberraute; both corps converged upon Paris, who was at Arriveriete, to defend the Soissons above its confluence with the Gave of Oleron. The French outposts were immediately driven across the Gave, and Paris attempted to destroy the bridge of Arriveriete; Wellington was too quick; the ninety-second regiment, covered by the fire of some guns, crossed at a ford above the bridge, and, beating two French battalions from the village, secured the passage. The allies then halted for the day near Arriveriete, having marched only five miles, and lost one man killed, with twenty-three wounded. Paris relinquished the Soissons, yet did not retire until the morning of the 18th, and the allies then seized the great road running from Sauveterre to Navarrens, up the left bank of the Oleron Gave.

Harispe, Villatte, and Paris, supported by a brigade of cavalry, were now at Sauveterre, occupying the bridge-head on the left bank; Taupin was opposite the Bastide de Bearn, lower down on the right; Foy on the right of Taupin; D'Erlon on the left of the Adour, above its confluence with the Gave de Pau.* In this state, the fourth division advanced to Bidache on the Bidouze, the light division followed in support to the Bastide de Clerence, the seventh division remained in that vicinity, its left being extended to the Adour. The cavalry of the centre, under Cotton, arrived also on

* Soult's MSS.

the banks of the Bidouze, connecting the fourth with the third division at Somberraute. Hill sent Morillo up the Soissons, to guard the fords as high as Nabas; and then spreading Fane's cavalry and the British and Portuguese infantry between that river and the Gave of Oleron, occupied all the villages along the road to Navarrens, and cannonaded the bridge-head of Sauveterre.

Soult, thrown by the first movement upon the defensive, was now at a loss to discover his adversary's object. The situation of the seventh, and the march of the fourth and light divisions, led him to think his works at Hastings and Peyrehorade would be assailed; and the weakness of his line, having only Taupin's division to guard the river between Sauveterre and Sordes, a distance of ten miles, made him fear the passage of the Gave would be forced near the Bastide de Bearn, to which post there was a good road from Came and Bidache. On the other hand, the prolongation of Hill's line towards Navarrens indicated a design to march on Pau; or it might be to keep him in check on the Gaves, while the camp at Bayonne was assaulted. In this uncertainty, he sent Pierre Soult with a cavalry brigade and two battalions of infantry to act between Oleron and Pau, and keep open a communication with the partisan corps forming at Mauleon. That done, he decided to hold the Gaves as long as he could, but when they were forced to abandon the defensive, concentrate his whole force at Orthes, and fall suddenly upon the first of the allies' converging columns that approached him.

CHAPTER II.

Lord Wellington arrests his movements, and returns in person to St. Jean de Luz to throw his bridge over the Adour—Is prevented by bad weather, and returns to the Gave of Mauleon—Passage of the Adour by Sir John Hope—Difficulty of the operation—The flotilla passes the bar and enters the river—The French sally from Bayonne, but are repulsed, and the stupendous bridge is cast—Citadel invested after a severe action—Lord Wellington passes the Gave of Oleron, and invests Navarrens—Soult concentrates his army at Orthes—Beresford passes the Gave de Pau near Peyrehorade—Battle of Orthes—Soult changes his line of operations—Combat of Aire—Observations.

SOULT'S conjectures embraced every project but the true one. Wellington did indeed design to keep him in check upon the rivers, not to obtain an opportunity of assaulting the camp of Bayonne, but to throw his stupendous bridge over the Adour; and that failing, he could still pursue his operations on the Gaves. Wherefore, when he had established his offensive line strongly beyond the Soissons and the Bidouze, and his pontoon-train was well advanced

towards Garris, he returned rapidly to St. Jean de Luz. Every thing there depending on man was ready, but the weather was boisterous with snow for two days, and fearful of letting Soult strengthen himself on the Gave of Oleron, he returned the 21st to Garris; this delay having decided him to make that his principal operation, leaving the bridge to Hope and Admiral Penrose.

PASSAGE OF THE ADOUR.

(Plan 2, page 31.)

On the 15th, the heights of Anglet had been occupied by the guards and Germans, small parties were cautiously pushed towards the river through the pine forest called the wood of Bayonne, and the fifth division, now under Colville, occupied Bussussary and the bridge of Urdains. On the 21st, Colville relieved the sixth division in front of Mousserolles, and Freyre was called over the Bidassoa to replace him at Bussussary. The other Spaniards and the heavy cavalry remained in Spain. Hope had, therefore, only two British and two Spanish divisions, three independent brigades of Anglo-Portuguese infantry, and Vandeleur's brigade of light cavalry, altogether twenty-eight thousand, with twenty pieces of artillery.* Two regiments which had been sent to the rear sick, and several others expected from England, were, however, destined to join him.

In the night of the 22d, the first division, six eighteen-pounders, and the rocket battery, were cautiously filed from the causeway near Anglet towards the Adour; but the road was deep and heavy, and one of the guns falling into a ditch seriously delayed the march: nevertheless, at daybreak the whole force reached some sand-downs which extended behind the pine forest to the river. The French piquets were then driven into the entrenched camp at Beyris, the pontoon-train and field artillery were brought down to the Adour opposite to the village of Boucaut, and the eighteen-pounders placed in battery on the bank. The light troops closed to the edge of the marsh which covered the right of the French camp, and España's division, taking post on the heights of Anglet, in concert with the independent brigades, which were at Arcangues and the bridge of Urdains, attracted the enemy's attention by false attacks, which were prolonged beyond the Nive by the fifth division.

It was intended that the arrival of the gun-boats and chasse-marées at the mouth of the Adour should have been simultaneous with that of the troops, but the wind continued contrary, none were to be seen, and Hope, whose firmness no untoward event could ever shake, resolved to attempt the passage with the army alone.

* Original Morning States, MSS.

The French flotilla opened its fire about nine o'clock; Hope's artillery and rockets retorted so fiercely that three gun-boats were destroyed, and the sloop so hardly handled that the whole took refuge higher up the river; meanwhile, sixty men of the guards were rowed in a pontoon across the mouth of the river in the face of a French piquet, which, seemingly bewildered, retired without firing. A raft being then formed with the remainder of the pontoons, a hawser was stretched across, and six hundred of the guards and the sixtieth regiment, with a part of the rocket battery, the whole under Colonel Stopford, passed; yet slowly and at slack water only, for the tide run strongly, and the waters were wide.

During this operation, General Thouvenot, deceived by spies and prisoners, thought the light division was with Hope as well as the first division, and that fifteen thousand men were embarked at St. Jean de Luz to land between Cape Breton and the Adour.* Wherefore, fearing to endanger his garrison by sending a strong force to any distance down the river, when he heard Stopford's detachment was on the right bank, he detached only two battalions under General Maucombe to ascertain the state of affairs; for the pine forest and a great bending of the river prevented him from obtaining any view from Bayonne. Maucombe made a show of attacking Stopford, but the latter, flanked by the field artillery from the left bank, received him with a discharge of rockets—projectiles which, like the elephants in ancient warfare, often turn upon their own side. This time, however, amenable to their directors, they smote the French column, and it fled amazed, and with a loss of thirty wounded. If Thouvenot had kept strong guards with a field-battery on the right bank of the Adour, Hope could not have passed over the troops, nor could any vessels have crossed the bar; no resource save that of disembarking between the river and Cape Breton would then have remained. This error was fatal to the French. The British continued to pass all night and until twelve o'clock on the 24th, when the flotilla was seen under a press of sail making with a strong breeze for the mouth of the river.

To enter the Adour is, from the flatness of the coast, never an easy task; it was now most difficult; because the high winds of the preceding days had raised a great sea and the enemy had removed one of the guiding flag-staves by which the navigation was ordinarily directed. In front came the boats of the men-of-war, and ahead of all, the naval captain, O'Reilly, run his craft, a chosen Spanish vessel, into the midst of the breakers, which, rolling in a frightful manner over the bar, dashed her on to the beach. That brave officer, stretched senseless on the shore, would have perished

* Thouvenot's Report.

with his crew, but for the ready succor of the soldiers; however, a few only were drowned, and the remainder with an intrepid spirit launched their boat again to aid the passage of the troops which was still going on. O'Reilly was followed successfully by Lieutenant Debenham in a six-oared cutter; but the tide was falling, and the remainder of the boats, the impossibility of passing until the next high water being evident, drew off, and a pilot was landed to direct the line of navigation by concerted signals.

When the water rose again, the crews were promised rewards in proportion to their successful daring, and the whole flotilla approached in close order; but with it came black clouds and a driving gale, which covered the whole line of coast with a rough tumbling sea, dashing and foaming without an interval of dark water to mark the entrance of the river. The men-of-war's boats first drew near this terrible line of surge, and Mr. Bloye, of the *Lyra*, having the chief pilot with him, heroically led into it; but in an instant his barge was engulfed, and he and all with him were drowned. The *Lyra's* boat being thus swallowed up, the following vessels swerved in their course, and shooting up to the right and left, kept hovering undecided on the edge of the tormented waters. Suddenly, Lieutenant Cheyne, of the *Woodlark*, pulled ahead, and striking the right line, with courage and fortune combined, safely passed the bar. The wind then lulled, the waves, as if conquered, abated somewhat of their rage, and the *chasse-marées*, manned with Spanish seamen, and having an engineer officer with a party of sappers in each, who compelled them to follow the men-of-war's boats, came plunging one after another through the huge breakers and reached the point designed for the bridge. Thus was achieved this perilous and glorious exploit. In effecting it, Captain Elliot, of the *Martial*, with his launch and crew and three transports' boats perished close to the shore, in despite of the most violent efforts made by the troops to save them; three other vessels cast on the beach lost part of their crews; and one large *chasse-marée* full of men, after passing the line of surf safely, was overtaken by a swift bellying wave which, breaking on her deck, dashed her to pieces.

All the first division and Bradford's Portuguese, eight thousand men, being now on the right bank, took post for the night. Next day, sweeping in a half circle round the citadel and its entrenchments, they placed their left on the Adour above the fortress, and their right on the same river below it; for the water here made such a bend in their favor, that their front was little more than two miles wide, and for the most part covered by a marshy ravine. This nice operation was effected without opposition, because the

entrenched camps, menaced by the troops on the other side of the Adour, were so wide that Thouvenot's force was scarcely sufficient to maintain them. The bridge was then constructed three miles below Bayonne, where the river was contracted to eight hundred feet by retaining walls, built with the view of sweeping away the bar by increasing the force of the current. The plan of bridge and boom were the conception of Colonel Sturgeon and Major Todd; but the execution was confided entirely to the latter, who, with a mind, less brilliant than Sturgeon's, but more indefatigable, very ably served his country throughout this war. Batteries were immediately constructed to fire hot shot, and so drive the sloop and gun-boats lying in the river away from the bridge, which was thus constructed. Twenty-six chasse-marées moored head and stern at distances of forty feet, reckoning from centre to centre, were first bound together with ropes; two thick cables were then carried loosely across their decks; and the ends being cast over the walls on each bank, were strained and fastened in various modes to the sands. They were sufficiently slack to meet the spring-tides, which rose fourteen feet; and planks were laid upon them without any supporting beams. The boom, moored with anchors above and below, was a double line of masts connected with chains and cables, so as to form a series of squares; hence, if a vessel broke through the outside, the shock would turn her round in the square, and she would become entangled with the floating wrecks through which she had broken. Gun-boats, with aiding batteries on the banks, were then stationed to protect the boom, and row-boats were furnished with grappling-irons to tow off fire-vessels. By the united labor of seamen and soldiers, all was finished on the 26th; and, contrary to the general opinion on such matters, Major Todd assured the author of this History that he found the soldiers, with minds quickened by the wider range and variety of knowledge attendant on their service, more ready of resource, and their efforts, combined by a more regular discipline, of more avail and with less loss of time, than the irregular activity of the seamen.

The agitation of the river from the force of the tides was generally so great that to maintain a pontoon-bridge on it was impossible; a knowledge of this had rendered the French officers too careless of watch and defence; and this year the shifting sands had given the Adour such a slanting direction towards the west, that it ran for some distance almost parallel to the shore; the outer bank, thus acting as a breakwater, lessened the agitation within, and enabled the large two-masted boats employed to ride safely and support the heaviest artillery and carriages. Nevertheless, this fortune, the errors of the enemy, the matchless skill and daring of the British

seamen, the discipline and intrepidity of the British soldiers, all combined by the genius of Wellington, were necessary to the success of this stupendous undertaking, which must always rank amongst the prodigies of war.

When the bridge was finished, Hope resolved to contract his line of investment round the citadel. This was a serious affair, for the French position outside was exceedingly strong. The flanks rested on ravines covered with fortified villas, and in the centre a ridge, along which the great roads from Bordeaux and Peyrehorade led into Bayonne, was occupied by the village and church of St. Etienne, both situated on rising points of ground strongly entrenched and under the fire of the citadel guns. Advancing in three converging columns, covered by skirmishers, the wings of the allies easily attained the edges of the ravines at either side, resting their flanks on the Adour above and below the town, at about nine hundred yards from the enemy's works; but a severe action took place in the centre. There the Germans and a brigade of guards should have attacked simultaneously in three masses, the guards on the left, the light battalions of Germans on the right, their heavy infantry in the centre; but an accident retarded the wings, and the centre first attacked the heights of St. Etienne. The skirmishing was sharp, the guns from the citadel opened, the church and village were stormed, an entrenched line of houses was carried, and a gun was taken. When the wings came up, the action ceased for a time, but the people of Bayonne were in such consternation that Thouvenot, to re-assure them, sallied, and charging the Germans twice, was wounded, and lost the position of St. Etienne. The loss of the allies could not have been less than five hundred, four-fifths being Germans, and the latter were dissatisfied at being unnoticed in the despatch—an omission somewhat remarkable, because Hope had openly commended their valor.

This new position had the ravines on each flank, and the centre being close to the enemy's works on the ridge of St. Etienne, was entrenched. Preparations for besieging the citadel were then commenced under the direction of the German Colonel Hartmann, a code of signals was established, and infinite pains taken to protect the bridge and secure a unity of action between the three investing bodies. The communications, however, required complicated arrangements; for the right bank of the Adour, being low, was overflowed every tide, and would have occasioned great difficulty but for the retaining wall, which, being four feet thick, was made use of as a carriage-road.

While these events happened at Bayonne, Wellington pushed his operations on the Gaves with great vigor. On the 21st, his

pontoons had reached Garris, and the 23d were carried beyond the Gave de Mauleon. During his absence, the sixth and light divisions had come up, and thus six divisions of infantry and two brigades of cavalry were concentrated beyond that river on the Gave d'Oleron, between Sauveterre and Navarrens. Beresford still held the line of the Bidouze down to its confluence with the Adour; and to distract the enemy, threw a battalion over the latter near Urt, and collected boats as if to form a bridge. In the evening he recalled his detachment, yet continued the preparations for a bridge until late in the 23d; then he moved forward and drove Foy's posts from the works at Oeyergave and Hastings, on the lower parts of the Oleron Gave, into the entrenchments at Peyrehorade. The allies lost fifty men, principally Portuguese, but Soult's right and centre were thus held in check; for Beresford had the fourth and seventh divisions, and Vivian's cavalry was strong enough for Foy at Peyrehorade and for Taupin at the Bastide of Bearn. The rest of the French army was distributed at Orthes and Sauveterre, feeling towards Navarrens; and on the 24th, Wellington put his troops in motion to pass the Gave d'Oleron. His movements and the arrival of his reinforcements again deceived Soult, who seems to have known nothing of the light division, and imagined the first division was at Came on the 22d, as well as the fourth and seventh divisions. However, his dispositions would have been the same; he did not expect to hold the Gave, and looked to a final concentration at Orthes.

On the 24th, Morillo, reinforced with cavalry, moved to the Laussette, a small river running in front of Navarrens, where rough ground concealed his real force. His scouts beat back the French outposts, and a battalion marching higher up menaced the fords of the Gave at Doguen, to draw the attention of the garrison of Navarrens from the ford Ville Nave, three miles below Doguen; for there Wellington designed to pass, and a great concentric movement was now in progress towards it. Le Cor's Portuguese marched from Gestas; the light division from Aroue, crossing the Soissons at Nabas; the second division, three batteries of artillery, the pontoons, and four regiments of cavalry moved from other points. Favored by the hilly nature of the country, the columns were well concealed from the enemy; and the sixth division advanced towards the fords of Montfort, three miles below that of Ville Nave. A battalion of the second division was sent to menace the ford of Barraute, below Montfort; but the third division, reinforced with a brigade of hussars and the batteries of the second division, marched by Osserain and Arriveriette against the bridge-head of Sauveterre, with orders to make a feint of forcing

a passage there. The bulk of the light cavalry remained in reserve under Cotton, but Vivian's hussars, coming up from Beresford's right, threatened all the fords between Picton's left and the Bastide of Bearn. Below that Bastide, some detachments were directed upon the fords of Sindos, Castagnhede and Hauterive. During this movement, Beresford kept Foy in check at Pereyhorade with the seventh division, and sent the fourth towards Sordes and Leren, above the confluence of the Gaves, to seek a fit place for a bridge: thus the French front was menaced on a line of twenty-five miles, yet the great force was above Sauveterre.

These operations were not very happily executed. The columns directed on the side of Sindos missed the fords; and when Picton, opening a cannonade against the bridge-head of Sauveterre, made four companies of Keane's brigade and some cavalry pass the Gave in the vicinity of the bridge, the first were immediately beaten back, with a loss of ninety men and officers: some were drowned, and thirty made prisoners; whereupon, the cavalry returned to the left bank, and the cannonade ceased. Nevertheless, the diversion was complete, and the general operations were successful. Soult on the first alarm drew Harispe from Sauveterre to Monstrueig on the Orthes road, where a range of hills running parallel to the Gave of Oleron separates it from that of Pau; thus only a division of infantry and Berton's cavalry remained under Villatte at Sauveterre; and that general, notwithstanding his success against the four companies, was so alarmed by Picton's demonstrations, that he abandoned his works on the left bank and destroyed the bridge. The sixth division had passed without opposition at Montfort above Sauveterre, and the other troops, coming down upon the ford of Villenave, met only with a small cavalry piquet, and crossed with a loss of but two men drowned—a happy circumstance, for the waters were deep and rapid, the cold intense, and the ford so narrow that the passage was not completed before dark. To have forced it in the face of an enemy would have been exceedingly difficult and dangerous; and it is strange that Soult, who was with Harispe, only five miles from Montfort and seven from Villenave, should not have opposed the passage. The heads of the allies' columns immediately seized the range of hills before spoken of, the right near Loubeing; the left towards Sauveterre, from whence Villatte and Berton had been withdrawn by Clausel, who seems to have kept bad watch when Clinton passed at Montfort.

Soult now took a position to give time for Taupin to retire from the lower parts of the Gave of Oleron towards the bridge of Berenx on the Gave of Pau; for both he and Foy had received orders to march upon Orthes and break down all the bridges as they passed.

When the night fell, Harispe's division also passed the bridge of Orthes, and D'Erlon was already established in that town; Clausel remained until the morning at Orion to cover the movement. Pierre Soult, posted beyond Navarrens with his cavalry and two battalions of infantry to watch the road to Pau, had been pressed by Morillo, and being now cut off by the passage of the allies at Vellenave was forced to retreat by Monein.

The 25th Wellington, taking some cavalry and guns, pushed Clausel's rear-guard from Magret into the suburb of Orthes, which covered the bridge of that place on the left bank; he also cannonaded the French beyond the river; but the Portuguese of the light division, skirmishing amongst the houses to prevent the destruction of the bridge, lost twenty-five men. The second, sixth, and light divisions, Hamilton's Portuguese, five regiments of cavalry, and three batteries were then massed in front of Orthes; the third division and a brigade of cavalry was in front of the broken bridge of Berenx five miles lower down the Gave; the fourth and seventh divisions with Vivian's cavalry were in front of Peyrehorade, from whence Foy retired by the great Bayonne road to Orthes. Morillo was directed to invest Navarrens; and as Mina was no sure guarantee against the combined efforts of the garrison of St. Jean Pied de Port and the warlike inhabitants of Baygorry, five British regiments, which had gone for clothing and were now coming up separately, were ordered to halt at St. Palais in observation, relieving each other in succession as they arrived at that place.

On the morning of the 26th, Beresford, finding Foy had abandoned the works at Peyrehorade, passed the Gave, partly by a pontoon-bridge, partly by a ford where the current run so strong that a column of the seventh division was like to have been carried away bodily. He had previously detached the eighteenth hussars to find another ford higher up, and that being effected under the guidance of a miller, the hussars gained the high road, half-way between Peyrehorade and Orthes, and drove some French cavalry through Puyoo and Ramous.* They rallied on their reserves and beat back the foremost of the pursuers, but would not await the shock of the main body now reinforced by Vivian's brigade and commanded by Beresford in person. In this affair Major Sewell, an officer of the staff who had frequently distinguished himself by his personal prowess, happening to be without a sword, pulled a large stake from a hedge and with that weapon overthrew two hussars in succession, and only relinquished the combat when a third had cut his club in twain.

Beresford now threw out a detachment to Habas on his left, to

* Notes by Colonel Hughes, eighteenth Hussars, MSS.

intercept the enemy's communication with Dax; and Wellington at the same time caused Lord Edward Somerset's cavalry and the third division to cross the Gave by fords below the broken bridge of Berenx. Then directing Beresford to take a position for the night on some heights near the village of Baights he proceeded to cast a pontoon-bridge at Berenx, and thus after a circuitous march of more than fifty miles his right wing was again united with his centre and a direct communication with Hope secured. During the 25th and 26th he had carefully examined Soult's position. He found the ancient and beautiful bridge of Orthes, consisting of several arches, could not be easily forced, because of a tower in the centre the gateway of which was built up. The principal arch in front of this tower was mined, the houses on both sides occupied, and the river near the bridge was deep and full of pointed rocks. Above the town however it spread wide with flat banks, presenting means for crossing, and the first design was to do so with Hill's troops and the light division; but when it became known that Beresford had crossed the Gave below, the third division passed at Berenx and the bridge was laid there. This operation was covered by Beresford, while Soult's attention was diverted by the continual skirmish at the suburbs of Orthes, by the appearance of Hill's columns above, and by Wellington's taking cognizance of the position near the bridge so openly as to draw a cannonade. It was not however thought that Soult, when he found Beresford and Picton over the Gave, would await a battle, and the emissaries said he was already in retreat; a circumstance to be borne in mind because the next day's operation required success to justify it.

Hope's happy passage of the Adour being now reported, he was directed to establish a line of communication to the port of Landes, where a permanent bridge was to be formed with boats brought up from Urt. A direct line of intercourse would thus be secured with the army at Bayonne; yet Wellington felt he was pushing his operations beyond his intrinsic strength if Suchet should send reinforcements to Soult; wherefore he directed Freyre to cross the Adour below Bayonne with two Spanish divisions and a brigade of Portuguese nine-pounders, and join him by the port of Landes. O'Donnell's Andalusians and the prince of Anglona's troops were also warned to be in readiness to enter France, but these orders were given with the greatest reluctance. The feeble resistance made by the French in the difficult country already passed, left him without much uneasiness as to the power of Soult's army in the field; but his disquietude was extreme about the danger of an insurgent warfare. "Maintain the strictest discipline, *without that we are lost,*" was his expression to Freyre; and he issued a pro

clamation authorizing the people of the districts he had overrun to arm themselves for the preservation of order under the direction of their mayors. He invited them to arrest all straggling soldiers and followers of the army, all plunderers and evil-doers, and convey them to head-quarters with proof of their crimes, promising to punish the culpable and pay for all damages; and he confirmed all the local authorities who chose to retain their offices, on the sole condition of having no political or military intercourse with the countries still possessed by the French army. Nor was this proclamation a dead letter. In the night of the 25th the inhabitants of a village, situated near the road leading from Sauveterre to Orthes, shot one English soldier dead and wounded a second who had come with others to plunder; the wounded man was hanged as an example; and an English colonel was compelled to quit the army for suffering his soldiers to destroy the municipal archives of a small town.

Soult had no thought of retreating. His previous retrograde movements had been effected with order, his army was concentrated with its front to the Gave; and every bridge, except the noble structure at Orthes, the ancient masonry of which resisted his mines, had been destroyed. One regiment of cavalry was detached on the right to watch the fords as far as Peyrehorade, three others with two battalions of infantry under Pierre Soult watched those between Orthes and Pau, and a body of horsemen and gens-d'armes covered the latter town from Morillo.* Two regiments of cavalry remained with the army, and the design was to fall upon the head of the first column which should cross the Gave; but the negligence of the officer stationed at Puyoo, who had suffered Vivian's hussars to pass on the 26th without opposition and without reporting the event, enabled Beresford to move in safety when otherwise he would have been assailed by at least two-thirds of the French army. It was not until three o'clock in the evening that Soult received intelligence of his march; the allied columns being then near Baigts on the right flank of the French army, and their scouts on the Dax road in its rear; at the same time the sixth and light divisions were seen descending by different roads from the heights beyond the river pointing towards Berenx.

In this crisis, the French marshal hesitated whether to fall upon Beresford and Picton, while the latter was still passing the river, or to take a defensive position. Finally, he decided upon the

* Official Report, MSS. Memoir by General Berton, MSS. *Canevas' de faits par General Keille et Colonel de la Chasse, MS.*

latter.* Wherefore, under cover of a skirmish near Baights, which his cavalry, coming from Puyoo, sustained against a body of infantry coming from the bridge of Berenx, he hastily threw D'Erlon's and Reille's divisions on a new line across the road from Peyrehorade. The right extended to the heights of San Boes, along which run the road from Orthes to Dax; and the line was prolonged by Clausel to Casteltarbe, a village close to the Gave. Having thus opposed a temporary front to Beresford, he made his dispositions to receive battle next morning, and brought Villatte's infantry and Pierre Soult's cavalry from the other side of Orthes through that town; it was this movement which led Wellington's emissaries to report that the army was retiring.

Soult's new line was on a ridge of hills, partly wooded, partly naked. An open rounded hill was in the centre, from whence one long narrow tongue was pushed out on the left, towards the high road of Peyrehorade, another on the right by St. Boës, towards the high church of Baights, the whole presenting a concave to the allies. The front was generally covered by a marshy ravine, broken by two short tongues jutting from the principal hill; behind which the road from Orthes to Dax run so far as the village of St. Boës, and thence along the ridge forming the right flank.

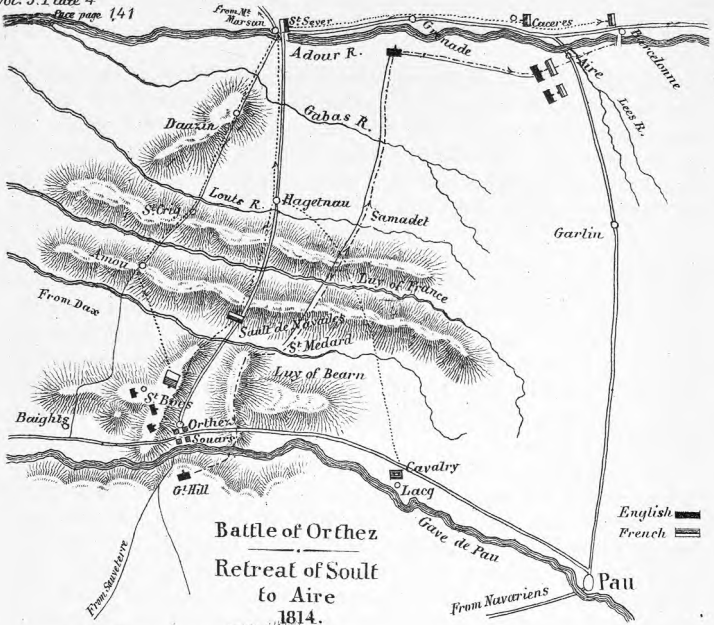
Behind the centre, a succession of undulating bare heathy hills trended for several miles to the rear; but behind the right, the country was low and deep. The town of Orthes, receding from the river up the slope of a steep hill, and terminating with an ancient tower, was behind the left wing.

Reille, having Taupin, Roguet and Paris under him, commanded on the right, and occupied all the ground from the village of St. Boës to the centre of the position. D'Erlon, having Foy and D'Armagnac, was on the left of Reille. He placed the first along a ridge extending towards the road of Peyrehorade, the second in reserve. In rear of this last, Villatte's division and the cavalry were posted above the village of Rontun;† that is to say, on the open hills behind the main position; in this situation, his right overlooking the low country beyond St. Boës, his left extended towards Orthes, he furnished a reserve to D'Erlon and Reille.

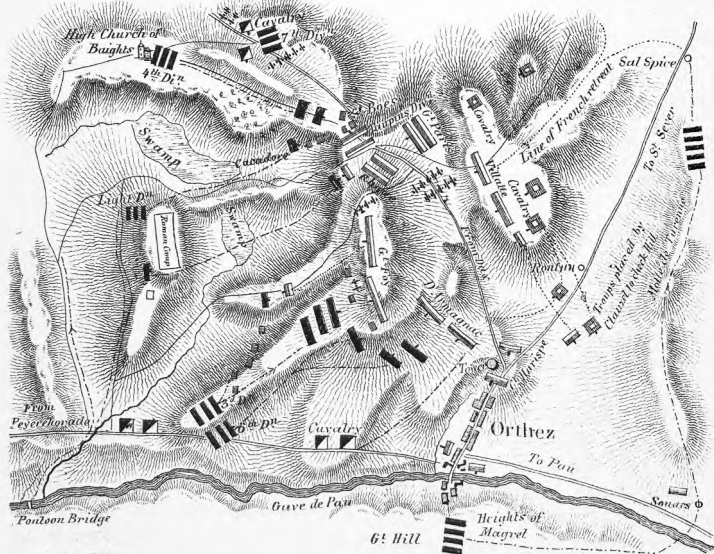
Harispe and Villatte were under Clausel, who occupied Orthes and the bridge, having a regiment near the ford of Souars above the town. Thus the French army extended from St. Boës to Orthes, but the great mass was disposed towards the centre. Twelve guns were attached to Harispe's troops, and twelve were on the round hill in the centre, sweeping in their range the ground beyond St. Boës; sixteen were in reserve on the Dax road.

* Soult's Official Report, MSS.

† Soult's MSS.



Battle of Orthez
Retreat of Soult
to Aire
1814.



Drawn by G. Nagler

On the 27th. at daybreak, the sixth and light divisions passed the Gave near Berenx, by the pontoon-bridge thrown in the night, and wound up a narrow way between high rocks to the great road of Peyrehorade. The third division and Lord Edward Somerset's cavalry were already established there in columns of march, having skirmishers pushed forwards to the edge of the wooded height occupied by D'Erlon's left. Beresford, with the fourth and seventh divisions and Vivian's cavalry, had then gained the ridge of St. Boës, and approached the Dax road beyond. Hill remained with the second British division and Le Cor's Portuguese, menacing the bridge of Orthes and the ford of Souars. Between Beresford and Picton, a distance of a mile and a half, there were no troops; but half-way, exactly in front of the French centre, was a Roman camp, crowning an isolated peering hill nearly as lofty as the centre of Soult's position.

On this camp, now covered with vineyards, but then open and grassy with a few trees, Wellington, after viewing the country on Beresford's left, stopped for an hour or more to examine the enemy's disposition for battle. During this time, the two divisions were coming up from the river, but so hemmed in by rocks that only a few men could march abreast; and their point of union with the third division was little more than cannon-shot from the enemy. Picton did not conceal his disquietude. Wellington, calm as the deepest sea, continued his observations without seeming to notice the dangerous position of his troops; and when they had reached the main road he reinforced Picton with the sixth, and drew the light division by cross roads behind the Roman camp, thus connecting his wings and forming a central reserve. From this point, by-ways led: one on the left to the high church of Baïghts and the Dax road, another on the right to the Peyrehorade road, and two went straight across the marsh to the French position.

This marsh, the open hill about which Soult's guns and reserves were principally gathered, the nature of the ridges on the flanks, all combined to forbid an attack in front, and the flanks were scarcely more promising. The extremity of the French left sunk, indeed, to a gentle undulation in crossing the Peyrehorade road; yet it would have been useless to push troops on that line towards Orthes, between D'Erlon and Casteltarbe; for the town was strongly occupied by Harispe, and was covered by an ancient wall and the bed of a torrent. It was equally difficult to turn the St. Boës flank, as the troops would have to enter the low marshy country beyond the Dax road; and the hills trending backwards from the centre of the French position would have enabled Soult to oppose a new and formidable front at right angles to his actual

position. The allied army must therefore have made a circuitous flank movement in mass, within gun-shot, through a difficult country, or Beresford's left must have been dangerously extended, and the whole line weakened. Nor could the movement be hidden, because the hills, although only moderately high, were abrupt on that side, affording a full view of the low country, and Soult's cavalry detachments were in observation on every brow.

It only remained to assail the French flanks along the ridges, making the principal efforts on the side of St. Boës, with intent to overlap the French right beyond, and seize the road of St. Sever, while Hill passed the Gave at Souars, and cut off the road to Pau, thus enclosing the beaten army in Orthes. This was no slight affair. On Picton's side, it was easy to obtain a footing on the flank ridge near the high road; but beyond that, the ground rose rapidly, and the French were gathered thickly with a narrow front and plenty of guns. On Beresford's side, they could only be assailed along the summit of the St. Boës ridge, advancing from the high church of Baights and the Dax road. But the village of St. Boës was strongly occupied, the ground immediately behind it strangled to a narrow pass by the ravine; and the French reserve of sixteen guns, placed on the Dax road, behind the centre of Soult's line, and well covered from counter-fire, was in readiness to crush the head of any column which should emerge from the gorge of St. Boës.

BATTLE OF ORTHES.

During the whole morning, a slight skirmish, with now and then a cannon-shot, had been going on with the third division on the right, and the French cavalry, at times, pushed parties forward on each flank; but at nine o'clock Wellington commenced the real attack. The third and sixth divisions won without difficulty the lower part of the ridges opposed to them, and endeavored to extend their left along the French front, with a sharp fire of musketry; yet the main battle was on the other flank. There Cole, keeping Anson's brigade of the fourth division in reserve, assailed St. Boës with Ross's British brigade and Vasconcellos' Portuguese; his object was to get on to the open ground behind it, but fierce and slaughtering was the struggle: five times breaking through the scattered houses did Ross carry his battle into the wider space beyond; yet ever as the troops issued forth, the French guns from the open hill smote them in front, and the reserved battery on the Dax road swept through them with grape from flank to flank. And then Taupin's supporting masses rushed forward with a wa-ting fire, and lapping the flanks with skirmishers, which poured along the

ravines on either hand, forced the shattered columns back into the village; it was in vain that with desperate valor the allies, time after time, broke through the narrow way, and struggled to spread a frond beyond; Ross fell dangerously wounded, and Taupin, whose troops were clustered thickly and well supported, defied every effort. Nor was Soult less happy on the other side. The nature of the ground would not permit the third and sixth divisions to engage many men at once, so that no progress was made; and one small detachment, which Picton extended to his left, having made an attempt to gain the smaller tongue jutting out from the central hill, was suddenly charged as it neared the summit by Foy, and driven down in confusion, losing several prisoners.

When the combat had thus continued on the side of St. Boës for three hours, Wellington sent a çaçadore regiment of the light division from the Roman camp to protect the right flank of Ross's brigade against the French skirmishers; but this was of no avail; for Vasconcellos' Portuguese, unable to sustain the violence of the enemy any longer, gave way in disorder; the French then poured on, and the British troops retreated through St. Boës with difficulty. This happened just as the detachment on Picton's left was repulsed, and victory seemed to declare for the French. Soult, who stood on the round open hill, which was the knot of his position, seeing his enemies broken and rolled back on each side, put all his reserves in movement to complete the success; and it is said, that in the exultation of the moment, he smote his thigh exclaiming: "*At last I have him.*" Whether this be so or not, it was no vain-glorious speech, for his battle was then very strong. There was however a small black cloud rising just beneath him. Amidst the thundering din and tumult that shook the field it was at first unheeded, but soon burst with irresistible violence.

Wellington, seeing St. Boës was inexpugnable, had suddenly changed his plan of battle. Supporting Ross with Anson's brigade, which had not hitherto been engaged, he backed both with the seventh division and Vivian's cavalry, now forming one heavy body towards the Dax road. Then he ordered the third and sixth divisions to be thrown in mass upon Foy's left flank, and sent the fifty-second regiment down from the Roman camp with instructions to cross the marsh in front, mount the French ridge, and fall on the flank and rear of the troops engaged with the fourth division at St. Boës. This was the cloud. Colborne, so often mentioned, led the fifty-second across the marsh under fire, the men sinking at every step above the knees, in some places to the middle, yet still pressing forward with that stern resolution and order to be expected from the veterans of the light division, soldiers who had

never yet met their match in the field. They soon obtained firm footing, and ascended the heights in line at the moment when Taupin was pushing vigorously through St. Boës; and when Foy and D'Armagnac, hitherto more than masters of their positions, were being assailed on the other flank by the third and sixth divisions. With a mighty shout and a rolling fire, the fifty-second soldiers dashed forwards between Foy and Taupin, beating down a French battalion in their course, and throwing everything before them into disorder. General Bechaud was killed; Foy dangerously wounded; and his troops, discouraged by his fall and by this sudden burst from a quarter where no enemy was expected, for the march of the fifty-second had been hardly perceived, save by the skirmishers, got into confusion;* the disorder then spreading to Reille's wing, he also was forced to fall back and take a new position to restore his line of battle. The narrow pass behind St. Boës was thus opened, and Wellington seized the moment to thrust the fourth and seventh divisions, Vivian's cavalry, and two batteries of artillery through, and spread a front beyond.

Meanwhile the third and sixth divisions won D'Armagnac's position and established a battery of guns on a knoll, from whence their shot ploughed through the French masses from one flank to another. Suddenly a squadron of French chasseurs came at a hard gallop down the main road of Orthes to charge these guns, and sweeping to their right rode over some of the sixth division which had advanced too far; but this charge was pushed madly, they got into a hollow lane and were nearly all destroyed. The third and seventh divisions then continued to advance and the wings of the army were united. Soult rallied his forces on the open hills beyond the Dax road; and with Taupin's, Roguet's, Paris', and D'Armagnac's divisions made strong battle to cover the re-formation of Foy's troops. His foes were however not all in front, this part of the battle was fought with only two-thirds of the allied army. Hill had remained with twelve thousand combatants, cavalry and infantry, before the bridge of Orthes; and when the first plan of attack was changed had orders to force the passage of the Gave, partly to prevent Harispe falling upon the flank of the sixth division, partly in hope of a successful issue: the last happened. Although unable to force the bridge he forded the river above at Souars, drove back the troops posted there, seized the heights above, cut off the French from the road to Pau, and turned the town of Orthes. He thus menaced Soult's line of retreat by Salespice on the road to St. Sever, at the moment when the junction of the allies' wings was effected on the French position.

* Soult's MSS.

Clausel ordered Harispe to abandon Orthes and close towards Villatte on the heights above Rontun, leaving however some conscript battalions on a rising point beyond the road of St. Sever called the "*Motte de Turenne*." Then he endeavored to keep Hill in check by the menacing action of two cavalry regiments and a brigade of infantry; but Soult arrived at the moment and seeing the loss of Souars had rendered his whole position untenable, gave orders for a general retreat. This was a perilous matter. The heathy hills upon which he was now fighting, although for a short distance they furnished a succession of parallel positions favorable enough for defence, soon resolved themselves into a low ridge running to the rear on a line parallel with the road of St. Sever; and on the opposite side of that road, about cannon-shot distance, was a corresponding ridge along which Hill, judging by the firing how matters went, was now rapidly advancing. Five miles distant was the *Luy de Bearn*, and four miles beyond that the *Luy de France*, two rivers deep and with difficult banks; and behind these the Lutz, the Gabas, and the Adour crossed the line.

Once over the wooden bridge of the Sault de Navailles on the *Luy de Bearn*, those streams would cover the retreat; but to carry off by one road and one bridge a defeated army still closely engaged in front seemed impossible. Nevertheless Soult did so. Paris sustained the fight on his right until Foy and Taupin's troops rallied; and when the impetuous assault of the fifty-second and the rush of the fourth and seventh divisions drove Paris back, D'Armagnac interposed to cover him until the union of the allies' wings was completed; then both retiring were covered in turn by Villatte. In this manner the French yielded step by step and without confusion, the allies advancing with an incessant deafening musketry and cannonade, yet losing many men especially on the right where the third division were very strongly opposed. But as the danger of being cut off at Salespice by Hill became more imminent the retrograde movements were more hurried and confused, and Hill seeing this, quickened his pace; at last both sides began to run violently, and so many men broke from the French ranks making across the fields towards the fords, and such a rush was necessarily made by the rest to gain the bridge of Sault de Navailles, that the whole country was covered with scattered bands. Then Cotton broke with Lord Edward Somerset's cavalry through a small covering body opposed to him by Harispe and sabred two or three hundred men; and the seventh hussars cut off two thousand, who threw down their arms in an enclosed field, yet some mismanagement occurred and the greatest part recovering their weapons, escaped.

The pursuit ceased at Luy de Bearn, and the French army appeared to be entirely dispersed; but it was more disordered in appearance than reality; for Soult passed the Luy de Bearn and destroyed the bridge with the loss of only six guns and less than four thousand men killed, wounded and prisoners. Many thousands of conscripts however threw away their arms, and one month afterwards the stragglers amounted to three thousand; nor would the passage of the river have been effected so happily if Wellington had not been struck by a musket-ball just above the thigh, which caused him to ride with difficulty, whereby the vigor and unity of the pursuit was necessarily abated. The loss of the allies was two thousand three hundred, fifty being taken with three officers. Among the wounded were Wellington, Walker, Ross, and the Duke of Richmond, then called Lord March. The last had served on Wellington's staff during the whole war without a hurt, but being made a captain in the fifty-second, like a good soldier joined his regiment the night before the battle; shot through the chest a few hours afterwards, he learned by experience the difference between the labors and dangers of staff and regimental officers, which are generally in the inverse ratio to their promotions.

Berton's cavalry, stationed between Pau and Orthes during the battle, had been cut off by Hill's movement; yet skirting that general's march they retreated by Mant and Samadet, picking up two battalions of conscripts on the road;* while Soult, having no position to rally on, continued his retreat at night to St. Sever, breaking down all the bridges behind him. Wellington pursued at daylight in three columns, the right by Lacadée and St. Medard to Samadet, the centre by the main road, the left by St. Cricq. At St. Sever he hoped to find the enemy still in confusion, but he was too late; the French were across the river, the bridge was broken, and the army halted. The result of the battle was however soon made known far and wide. Daricau who with a few hundred soldiers was endeavoring to form an insurgent levy at Dax, the works of which were incomplete and still unarmed, immediately destroyed all the stores not removed to Mont Marsan, and retreated through the Landes to Langon on the Garonne. St. Sever offered no position, and Soult turning short to the right moved upon Barcelonne higher up the Adour; but he left D'Erlon with two divisions of infantry, some cavalry and four guns at Caceres on the right bank, and sent Clausel to occupy Aire on the other side of the river. He thus abandoned his magazines at Mont Marsan and left open the direct road to Bordeaux; but holding Caceres with his right he commanded another road by

* Memoir by General Berton, MSS.

Rocquefort to that city; while his left, being at Aire, protected the magazines and artillery parc at that place and covered the road to Pau. The main body at Barcelonne equally supported Clausel and D'Erlon, and covered the great roads leading to Agen and Toulouse on the Garonne, and to the mountains by Tarbes.

In this situation it was difficult to judge what line of operations he meant to adopt. Wellington however passed the Adour about one o'clock, partly by the repaired bridge of St. Sever, partly by a deep ford below, and immediately detached Beresford with the light division and Vivian's cavalry to seize the magazines at Mont Marsan; at the same time he pushed the head of a column towards Caceres, where a cannonade and charge of cavalry had place and a few men and officers were hurt on both sides. Next day Hill, marching from Samadet, reached the Adour between St. Sever and Aire, and D'Erlon was again assailed on the right bank and driven back skirmishing to Barcelonne. This event proved that Soult had relinquished Bordeaux; yet the pursuit could not be pushed more vigorously, because every bridge was broken; and a violent storm on the evening of the 1st had filled the smaller rivers and torrents, carried away the pontoon-bridges, and cut off all communication between the troops and their supplies.

On the right bank of the Adour the main body halted until the bridges could be repaired, but Hill who was on the left bank marched to seize the magazines at Aire. Moving in two columns from St. Savin and St. Gillies on the 2d, he reached his destination about three o'clock with two divisions of infantry, a brigade of cavalry, and a battery of horse-artillery; he expected no serious opposition; but Clausel had arrived a few hours before, and was in order of battle, covering the town with Villatte's and Harispe's divisions and some guns. The French occupied a steep ridge in front of Aire, high and wooded on the right where it overlooked the river, yet merging on the left into a wide table-land over which the great road led to Pau. Strong for battle was this position, yet it could be readily outflanked on their left by the table-land, and was uneasy for retreat on the right, for the ridge was narrow, the ravine behind steep and rugged with a mill-stream at the bottom; a branch of the Adour also flowed behind Aire and cut it off from Barcelonne, while behind the left wing was the greater Lees, a river with steep banks and only one bridge.

COMBAT OF AIRE.

Hill attacked without hesitation. William Stewart with two British brigades fell on the French right, a Portuguese brigade assailed their centre, and the other brigades followed in columns

of march; but the action was very sudden. the Portuguese were pushed forward in a slovenly manner by Da Costa, a man of no ability, and Harispe met them on the flat summit of the height with so rough a charge, that they gave way in flight. The rear of the allies being still in march, the battle was like to be lost, when Stewart, having by this time won the heights on the French right, where Villatte, fearing to be enclosed, made but a feeble resistance, immediately detached Barnes with the fiftieth and ninety-second regiments to the aid of the Portuguese. The vehement charge of these troops turned the stream of fight, the French were broken in turn, and thrown back on their reserves; yet they rallied with great courage, fighting obstinately until Byng's British brigade came up; then Harispe was driven towards the river Lees, and Villatte quite through the town of Aire into the space between the two branches of the Adour behind.

Reille, who was at Barcelonne when the action began, brought up Roguet's division to support Villatte, and the combat was continued until night at that point, while Harispe crossed the Lees and broke the bridge, but the French lost many men. Two generals, Dature and Gasquet, were wounded, a colonel of engineers was killed, a hundred prisoners were taken; many of Harispe's conscripts threw away their arms and fled to their homes, and the magazines fell into the conqueror's hands. The loss of the British was one hundred and fifty, Barnes was wounded, and Colonel Hood killed; the loss of the Portuguese was never stated, yet it could not have been less than the British, and the vigor of the action proved the French courage to be little abated by the battle of Orthes. Soult immediately retreated up the Adour by both banks towards Maubourget and Marciac, and he was not followed, for new combinations were now opened on both sides.

OBSERVATIONS.

1. On the 14th of February, the passage of the Gaves was commenced by Hill's attack on Harispe at Hellette. On the 2d of March, the first series of operations was terminated by the combat at Aire. In these sixteen days, Wellington traversed with his right wing eighty miles, passed five large and several small rivers, forced the enemy to abandon two fortified bridge-heads and many minor works, gained one great battle and two combats, captured six guns and a thousand prisoners, seized the magazines at Dax, Mont Marsan, and Aire, forced Soult to abandon Bayonne, and also cut him off from Bordeaux. And in this time he threw his stupendous bridge below Bayonne, and closely invested that fortress after a sharp and bloody action. Success in war, like charity in

religion, covers a multitude of sins ; but success often belongs to fortune as much as skill ; and the combinations of Wellington, profound and sagacious, might, in this manner, be confounded with the lucky operations of the allies on the other side of France, where the presumption and the vacillation of ignorance alternately predominated.

2. Soult attributed the loss of his positions to the action of superior forces. Is this well founded? His own numbers cannot be determined exactly ; but, after all his losses in December, after the detachments made by the emperor's order in January, and after completing the garrison of Bayonne to fourteen thousand men, he informed the minister of war that thirty thousand infantry, three thousand cavalry and forty pieces of artillery were in line.* This did not include the conscripts of the new levy ; all youths, indeed, and hastily sent to the army by battalions as they could be armed, yet brave ; and eight thousand of them might have joined before the battle of Orthes. Wherefore, deducting the detachments of cavalry and infantry under Berton on the side of Pau, and under Daricau on the side of Dax, it may be said that forty thousand combatants of all arms were engaged in the battle. Thirty-five thousand were very excellent soldiers ; the conscripts of the old levy, who joined before the battle of the Nivelle, were stout men, and their vigorous fighting at Garris and Aire proved it ; for of them was Harispe's division composed. Wellington's force is known. He commenced operations with the second, third, fourth and seventh British divisions, the independent Portuguese division of Le Cor, Morillo's Spaniards, and forty-eight pieces of artillery ; but with only four brigades of horse, for Vandeleur remained with Hope and all the heavy cavalry and the Portuguese were left in Spain. Following the morning states of the army, this would furnish, exclusive of Morillo's Spaniards, something more than forty thousand fighting men of all arms, four thousand being horsemen. But five regiments of infantry, and amongst them two of the strongest British regiments of the light division, were absent to receive their clothing ; deduct these, and thirty-seven thousand Anglo-Portuguese combatants remain. It is true that Mina and Morillo aided in the commencement of the operations ; but the first immediately invested St. Jean Pied de Port and the latter invested Navarrens. Wellington was therefore in the battle superior by a thousand horsemen and eight guns ; but Soult outnumbered him in infantry by four or five thousand, conscripts it is true, yet useful. Why then was the passage of the Gaves so feebly dis-

* Official Correspondence, MSS.

puted? Because the French general remained entirely on the defensive in positions too extended for his numbers.

3. *Offensive operations must be the basis of a good defensive system.* Let Soult's operations be tried by this rule. On the 12th, he knew that the allies were in motion for some great operation, and he judged rightly that it was to drive him from the Gaves. From the 14th to the 18th, his left was continually assailed by very superior numbers; but during part of that time, Beresford could only oppose to his right and centre the fourth and a portion of the seventh divisions, with some cavalry; and those not in a body and at once, but parcelled and extended, for it was not until the 16th that the fourth, seventh and light divisions were able to act in mass. On the 15th, Wellington's troops were too extended, Villatte's, Taupin's, and Foy's divisions were never menaced until the 18th; and there was nothing to prevent D'Erlon's divisions, which only crossed the Adour on the 17th, from being on the Bidouze on the 15th. Soult might, therefore, by well digested combinations, have united four divisions of infantry and a brigade of cavalry to attack Beresford, on the 15th or 16th, between the Nive and the Adour. If successful, the defeated troops, pushed back upon the sixth division, must have fought for life, with the rivers on their flanks, Soult in front, and the garrison of Bayonne issuing from the works of Mousserolles on their rear; if unsuccessful, the French retreat behind the Gave of Oleron could not have been prevented.

Soult was, however, not exactly informed of the numbers and situation of his opponents.* He thought Beresford had the first division also on the lower Bidouze; he knew Wellington had large reserves to employ; and the design of passing the Adour below Bayonne being unknown to him, he naturally supposed they would be used to support the operations on the Gaves, he therefore remained on the defensive. It might possibly also have been difficult to bring D'Erlon across the Adour by the Port de Landes before the 17th, because the regular bridge had been carried away, and the communications interrupted a few days before by the floods. In fine, there are many matters of detail in war, known only to a general-in-chief, which forbid the best combinations, and this it is that makes the art so difficult and uncertain. Great captains worship fortune.

4. On the 24th, the passage of the Gave of Oleron was effected; Soult, then, recognized his error, and concentrated his troops at Orthes, to retake the offensive by a fine movement, and effected with ability; yet he suffered another favorable opportunity of giving a counter-blow to escape him. The infantry under Villatte, Ha-

* Soult's MSS.

rispe and Paris, supported by a brigade of cavalry, were about Sauveterre; that is to say, four miles from Montfort, and only seven from Villenave, where the principal passage was effected, where the ford was deep, the stream rapid, the left bank not entirely commanding the right. How then did it happen that the operation was effected without opposition? Amongst the allies, it was rumored that Soult complained of the negligence of a general who had orders to march against the passing troops; and the position of Harispe at Monstrueig, equidistant from Sauveterre and Villenave, would seem to have been adopted with that view; but there is no confirmation of the report in Soult's correspondence, and it is certain he thought Picton's demonstration at Sauveterre was a real attack.

5. The position adopted at Orthes was excellent for offence; it was not so for defence when Beresford and Picton had crossed the Gave below in force. Wellington could then throw his whole army on that side, and secure his communication with Hope; after which, out-flanking the right of the French, he could seize the defile of Sault de Navailles, cut them off from their magazines at Dax, Mont Marsan and Aire, and force them to retreat by the Pau road, leaving open the way to Bordeaux.* To await this attack was therefore an error; but Soult's original design was to assail the head of the first column which should come near him, and Beresford's approach to Baigts on the 26th furnished the opportunity. It is true, the French light cavalry gave intelligence of that general's march too late, and marred the combination; yet there was still time to fall on the head of the column while the third division was in the act of passing the river and entangled in the narrow way leading from the ford to the Peyrehorade road; it is said Soult appeared disposed to do this at first, but finally took a defensive position, in which to receive battle.† And when morning came, he neglected another opportunity. For two hours, the third division and the hussars were close to him, covering the march of the sixth and light divisions through the narrow ways leading from the bridge of Berenx up to the main road; the infantry had no defined position, the cavalry had no room to extend; and there were no troops between them and Beresford, who was then in march by the heights of Baigts to the Dax road. If Soult had pushed a column across the marsh to seize the Roman camp, he would have separated the wings of the allies; and then by pouring down the Peyrehorade road with Foy's, D'Armagnac's and Villatte's divisions, he would probably have overwhelmed the third

* Official Correspondence, MSS.

† Notes by General Keille and Colonel de la Chasse, MSS.

division before the other two could have extricated themselves from the defiles. Picton therefore had grounds for uneasiness, but he showed it too openly.

6. With a subtle skill did Soult take his ground of battle at Orthes; fiercely and strongly did he fight, and wonderfully did he effect his retreat across the Luy of Bearn; but twice in twenty-four hours he neglected those happy occasions which, in war, take birth and flight at the same instant; and as the value of his position, essentially an offensive one, was thereby lost, a slowness to strike may be objected to his generalship. Yet, there is no commander, unless a Hannibal or a Napoleon, surpassing human proportions, but will abate something of his confidence, and hesitate after repeated defeats. Soult, in this campaign as in many others, proved himself a hardy captain, full of resources. Wellington, with a vastness of conception and a capacity for arrangement and combination equal to his opponent, possessed in a high degree that daring promptness of action, that faculty of inspiration for suddenly deciding the fate of whole campaigns with which Napoleon was endowed beyond all mankind. It is this which especially constitutes military genius. For so vast, so complicated are the combinations of war, so easily and by such slight causes are they affected, that the best generals do but grope in the dark, and they acknowledge the humiliating truth. By the number and extent of their fine dispositions then, and not by their errors, the merit of commanders is to be measured.

7. Wellington designed to force Soult over the Garonne and if possible upon Bordeaux; because it was the direct line, the citizens inimical to the emperor, and the town, lying on the left bank of the river, not to be defended; because a junction with Suchet would thus be prevented; and if he could throw the French into the Landes, where his own superior cavalry could act, they would probably be destroyed. To operate against Soult's left towards Pau was the obvious method of preventing a junction with Suchet, and rendering the fortified positions on the Gaves useless. But the investment of Bayonne required a large force, which was yet weak against an outer attack, because separated in three parts by the rivers; hence a wide movement on Pau would have let Soult place the Adour between himself and Wellington, while he fell upon Hope. This rendered it necessary to cross all the Gaves on a contracted line of operations, and to collect the principal mass of troops on the right by the help of the great road leading to St. Jean Pied de Port. Rapid marches and reiterated attacks then forced the passage of the rivers above the points which Soult had fortified for defence, and so turned that general's left with the view

of finally cutting him off from Suchet, and driving him into the wilderness of the Landes. During these marches, Beresford remained on the lower parts of the rivers to occupy the enemy's attention, and cover the troops blockading Mousseroles; and, by collecting boats at Urt, and other demonstrations, indicating a design of throwing a bridge over the Adour above Bayonne, diverted attention from the point chosen below the fortress for that operation; and at the same time he provided the means of throwing another bridge at the Port de Landes, to secure the communication with Hope by the right bank, whenever Soult should be forced to abandon the Gaves. These were fine combinations.

8. It has been shown Beresford was so weak at first that Soult might have struck a counter-blow. Wellington admitted the error. Writing on the 15th, he says: "If the enemy stand upon the Bidouze, I am not so strong as I ought to be;" and he ordered up the fourth and light divisions; yet, this excepted, his movements were conformable to the principles of war. He chose the best strategic line of operations, his main attack was made with heavy masses against the enemy's weakest points, and in execution he was prompt and daring. His conduct was conformable also to his peculiar situation. He had two distinct operations in hand, namely, to throw his bridge below Bayonne and to force the Gaves. He had the numbers required to obtain these objects, but dared not use them, lest he should bring the Spanish troops in collision with the French people; yet he could not entirely dispense with them, and therefore brought Freyre up to Bayonne, Morillo to Navarrens, and Mina to St. Jean Pied de Port; thus seeming to put his whole army in motion, and gaining the appearance of military strength with as little political danger as possible. Nevertheless, so terrible had the Spaniards already made themselves by their cruel, lawless habits, that their mere return across the frontier threw the whole country into consternation.

9. When in front of Orthes, it would at first sight appear as if Wellington had changed his plan of driving the enemy upon the Landes: but it was not so; he did not expect a battle on the 27th. This is proved by his letter to Hope, in which he tells him he anticipated no difficulty in passing the Gave of Pau; that on the evening of the 26th, the enemy were retiring; and that he designed to visit the position at Bayonne. To pass the Gave in the quickest and surest manner, to re-establish the direct communications with Hope, and unite with Beresford, were his immediate objects; if he finally worked by his left, it was a sudden act and extraneous to the general design, which was certainly to operate with Hill's corps and the light division by the right.

10. On the morning of the 27th, Wellington, after passing the Gave, first discovered Soult's intention to fight, and that he was himself in a false position. Had he shown any hesitation, any uneasiness, had he endeavored to take a defensive position with either Beresford's or Picton's troops, he would inevitably have drawn the attention of the enemy to his dangerous situation. Instead of this, judging Soult would not on the instant change from the defensive to the offensive, he confidently pushed Picton's skirmishers forward as if to assail the left of the French position, putting Beresford also in movement against their right; and this with all imaginable coolness. The success was complete. Soult, who supposed the allies stronger than they really were, naturally imagined the wings would not be so bold unless well supported in the centre, where the Roman camp could hide a multitude. He therefore held fast to his position until the movement was more developed, and in two hours the sixth and light divisions were up, and the battle commenced. It was well fought on both sides, but the crisis was decided by the fifty-second; and when that regiment was put in movement, only a single Portuguese battalion was in reserve behind the Roman camp: upon such nice combinations of time and place does the fate of battles turn.

11. Soult should not have accepted battle at Orthes, and it has been said, Wellington's wound at the most critical period of the retreat alone saved the hostile army. Nevertheless, the clear manner in which the French got away, the prompt judgment shown in suddenly changing the line of retreat at St. Sever, the resolute manner in which fight was made at Caceres, Barcelonne, and Aire, were all proofs of great ability. It was Wellington's aim to drive the French on to the Landes, Soult's to avoid this, and he therefore shifted from the Bordeaux line to that of Toulouse, not in confusion, but with the resolution of a man ready to dispute every foot of ground.* The loss of the magazines at Mont Marsan was no fault of his; he had given orders for transporting them towards the Toulouse side fifteen days before, but the matter, depending upon the civil authorities, was neglected. He was blamed by some of his officers for fighting at Aire, yet it was necessary to cover the magazines there, and essential to his design of keeping up the courage of the soldiers under the adverse circumstances which he anticipated: here the palm of generalship remained with him, for the battle of Orthes was less decisive than it should have been. I speak not of the pursuit to Sault de Navailles, nor of the next day's march upon St. Sever, but of Hill's march on the right. That general halted near Samade the 28th, reached St. Savin on

* Soult's MSS.