whelmed by converging enemies. Foy was in the Upper Tagus valley, D'Armagac at Talavera, and the horsemen of Drouet were so near to Merida that they could easily intercept Sir Rowland's retreat. Wellington's wise devices were intended to divert any suspicion from his real intentions. Hill had 6000 men under his immediate command, and the covering forces under Graham and Sir William Erskine mustered about 20,000 more. Still, with all possible precautions and with good information as to the approaches, the enterprise seemed desperate enough. It must be said for Hill that in that critical emergency he faced the chances of failure like a hero. There could be no reproaching him then with shrinking from responsibility. He understood the vital importance of his instructions, and braced his resolution to act on them unflinchingly. On the 12th of May he crossed the Guadiana with a pontoon train and some heavy howitzers as well as a dozen of light field-pieces. Three days later he was at Jaraicejo, on the southern slope of the Sierra, where he made his final dispositions. The advance was in three columns, which were to cross the Sierra in the night, and open simultaneous attacks at daybreak. The left, moving forward by side paths, was to assail the castle of Mirabete. The centre, with the cavalry and artillery, was to follow the royal road; the right column, under Hill in person, advancing by paths even more difficult than those on the left, was to carry Fort Napoleon. Difficulties and obstructions more formidable than had been anticipated upset the combinations, and there was no surprise. On a nearer examination, Hill had realised that the defences of the pass were too strong to be stormed. Taking a bold resolution, he ordered Chowne, with the left column, to feign an attack; he decided to dispense with his artillery, and leading his own column against Fort Napoleon, to take the works there by escalade.

Towards dusk on the evening of the 16th he began the descent; but though the distance to the Tagus valley was only six miles, at dawn his rear was still entangled in the passes. While he was waiting for the stragglers to come up, Chowne delivered the attack on Mirabete. As for the French in Fort Napoleon, they were not unprepared; on the previous day they had information of the enemy's presence. Still they were startled by the roar of the guns and by the clouds of cannon smoke on the Sierra crest, wreathing up over the passage they deemed impregnable. While crowding the ramparts as eager spectators, their attention was diverted to matters more immediate. With ringing British cheers the head of the right column had broken from under cover, and came rushing across the intervening ground. The French had their muskets ready to their hands; the British were welcomed with withering discharges from cannon and small arms, while Fort Ragusa responded to the cannon of Fort Napoleon with a heavy flanking fire. All failed to check the rush of our soldiers, though even when they had swarmed down into the ditch and set up the ladders there was a *contretemps* that must have stopped less determined men. Nothing shows the difficulties of the undertaking more forcibly than the fact that the scaling ladders had been sawn in halves in order that they might turn the corners of the precipitous paths. Too short for their purpose, they only reached to beneath the projecting ledge of the parapet. The assailants managed to scramble over and make good a footing; then the fury of the assault became irresistible, and in fierce hand-to-hand fighting its defenders were driven out of the redoubt. The guns of Fort Ragusa were silenced, for they could not fire upon that mixed mob of friends and enemies. The fugitives rushed for the *tête-de-pont*, but there again the pursuers entered with them. In the headlong flight across the bridge some of the pontoons broke from their moorings, and many of the fugitives perished in the water. The guns of Fort Napoleon were turned on Ragusa, and, what was rare in the war, a Frenchman entrusted with an important post lost his head and showed the white feather. The Commandant, with his garrison, joined the rout, and so nearly did the fate of these fortifications tremble in the balance that he actually met reinforcements coming up from Naval Moral. Hill had intended to bring forward his heavy artillery and breach the walls of the Castle of Mirabete, but a false report from Erskine that Soult in person was in Estremadura, induced him to change his plan and withdraw to Merida. Yet his success had been virtually complete, although Lord Wellington was much annoyed that he had not been left to put the finishing touch to his operations. Mirabete was cut off by the demolition of the bridge, although its little garrison was subsequently relieved. And before retiring, Hill destroyed the works on the river, blew up the magazines and burned the stores. Thenceforth Marmont could only communicate with Drouet and Soult by the circuitous route of Toledo; whereas by restoring the bridge of Alcantara, Wellington shortened his own communications, enabling his right wing to communicate with his main army in almost a direct inner line. Moreover, by crossing or re-crossing the Tagus at pleasure, Hill was in a position to mystify Drouet, and consequently Soult. That restoring or rather the patching up of the superb bridge, which had been blown up to the mutual disadvantage of the belligerents, was one of the most ingenious feats of rough-and-ready military engineering. The credit was due to Colonel Sturgeon. The problem was to span a gap 90 feet in width at a height of 150 feet above the river, and to make it practicable for the passage of heavy artillery. In the arsenals of Elvas he arranged a network of strong cable, plaited in sections so as to be capable of easy transport. Cables were stretched across the abyss and secured to beams riveted in the masonry. On those hempen girders the network rested, over all was laid a flooring of planks, and the guns were drawn across without an accident.

Wellington's initial purpose had been the isolation of Marmont, and that isolation had been secured. He was favoured by the political condition of Spain and by the jealousies that prevailed among the French in high places. Marmont could hope for little from the army of the north. The activity of the guerrillas from Navarre to Biscay, the presence of flying English squadrons off the coast and demonstrations from Gallicia which he could not estimate, kept Bonnet's weakened army fully occupied, compelling him, in especial, to guard the Gallician passes into Leon. In the early spring Joseph had been appointed commander of all the armies in Spain ; and the central army, which had its headquarters in the capital, was immediately under him. But the generals, doing each what seemed right in his own eyes, and looking exclusively to his own interests, paid little heed to the royal orders when they did not positively disobey. Joseph might and ought to have strengthened Marmont, when he must have suspected that the Castilles were the object of attack. But he trembled not without reason for himself and for his hold on the capital. Madrid was mined with explosive combustibles ; a spark might fire them at any moment, and he was troubled on every side by the guerrillas swarming in the mountains. Drouet's connecting corps was the pivot of the three armies, and Joseph did order Drouet to cross the Tagus and carefully observe the movements of Hill. It would have at once brought that general nearer to Madrid, and enabled him in case of need to support Marmont. Drouet was willing to obey, for he hated Soult; but when he had actually commenced his northward march, that marshal took practical measures to compel him to retrace his steps. Probably, from any point of view, Soult's dispositions were the wiser, for Drouet, when recalled to threaten Portugal and the flank of the allied advance, could still give Marmont indirect but effective assistance. Moreover, Soult seems to have believed to the last that Wellington held to his original plan and contemplated the invasion of Soult's own province, and Wellington, being aware of that false impression, did all in his power to confirm him in it.

So, thanks to skilful strategy and shrewd diplomacy, Marmont and Wellington were face to face on the eve of a campaign of which both appreciated the supreme importance. The adversaries were not unequally matched. Inferior in genius and flexible decision to Wellington, the French Marshal was no mean master of the art of war, and he seldom showed more strategical science than in the manœuvres which ended in his defeat at Salamanca. The armies were nearly equal in numbers. Marmont had 52,000 men, and although Wellington's strength was somewhat greater, about two-fifths of his army were Portuguese. It was universally admitted that the Portuguese fought well, nevertheless they could not be relied upon like the British. But one most gratuitous difficulty was thrown in Wellington's way. Again, when the ministry at home were squandering subsidies on the juntas, his military chest was as empty as that of Moore when Moore marched upon Sahagun, or as his own when he fought the battle of Talavera. He must buy meat, as he insisted, for his soldiers in Spain with ready money. Of money he had next to none, and the Treasury would not even back his bills. As he wrote to the Premier in emphatic words, 'I cannot think without shuddering upon the probability that we shall be distressed; nor upon the consequences which may result from our wanting money in the interior of Spain.'

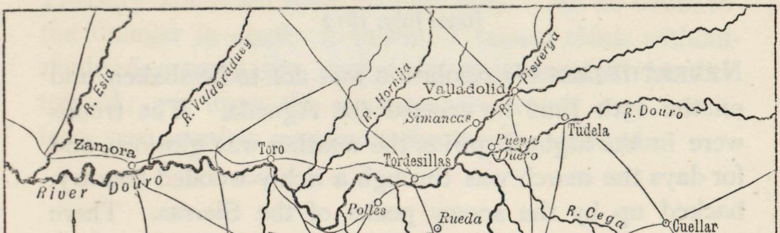
CHAPTER XIII

CAMPAIGN OF SALAMANCA

June, July, 1812

NEVERTHELESS his resolution was not to be shaken, and on the 13th June he crossed the Agueda. The troops were in the highest spirits, the weather was glorious, and for days the march was through a richly-wooded country, backed up by the snowy peaks of the Sierras. There was no sign of an enemy till at last the German horse who headed the advance came upon one of the French pickets. Then the hostile cavalry showed in some force, careering over the plain and hovering along the heights on either flank. Sundry sharp skirmishes ensued. With evening the enemy withdrew behind the Tormes, and the allies lit their bivouac fires in front of Salamanca, with its piles of ecclesiastical buildings hanging over the shallow river, all crowned by the great dome of the cathedral. Marmont had evacuated the city on the preceding day, retreating towards Fuente el Sauco.

No city had suffered like Salamanca from the French occupation. Even more than Zaragoza, the venerable seat of learning was an agglomeration of massive convents, churches and colleges capable of indefinite defence. The French had never contemplated holding all the city with its rambling suburbs, but they had spared no pains and certainly shown no consideration for sentimental associations or for the citizens in constructing a fortress that should be virtually impregnable. The site chosen was the suburb of San Blas, where precipitous



MAP TO ILLUSTRATE
THE
CAMPAIGN OF SALAMANCA

R. Esla
R. Valderaduey
R. Hornija
R. Pisuerga
Valladolid
Simancas
R. Douro
Tudela
Zamora
Toro
Tordesillas
Puente Duero
River Douro
Pollos
Rueda
R. Cega
Cuellar
R. Guarena
Nava del Rey
Medina del Campo
R. Adaja
Olmedo
R. Eresma
Castrejon
Fuente el Sauco
R. Tarabancos
Torrecilla
St. Olmo
R. Zapardiel
Canizal
Arevalo
S. Maria
S. Cristoval
R. Tormes
Cantelpino
la Serna
Huerta
Salamanca
Segovia
Flores
Los Arapiles
Nava Setroval
Alba
R. Adaja
El Espinar
Guadarrama
Avila
El Escorial
English Miles
0
10
20
30

cliffs rise sheer out of the river. It is said that some thirty convents and colleges had been razed to furnish the blocks of masonry for the stupendous forts. A crowded quarter had been swept away to clear ground for the broad glacis, the casemates, the scarps and the counterscarps. Ever since the English landed at Lisbon the French had been industriously wrecking and reconstructing, and now the approaches had been mined. So Marmont, in the full assurance that three weeks to a month must elapse before his forts could possibly surrender, retired with the intention of returning for their relief.

Wellington was welcomed with passionate demonstrations. The streets and spacious plazas were decorated with flags and flowers, and illuminated after nightfall. He rode to his quarters amid the shouts of the crowd, and the women, falling on their knees, were pressing their lips on his stirrups. He would not have been human had he not been touched. Probably the dread of giving over the joyous and grateful city to the vengeance of the enemy may have influenced his determination to offer immediate battle, even under disadvantages. Yet it was essential to his plans that he should possess himself of the forts, and hold them with the only bridge which had been left standing. By that bridge was the only passage on his line of retreat to Rodrigo. But the Tormes was shallow when not in flood, and now his army passed it on the 17th June, by fords above and below the town. General Clinton, with the 6th Division, invested the forts, and Wellington, after his enthusiastic reception, took up his position with the army on the ridge of San Christoval, a natural bulwark four miles long, protecting the city to the north five miles in advance. Thenceforth the strategy of either general was directed to attack and to defend a line of communications. Marmont was bound to guard against being cut off from Valladolid and Burgos, while to Wellington it was of even more vital importance to maintain his communications with his fortresses. Had he been beaten and thrown back upon Eastern Castille, between the armies of Marmont and Joseph, his case would have been well-nigh desperate. As for Marmont, in the event of defeat, he would undoubtedly have left the way open to Madrid, a sufficiently serious consideration. But for himself, as his talents must have almost infallibly saved him from a rout, he would be merely pressed back upon his supports. Already, now that Joseph had awakened to the real state of affairs, Caffarelli was coming up in considerable force, and Bonnet was making a demonstration from Leon, although he was recalled by an unlooked-for burst of activity on the side of Gallicia. Yet the issues depending on a battle were so grave that Marmont had no desire to fight. What he did wish was, by outflanking the allies on their right, and threatening with his own left the road to Rodrigo, to save the Salamancan forts, and manœuvre Wellington into a retrogade movement. Indeed he succeeded in forcing his great opponent to the perilous tactics of showing a front to the enemy parallel to a line of retreat. And for once Wellington's genius made an exception prove the rule, by extricating himself triumphantly from an embarrassing situation, and being only prevented by the almost invincible Spanish *laches* from inflicting a crushing defeat on his adversary.

Wellington had under-rated, as Marmont had overestimated, the strength of the Salamanca forts, and the siege was far more tedious and formidable than he had expected. The ruins covering the rocky soil prevented excavation, and earth for the approaches had to be carried up under cover of night. The bombardment began on the 17th, but it was not till the 20th that the heavy iron howitzers arrived from Almeida. Then the old masonry of the Convent of San Vincente, solid as it was, collapsed; there was a stone-slip, bringing the roof along with it, which crushed many of the defenders. A yawning chasm was opened into the heart of the place. Shells and carcasses fell in showers; the timbers were fired, and there was a widespread conflagration. Nevertheless, the brave garrison under heavy fire succeeded in extinguishing the flames. On the 23d the siege operations were suspended from lack of ammunition. A previous attempt at escalade had been repulsed with considerable loss. Three days later an ammunition train arrived; the batteries re-opened, and again San Vincente was set on fire. On the 27th the white flag was hung out. The forts had held out for ten days; they would have surrendered several days before, had not the British batteries been compelled to suspend their fire, and so Marmont had made a grave miscalculation, when timely action was of supreme importance.

Time, as he believed, had been on his side. Each day was bringing him reinforcements from the north, and more than once he had countermanded his marching orders, as expected succours were delayed. In one respect he was master of the game, for prudence compelled Wellington to act strictly on the defensive. He had determined not to provoke an action unless he could strike with deadly effect. A drawn battle would have been tantamount to defeat, and a barren victory would scarcely have improved the situation. For Marmont had a safe retreat to Valladolid; he would have fallen back on the French forces of the north, and Joseph had now set the central army in motion. It was known, besides, from intercepted despatches, that the intrusive King had repeatedly sent peremptory orders to Soult to detach Drouet to Marmont's assistance. It was known also that Soult had as often declined; but it was notorious that Drouet made no secret of his insubordination, and was more disposed to take orders from Madrid than from Seville. It is true that, so far as that very independent general was concerned, Hill, who commanded the allies in Estremadura, thanks to the capture of Mirabete and the restoration of the bridge of Alcantara, could unite himself to Wellington by a direct march, whereas Drouet could only join Marmont by a difficult and circuitous route. But if either army were forced to an orderly retreat, everything was in Marmont's favour, and, moreover, his reputation was seriously at stake in preventing the fall of fortified Salamanca. The loss of the stupendous works over which the invaders had expended infinite labour, would be regarded by the Emperor—as indeed it was—as a visible sign of the Marshal's incapacity. He was watching his opportunity to compel Wellington to fight at a disadvantage, and on a field where he could avail himself of his numerical superiority. Failing that, he sought to inflict a moral defeat and gain a substantial advantage, by compelling the British to raise the siege and to abandon the city which had received them with patriotic jubilation. To that end he directed the manœuvres, which, by turning Wellington's left flank, would have barred his only line of retreat. As for Wellington, his mind was made up to the practice of that patience which had often before served him so well. He would not be provoked to fight, except upon his own terms. If he must again fall back upon the Portuguese frontier, he would rather do so than risk disaster. Seldom was his resolution more sorely tried, and more than once it seemed that circumstances and the undeniable science of his adversary would prove too strong for him.

Never, perhaps, have there been more dramatic operations than those directed by Marmont for the relief of the forts, and those others a month later, which, when the former had failed, preceded the fiercely-contested battle. On the 17th June, when Wellington entered the town and General Clinton invested the forts, the allied main army had taken up its covering position on San Christoval, while Marmont, with two divisions, withdrew to Fuente el Sauco, on the road to Toro on the Douro. Relying on the resistance of the forts, he had only withdrawn to return. He had rallied to him 25,000 men, when on the 20th he marched southward again. The whole country to the north and east of Salamanca was wild and open, without enclosures. Marching troops had unlimited liberty of action, but every movement could be discerned from afar. The British battering-train was immediately placed in safety across the river, and the army remained ranged in battle order on San Christoval. The position was favourable and very strong. The summit was a broad flat on which the battalions could deploy. The steep front was traversed by deep, hollow lanes and dotted over with defensible stone enclosures. At the base were sundry villages which were occupied. The concave amphitheatre of heights was flanked on the right by the upper Tormes, with its fords; on the left it sank down into marshes on the lower river, which sweeps round the back of the position. From those commanding heights everything could be seen for miles which was passing on the plain below, and they were practically safe from direct attack. The sole drawback was that the heat was intense, and there was neither shade nor water, nor fuel for cooking.

Towards evening the enemy's horse made a demonstration, as if to turn the left flank by the lower Tormes. The light division was detached in support of our light cavalry, and the demonstration was checked; but meantime it had become clear that the real attack was developing on the right. Massed at the base of the hills, their mortars began shelling the ridge, and even after the night had settled down the flights of shells still illuminated the darkness. The allied outposts were driven in, and the French established their own within gunshot of our batteries. Both armies were on the alert with the dawn, in full expectation of a battle; but the 21st was passed in inactivity. Wellington, who had slept on the ground, was looking out for an offensive movement by Marmont, but Marmont was awaiting the arrival of reinforcements. They came on the 22d—three divisions with a brigade of cavalry, and there being 40,000 men at his command, he extended his line to the left and seized upon some heights from whence he could threaten the allied right. Moreover, the movements of the allies were no longer masked, and so far he was on equal terms with his adversary. But what he saw did not encourage him to maintain an exposed position; towards evening his extended left was attacked and driven back before supports could be brought up, and in the night he cautiously withdrew to a range of parallel heights, six miles in the rear. Lord Wellington has been sharply criticised for not availing himself of the rash move of the enemy on the 20th, when Marmont pushed forward to the base of the allied position with forces visibly very inferior. Nor does it seem clear why he did not then hurl down his masses, to overwhelm the enemy with a serried shock, as when he began the battle of Salamanca. He may have made a mistake then and again on the next day, when even partial historians are inclined to blame him. But the explanation evidently is that the calculated inactivity was part of the system which had determined to risk nothing needlessly. He would have welcomed an attack on his strongly-defended heights, but he would not go down to the plain to deliver one, when the descent of the difficult face of the hill might have thrown his columns into confusion. Besides, the circumstances were distinctly different: Marmont's forces might be the weaker, but his divisions were well ordered and all in close touch. There was no such tempting opportunity to strike as on the day of the battle, nor had it become imperative to force an engagement, in order to save the only line of retreat.

Marmont's new position was well chosen, and it was needful that he should be more carefully observed than ever. Still hanging about anxiously for the relief of the forts, it was apparent that he meant to send his left wing across the Tormes. But the allies could baffle him by operating on a shorter line, and the fords of Santa Marta and Huerta were guarded—the one by General Graham with two divisions, the other by the heavy German horse. The 23d was again a quiet day, but on the following morning shots were heard from the dense mist which veiled the lower ground. As the fog lifted, the Germans were seen in retreat before massive columns of infantry, preceded by field batteries, which opened fire periodically. Graham and his divisions thereupon were ordered across the river, with Le Marchant's English cavalry. The rest of the army was concentrated in readiness between the villages of Cabrerizos and Moresco. The French advanced till, as their skirmishers crowned an eminence, they saw Graham deploying in order of battle, and perpendicular to the Tormes. With him were eighteen guns in position. While on the eminences to the right were the masses of our main army, and the light division below was prepared either to cross in support of Graham, or to join in the attack on the French who were posted on the right bank. The French general had timely warning of the danger into which he was rushing. He promptly turned back, re-crossed the Tormes, and resumed his former ground. Then came in the hesitation induced by the knowledge that further reinforcements were on their way. He would have fought on the 23d, when he had rallied his forces, but he had learned that Caffarelli was on the march. Consequently he had fallen back to await the arrival. On the 26th he felt that time was pressing, for the forts had signalled that they could only hold out for three days. He had again made up his mind to fight on the 28th, but the evening before he learned to his mortification that they had surrendered. Thus there was no longer a reason for hazarding a battle, with the advantages of position against him. He broke up his encampments and retired in the night towards the Douro.

He was suffered to pass in peace to the northern bank. Wellington, acting on doubtful and imperfect information, had scattered his troops, and was in no condition to attack at Tordesillas, the only place where a bridge was still standing. From Toro on the west, to Simancas on the east, all the other bridges had been broken down. Toro, on which Marmont's right was rested, was a strongly-fortified post; so was Simancas, on the Pisuerga which was unfordable; and at Valladolid the bridges and *têtes-de-pont* were fortified and efficiently defended. There were various fords, but they were doubtful and treacherous, and even in July subject to freshets in sudden rain-storms. It was a long-extended line which Marmont had to defend; but his operations were effectually masked by the river, and as the Douro takes a wide sweep to the south, he could act upon a direct line, while the allies had to circle round an arc. Nor had Wellington accurate information from his spies as to any point where he might pass to resume the offensive. With numbers altogether inadequate to the work to be done, he had looked for assistance from Castaños, who was laying siege to Astorga. It was his desire that the Spaniard should place himself in communication with Silveira, and that they should unite an army behind the Esla strong enough to check the foraging of the French, and throw them back upon their magazines. But experience had taught him to expect little nor was he disappointed, for Spanish procrastination, as usual, disconcerted the plan. Then ensued a weary time of waiting. Neither general cared to fight. Marmont knew that he would be reinforced from the armies of the north, or the reserves which Napoleon had established in Burgos and elsewhere. Meantime he had lost touch with the army of the centre, for Joseph, on hearing of his unexpected retreat, had withdrawn the garrison from Arica, and the King's headquarters at Segovia were isolated by the activity of the guerrillas. And with possession of the bridge at the central point of Tordesillas he was safe from attack; for Wellington dare not attempt the passage of the river, when the enemy might fall on his flank and cut communications he had abandoned.

On the 8th July Bonnet brought up 6000 men, and Marmont thereupon showed signs of activity. He began to repair the bridge at Toro. Three parallel tributaries flow into the Douro from the south. Wellington's headquarters were on the Trabancos, the central stream, and his right at Rueda, to the east of the easterly Zapardiel. Now, in response to Marmont's movement, he extended his left to the Guarena. Some considerable time was passed in inaction; and the careless interlude is an example of the amenities that soften war, when brave men are professionally pitted against each other. The pickets on either side crossed the river and freely intermingled, interchanging wine flasks and tobacco-pouches. If they could not speak they could communicate by signs and gestures. But on the right there was demoralisation in the British ranks, nor was it possible to restrain the soldiers from brutish debauchery. There were similar scenes, with more leisure for indulgence than in those which had disgraced the retreat of Sir John Moore. Rueda is the capital of a rich wine district. Vast quantities of the strong red vintages were stored in the famous labyrinth of wine-cellars, where the pickaxe has aided Nature in excavating the soft limestone rock. The British privates offered hospitality to their French comrades, and many drunkards of both armies got lost in these labyrinths, to die miserable deaths. Even the men who showed more self-restraint were seldom altogether sober, and it was almost impossible to enforce ordinary discipline. What was even more serious, both officers and men, living in plenty or luxury, had leisure to grumble; full of fighting ardour, they blamed the general for having evaded battle at San Christoval; and then was generated that dangerous spirit of insubordination which showed itself under graver aspects in the retreats from Badajoz and Madrid. Perhaps it is a questionable compliment to say that they were less discontented at the pay of all ranks being lamentably in arrear.

Wellington's situation at that time is a striking example of the anxieties and responsibilities that may weigh upon a general, charged with great and complicated operations, yet dependent upon others for their satisfactory execution. Napoleon was supreme master; what he