

CHAPTER XIV.

The nations of Europe roused to resistance against France.—The battle of Eckmühl.—Napoleon retires to the island of Lobau.—Insurrection of the Tyrolese.—Battle of Wagram.—Austria concludes a Peace.—The Tyrolese subdued.—Expedition to the Scheldt.—The British land in Walcheren.—Flushing bombarded.—Its surrender.—The Marsh Fever breaks out.—Fatal termination of the Expedition.—The battle of Talavera.—Alarm in England.—Disquiet of ministers.—Duel between lord Castlereagh and Mr. Canning.—The Jubilee.—Question of Parliamentary Privilege.—Committal to the Tower of sir Francis Burdett.—Portugal.—Lines of Torres Védras.—The campaign of 1810.—Almeida.—Battle of Busaco.—Wellington retires within his Lines.

WHEN the Session of Parliament was closed on the 21st of June, 1809, events in Germany justified the assertion in the royal Speech, that the resistance in Spain against the usurpation and tyranny of the French government had "awakened in other nations of Europe a determination to resist, by a new effort, the continued and increasing encroachments on their safety and independence." M. Thiers candidly says, "The odious act at Bayonne, the difficulties that had arisen in Spain, had all at once, throughout Germany as well as in Austria, excited indignation and restored hope."* Every man in Prussia, from the peasant to the noble, was ready to revolt. In the countries in alliance with France—in Saxony, in Westphalia, in Bavaria, in Würtemberg, in Baden—the people, oppressed by the presence of troops, by conscriptions, and by taxes, complained that each of their sovereigns had sacrificed his country to his personal ambition. In the Tyrol, the hardy mountaineers, who were attached by old hereditary ties to the House of Austria, bore impatiently the yoke of Bavaria, to which crown they had been annexed, and were ready to rise in insurrection. It was a crisis that was worthy of heroic efforts, if Europe were to be free.

The first great operations of the war gave no very decided advantage to Napoleon, although his bulletins spoke of partial victories as final triumphs. The battle of Eckmühl on the 22nd of April was followed by the entry of the French into Vienna on the 13th of May. But the archduke Charles had reinforced his army, and was advancing rapidly along the left bank of the Danube, to

* "Le Consulat et l'Empire," tome x. p. 56.

prevent the enemy crossing from the right bank, on which Vienna is situated. In the great stream of the Danube is the island of Lobau, nearly three miles in length, and nearly two miles in breadth. To this island Napoleon determined to transport his army. This was an operation of no common difficulty; but it was accomplished by incessant labour in constructing a great bridge upon boats, held in their places by anchors, or by the weight of cannon taken from the arsenal of Vienna. From Lobau there was a smaller stream to cross, by a similar bridge, before a landing could be effected on the open plain on the left bank. On the morning of the 21st of May, the army of the archduke Charles saw from wooded heights the army of Napoleon crossing the lesser branch of the river, and pouring into the great level called Marchfeld. As the French formed their line, the village of Aspern was on one flank; the village of Essling on the other flank. On the 21st and 22nd of May, the most sanguinary contest of the war here took place. "It was a battle," says Thiers, "without any result but an abominable effusion of blood." Never before was the all-conquering emperor in so dangerous a position as when the day closed upon this horrible carnage. He could not return to Vienna; for the river had risen, and the Austrians had floated down the main stream great barks of timber, and numerous fire-ships, which swept away the boats and their bridge. Napoleon could only return to the island of Lobau. Here he retreated, carrying with him thousands of wounded soldiers. The place afforded small means for their cure or comfort; and there was soon little difference between those who died in the battle-field and those who were borne from it to a lingering death.

Shut up in the island of the Danube, the French emperor was strengthening his position, and waiting for events. They were of a mixed character. The heroic partisan, colonel Schill, and the duke of Brunswick, who had headed the German insurrection in Saxony, Westphalia, and Hanover, had failed. Schill was killed in Stralsund. The duke of Brunswick, with a few troops, embarked for England. The Tyrolese were in active resistance to the Bavarians; and their first successes gave a new impulse to the sentiment that when the German people should rise against their oppressors, as "the herdsmen of the Alps" had risen, the day of deliverance was at hand. That day was for awhile postponed. Andrew Hofer, the innkeeper in the valley of Passeyr, and three other resolute friends, led the revolt which broke out on the 8th of April. The Bavarians entered the province with 25,000 men. From mountain to mountain the signal fires had been lighted, which called forth the bold peasants to seize their rifles, and march to

attack the Bavarians in the gorges of the hills, and even in the towns which they held in strength. Halle was taken; Innsbruck surrendered after an obstinate defence. After the French occupied Vienna, the Tyrol was invaded by two French and allied armies. The Tyrolese fled not at their presence. They defeated the French and Saxons in the valley of the Eisach. The vanguard of four thousand Bavarians under the duke of Dantzic was destroyed. A new mode of warfare spread dismay amongst the disciplined troops, who thought they were marching to an easy conquest. As they wended their way unsuspectingly through passes where perpendicular rocks rose on either side, voices would be heard from above, shouting. "Let go your ropes." Then would descend masses of rocks and timber, crushing and burying the columns, whilst the unerring rifles picked off the few who fled from the overwhelming ruin. The duke of Dantzic speedily retreated from the dangerous mountains. But Hofer dared to encounter him in a pitched battle, and the innkeeper won the victory.

Such were the tidings that reached Napoleon in the island of Lobau. The inaction of mutual exhaustion was coming to an end. To Napoleon inaction was generally insupportable. He appeared busily employed in constructing massive bridges from the island to the left bank of the Danube; but he was secretly collecting the materials for another work. On the night of the 4th of July the whole of his army crossed the stream, by a bridge hastily thrown over an unguarded point. On the morning of the 5th the French moved in order of battle towards the entrenched camp of the Austrians, which was to resist the passage over the Danube so ostentatiously prepared. The archduke Charles quitted his entrenchments, abandoning the country between Enzensdorf and Wagram. He had lost the opportunity of attacking the French as they crossed the river in that one night, and confronted him as if by miracle. He now retired to a strong position on the elevated table-land of Wagram. From this locality the great battle of the 6th derives its name. The number of soldiers engaged in the work of mutual destruction was between three and four hundred thousand. The French historians claim to have killed or wounded twenty-four thousand Austrians; and admit to have lost eighteen thousand in killed or wounded. But the sturdy resistance of Austria had deranged some of Napoleon's grandest plans of ambition. "He had renounced the idea of dethroning the House of Hapsburg, an idea which he had conceived in the first movements of his wrath."* He would humiliate Austria by new sacrifices of territory and of

* Thiers, tome x. p. 478.

money. The time was fast approaching when the conquering *parvenu* would demand a daughter of the House of Hapsburg in marriage, completing the triumph of his proud egoism by divorcing the woman who had stooped from her rank to wed the Corsican lieutenant of artillery. Austria sued for an armistice; and the armistice led to a peace. Two of the conditions of the peace of Vienna, which was signed on the 14th of October, were more degrading to Austria than the loss of territory. One was that she should give no succour to the Tyrolese who had so nobly fought for her independence. The other was, that she should unite with all the rest of the enslaved continent in the exclusion of the commerce of England, her ally, that was affording the most effectual co-operation by exertions in Spain; and had attempted by a small expedition to Naples, and a vast expedition to the Scheldt, to divert the levies of France from going to the aid of the French armies that were fighting against Austria on the Danube and in Italy. England was ill-timed in her assistance; she was unlucky; but her good-will was not the less sincere. Napoleon returned to Paris; and left his marshals to put down the spirit in Germany which a humiliating peace could not compromise, and which the system of terror could not wholly extinguish. Fifty thousand French and Bavarians marched into the Tyrol; hunted the peasantry from hill to hill; set a price upon the head of Andrew Hofer; and procured his arrest by treachery. He was tried by court-martial at Mantua, and condemned to death. The majority of French officers were averse to the sentence being executed. There was a respite; but an order from Paris left no choice. He was shot on the 20th of February.

The history of the fatal expedition to Walcheren might be sufficiently traced in the Papers presented to Parliament, and in the Minutes of Evidence taken before a Committee of the whole House of Commons.* But time has opened other sources of information. The materials are ample for a narrative, interesting in itself, and instructive for warning against official neglect, ignorance, and presumption. We are enabled to add a few details from an unpublished journal.†

Sir David Dundas succeeded the duke of York as Commander-in-chief, on the 18th of March. On the 24th he was called to a Cabinet meeting. He was informed that an immediate attack on

* See Hansard, vol. xv. Appendix, col. 1 to 639, and vol. xvi. Appendix, col. 1105 to 1130.

† "Narrative of the Expedition," by an Officer employed—MS. of 200 pages, in the possession of the author of the "Popular History."

the island of Walcheren was contemplated; that there were nine or ten sail of the line in the harbour of Flushing, not in a state to proceed to sea; that our navy had a large disposable force; and that fifteen thousand land forces would be necessary for the operation. Could such a force at once be assembled? Sir David Dundas said that such a force could not at once be provided; that the corps which had returned from Spain were in very indifferent health, and their military equipment was in a very defective state. Preparations went on to complete the remains of sir John Moore's army for service; and volunteers from militia regiments were gradually drafted into regiments of the line. But the scheme had assumed a more formidable character, when lord Castlereagh, on the 29th of May, stated to sir David Dundas that his majesty's government felt it their duty to investigate, having formidable means at their disposal, how far it was possible to strike a blow against the enemy's naval resources in the Scheldt, "including the destruction of their arsenal at Antwerp, and the ships of war stationed in different parts of the Scheldt, between Antwerp and Flushing." The answer of the Commander-in-chief, on the 3rd of June, was not encouraging. He thought that an attack upon Antwerp was a service of very great risk. On the 18th of June, lord Castlereagh directed that 35,000 infantry and 1800 cavalry should be held in readiness for immediate embarkation. Sir David Dundas was not consulted as to the appointment of the commander of the expedition, although he knew that it was meant to appoint lord Chatham. There were equally important persons with whom no consultation was held. Sir Lucas Pepys, the Physician General to the forces, was acquainted with the nature of the disorder to which soldiers were subject in the island of Walcheren. The medical officers of the army were not informed where the expedition was going, and therefore could not make any particular preparation. With Mr. Thomas Keate, Surgeon General of the army, there was no consultation. He knew perfectly well the nature of the complaint prevalent in Walcheren at the season when the expedition was about to sail; and had confidence been reposed in him he should have recommended precautions that might have lessened the malady. On the 16th of July, "our trusty and well-beloved cousin and counsellor, John, earl of Chatham," received his instructions, as the commander of a large division of his majesty's forces, to attack and destroy the naval force and establishments in the Scheldt, acting in conjunction with the commander of the naval portion of the armament, sir Richard Strachan. The whole amount of the land-force, according to the list transmitted to lord

Chatham, was 39,143 infantry, cavalry, and artillery. The naval force comprised 35 sail of the line, 5 ships of 50 and 44 guns, 18 frigates, and 160 sloops, gun-brigs, bomb-vessels, gun boats, &c. The army was encamped on Southsea common and on the hills around Portsmouth. The ships of war were assembled at Spithead, ready to take a portion of the troops on board, whilst others were received by transports. The weather was the finest of a fine summer. Gazers from all parts came to look upon the most magnificent expedition that ever left the British ports. The ostentatious preparation was out of harmony with the affected secret of its destination. The French and Dutch knew thoroughly well what was intended. The English army and navy were to be kept in the dark, so that the mystery should not be divulged and find its way to Flushing and Antwerp. Yet the first order issued, whilst the troops were embarking, was one against taking quarters "un-sanctioned by the Burgomaster."

On the 25th of July this great armament sailed from Portsmouth to the Downs. During the three days on which it ran down the English shore, every height was crowded with people. "Of all the displays that I have ever seen," says the writer of the MS. Journal, "the finest was that which opened on us as we rounded the South Foreland. The sea was literally covered for miles with shipping, and all was animation. Upwards of a thousand sail were rolling at anchor off Deal, and among them six enormous three-deckers that looked like castles. All England seemed to have collected on the coast. Boats were sweeping in all directions among the fleet. Hundreds of parties from the shore were rowing about among us. The bands of the regiments were playing, bugles sounding and in the heavy swell of a north-east gale flag and cannon signals were perpetually busy. The whole had an incomparable look of spirit and triumph, and was an actual display of power that we proudly felt the world beside could not equal."

On the 28th of July, at daybreak, the first division of the fleet, with sir Richard Strachan, and the earl of Chatham on board, sailed from the Downs. A larger division followed on the 29th. On the 30th twenty thousand men landed on the isle of Walcheren. Middleburgh, the chief town, was immediately surrendered. The French troops were driven into Flushing. Other operations were attended with complete success. Every obstacle was quickly removed that would have prevented Antwerp being taken by a sudden and well-combined movement of the naval and military forces. The French ships at Flushing had withdrawn and gone up the Scheldt. No English squadron pursued. The garrison of Ant

werp had only 3000 men. Napoleon said to O'Meara that if a few thousand men had been landed at Wilhemstadt and marched direct to Antwerp, it might have been taken by a *coup-de-main*. After the fleet had got up, that was impossible. Bahtz, the key to both channels of the Scheldt, was taken by sir John Hope on the morning of the 3rd, and the whole of South Beveland was in his possession. All the energy of the first operations had no other ulterior object, in the eye of the Commander-in-chief, than the taking of Flushing, and the occupation of Walcheren. It would seem as if the earl of Chatham had known that Napoleon held that Flushing was impregnable; and that it had become a point of honour with him to prove that the great emperor could sometimes be mistaken. From the palace of Schönbrunn, whilst negotiating a peace with Austria, Napoleon wrote on the 6th of October to his minister of war at Paris,—who had apprised him of the appearance off Walcheren of the English armament,—“They will not take Flushing since the dykes can be cut; they will not take the squadron, for it can ascend to Antwerp.”* Ten days later, this provident administrator, who never suffered any circumstances in his vast empire to be indifferent to him, showed how much better he understood what our army would experience than the war minister who directed the expedition. Napoleon then wrote, “Before six weeks, of the fifteen thousand English who are on the island of Walcheren, not fifteen hundred will be left. The rest will be in the hospitals. . . . The expedition has been undertaken under false information, and has been ignorantly calculated.” †

The enemy that was gathering around our troops,—far more dangerous than the batteries of Flushing,—was soon perceptible. The investment of the place was completed, before a bombardment commenced on the 13th of August. The troops slept, for the most part, in the open air. In his MS. Journal the officer writes: “Towards morning we found ourselves wrapped in that chill, blue, marshy mist rising from the ground, that no clothing can keep out, and that actually seems to penetrate to the inmost frame. And this we always found the morning atmosphere of Walcheren,—the island covered with a sheet of exhalation, blue, dense, and fetid.” The positive orders which Napoleon had sent from Schönbrunn, that general Monnet, the commander of Flushing, should cut the dykes, were now carried into effect. On the 11th, the sea-dyke, extending from the right flank of Flushing on the land side to the canal of St. Joostland, was cut. The water spread over the fields, filled the ditches, and forced the besiegers to abandon some parts

* Thiers, tome xi. p. 452—“Lettres relatives à Walcheren.”

† *Ibid.*, p. 460.

of the trenches. There was no time to lose. The bombardment commenced upon a scale that was perhaps unequalled in any previous siege. Batteries of heavy ordnance fired incessantly night and day upon the devoted town. The Congreve rocket was employed with fearful effect. Ten line of battle ships, on the morning of the 14th, ranged along the sea line of defences, and kept up a cannonade for several hours. Flushing was on fire in every quarter. At last after three days the governor agreed to surrender, on the condition of the garrison becoming prisoners of war. The occupation of the Dutch fishing town was the prize that cost twenty millions of money. The siege operations were conducted by sir Eyre Coote, lord Chatham “having hoped, had circumstances permitted, to have proceeded up the river.”* His lordship, whose vocation, according to an epigram not far from the truth, was to eat, and to sleep, contrived to console himself for his disappointment in not going up the river, to encounter Bernadotte, who had arrived at Antwerp with a great army. He rested happily at Bahtz; where his existence was proclaimed by two turtles sprawling upon their backs in his garden, ready for the art of the commander-in chief of the kitchen who accompanied him. †

And now came the dread event which Napoleon had predicted. Lord Chatham wrote home on the 29th that he was obliged to close his operations with the capture of Flushing. He adds, “I am concerned to say, that the effect of the climate at this unhealthy period of the year is felt most seriously, and that the number of the sick already is little short of three thousand.” The morning fogs began to be heavier and more penetrating. The soldiers, who had been kept up by the animation of the siege, now sank, exhausted and despairing. They were carried into close barracks at Middleburgh, where the fever raged more and more, and the barracks all became hospitals. The surgeons were unsupplied with bark and other necessary medicines. The medical officers themselves were seized, and either died or were disqualified for attendance. Proper supplies of medicine and of wine from England were coming as soon as routine could bestir itself. The main army was ordered home, and with them went lord Chatham. But fifteen thousand men were left in Walcheren “for the protection of the island.” The despatches of sir Eyre Coote, from the 31st of August to the 23rd of October, contain the most distressing accounts of the progress of the fever. Thousands had died. Four thousand sick had been sent to England. Sixteen hundred more were about to be sent;

* Despatch, 16th August.

† “Court and Cabinets of George III,” vol. iv. p. 356.

and then the hospitals would still contain four thousand sick, who must have been abandoned to the French in the event of their landing. Every one who had thought or read knew what would be the consequence of sending forty thousand men to Zealand in August, and of their continuing there for two or three months. Every one suspected what might happen, except the ministry, and especially the Secretary-at-War. Sir John Pringle's book on the "Diseases of the Army" was known to common readers; but it was unknown, or unheeded, in Cabinet Councils, where some members were assiduously engaged in the laudable endeavour to circumvent a colleague, yet leaving him to the consequences of his own incapacity; and others thought that whatever he did was right, as long as he did not go before his party in any large or liberal views. Mr. John Webb, the Inspector of Hospitals, reported to lord Castlereagh, on the 11th of September,—when the ravages had begun, and statesmanship at last had taken counsel of science,—that, independent of the existing records of the unhealthiness of Zealand, every feature of the country exhibited it in the most forcible manner;—the canals communicating with the sea, covered with the most noisome ooze; every ditch loaded with matter in a state of putrefaction; the whole island little better than a swamp; scarcely a place where water of a tolerable quality could be procured; the children sickly, and many of the adults deformed. The endemic diseases of the country, remittent and intermittent fevers, says the Inspector, begin to appear about the middle of August, and continue to prevail until the commencement of frosty weather. He adds one important fact, after describing how the disease had spread in the army with a rapidity almost unexampled in the history of any military operation, that "those men who may be attacked with fever, and recover from it, will have their constitutions so affected by the shock, that their physical powers, when called into action hereafter, will be very materially diminished."* The "Journal of an Officer" describes what was endured by thousands of the sick. After a month's suffering he was carried to Flushing; shipped on board of a frigate; when in the Downs, the ship was telegraphed that the hospitals were full; went on to Spithead; and was borne ashore fainting. "My recovery was long doubtful, and when it at last commenced, it was long imperfect. The venom of the marsh-fever had a singular power of permeating the whole human frame. It unstrung every muscle, penetrated every bone, and seemed to search and enfeeble all the sources of mental and bodily life. I dragged it about with me for years." Such was the

* Hansard, vol. xv. Appendix, col. xii.

end of the great Armada that sailed from the Downs on the 28th of July, with a pomp and power that had never been equalled since another Armada came to a like fatal termination of vain hopes and blind confidence. The calamity which England had sustained had a most serious effect upon the progress of the war in Spain and Portugal. In the summer of 1810, the operations of lord Wellington were fatally crippled by the want of men to supply his losses. His earnest request for more aid from home was thus answered by lord Liverpool on the 22nd of August: "Now, with respect to reinforcements to your army, I am under the painful necessity of informing you that the effects of the fever contracted by our army last year in Walcheren are still of that nature that, by a late inspection, we have not at this time a single battalion of infantry, in Great Britain and Ireland, reported fit for service in the field, with the exception of the infantry of the duke of Brunswick's corps."* Walcheren was evacuated on the 23rd of December. Then came inquiries in Parliament. The ministry made every effort to screen lord Chatham from a vote of censure, which was prevented only by very small majorities. The character of the army and navy was not injured. The disgrace rested with the commander; with the Secretary-at-War; and with the members of the Cabinet, who believed him incapable, and had not the courage to enforce their belief.

After the retreat of Soult from Oporto, sir Arthur Wellesley, at the beginning of July, entered Spain. On the 20th, he made a junction with the Spanish army under Cuesta, at Oropesa. Marshal Victor was in position at Talavera. His outposts were attacked on the 22nd by the Spanish and British; and Victor, retiring to Torrijos, was joined by Sebastiani, and afterwards by king Joseph. Cuesta was obstinate and conceited. Taking his own counsel, he pushed on alone to attack the French, and was driven back to the British army, on the Alberche. With the greatest difficulty he was persuaded not to fight in a position where he would have been destroyed. In a sulky mood, he left to Sir Arthur Wellesley the command of the two armies. The British general retired six miles to Talavera, where he had previously chosen his field of battle, and which he had strengthened by some earthworks. On the 27th, the French crossed the Alberche, and there was a partial contest, in which they were repulsed. On the 28th, the French renewed the attack. From nine o'clock of that morning till noon, the two armies reposed. It was the calm before the storm. The heat was excessive, and the French and English soldiers quitted their ranks,

* "Supplementary Despatches," vol. vi. p. 568.

and assuaged their thirst in the little stream that separated their several positions. The scene was suddenly changed. The French drums beat the *rappel*; the eagles were uplifted; the columns formed, and the battle commenced. They first attacked the left, which was weak; then fell upon the right; and later in the day threw their force upon the centre of the line. A formidable battery was making fearful havoc. The centre was giving way, when sir Arthur Wellesley ordered the 48th regiment to descend from the height which they occupied, and meet the brunt of the fight. The scattered masses rallied. The English general hurled a charge of cavalry upon the French columns; and the victory was won. In writing to a friend in India, sir Arthur Wellesley said, "The battle of Talavera was the hardest fought of modern times. The fire at Assaye was heavier, while it lasted; but the battle of Talavera lasted for two days and a night. Each party engaged lost a fourth of their numbers."* To another friend he writes, "We had certainly a most fierce contest at Talavera, and the victory which we gained, although from circumstances it has not been followed by all the good consequences which we might have expected from it, has at least added to the military reputation of the country, and has convinced the French that their title to be called the first military nation in Europe will be disputed, not unsuccessfully."† "This battle," says Jomini, "recovered the glory of the successors of Marlborough, which for a century had declined. It was felt that the English infantry could contend with the best in Europe." Very few Spaniards were engaged. Sixteen thousand English, of which number many had been recently taken from the militia, repulsed thirty thousand French veterans. Napoleon was furious at the results of the battle of Talavera. He wrote from Schönbrunn to general Clarke, that he should express to marshal Jourdan the emperor's extreme displeasure at the inaccuracies and falsehoods in his report. "He says that on the 28th we were in possession of the British army's field of battle—that is to say, of Talavera, and of the table land on which their left flank rested; whilst his subsequent reports, and those of other officers, say the exact contrary, and that we were repulsed during the whole day. . . . Tell him that he might have put what he pleased into the Madrid newspapers, but that he had no right to disguise the truth to government."‡ The next day the emperor wrote to his Minister of Police a memorandum, to be expanded into articles in the Journals: "Lord Wellesley is beaten in Spain. Surrounded in his rout,

* "Supplementary Despatches," vol. vi. p. 431.

† *Ibid.*, p. 387.

‡ "Correspondence with King Joseph," vol. ii. p. 66, August 21.

he seeks his safety in a precipitate flight under excessive heat. In quitting Talavera, he has recommended to the duke of Belluno five thousand sick and wounded that he was obliged to leave there. If affairs had been properly conducted in Spain, not an Englishman would have escaped; but nevertheless they are beaten. Comment on these ideas in the journals. Demonstrate the extravagance of the ministers in exposing thirty thousand English, in the heart of Spain, against a hundred and twenty thousand French, the best troops in the world, while at the same time they sent twenty-five thousand others to come to grief (*se casser le nez*) in the marshes of Holland."* In these hints for his journalists of Paris, Napoleon exaggerated the painful facts which the English general readily admitted. He was obliged to retreat, for Soult had suddenly appeared with fifty thousand men. He was surrounded by immense armies; he did leave, to be guarded by Cuesta, fifteen hundred of his sick and wounded; when Cuesta marched away and left his charge, sir Arthur did recommend them to the humanity of the French generals, who acted generously towards them, as sir Arthur Wellesley had acted towards the French at Oporto. He had confided too much in Spanish generals and in Spanish troops. He had trusted too much to the zeal and activity of the commissariat to furnish him supplies. Admiral Berkeley, who commanded in the Tagus, says: "Twice has the army been stopped for money, and twice for provisions. The horses starved, while ships, loaded with hay and oats from England, enough to furnish all the cavalry, were rotting and spoiling in the Tagus. The medical staff is as bad: as our army were dying away for want of medicines, while more than sufficient were in ships in the river."† Nearly half a century was to slide on before such results of "ignorance and delay" were to be counted as monstrous things, that could never again shake the public confidence in official sagacity. The experience of one campaign taught sir Arthur Wellesley great lessons. In India he had acquired the power of regulating the commissariat upon the largest scale; in providing not only for men and horses, but for elephants and bullocks, and all the gorgeous cavalcades of an oriental camp. In his first campaign in Portugal, he had somewhat too much relied upon the War Office, and the Victualling Office, and the Transport Office. Each department did its own work in parallel lines, and never thought that the Division of Labour was worthless without the Union of Forces.

* Thiers, tome vi. p. 461—"Lettres de Napoléon."

† Court, &c. of George III., vol. v. p. 359.

He soon came to look sharply after the most apparently trifling details. But he also came to rely upon himself, and to leave the Spanish generals to their jealousies, and the Spanish juntas to their own conceits. His brother, the marquis (then ambassador in Spain), seeing that he could not bring the native authorities to act "with common spirit, honesty, or decency," advised him to return home.* He remained to show how a resolute will and a clear head can surmount every difficulty.

The battle of Talavera won for sir Arthur Wellesley the name by which we shall henceforth speak of him—Wellington: first Viscount, then Earl, then Marquis, then Duke. By what name he was to be called was almost a matter of chance.† "Talavera" was thought of. Of "Wellesley" his brother wore the honours. "Wellington" was chosen—the household word for all time. In December the British army had crossed the Tagus at Abrantes. When his head-quarters were at Badajoz, in October, lord Wellington had gone to Lisbon, "to arrange finally for the defence of Portugal." He had conceived the grand project of the lines of Torres Védras. In January, 1810, his head-quarters were at Viseu; and he was in constant communication with lieutenant-colonel Fletcher, an officer of engineers, on the execution of this gigantic work. The scheme was not to be paraded before the world. It was to be proceeded with steadily and unostentatiously. He would claim no merit with the English government or the English people, for preparing a stronghold, from which he might go forth to do battle with armies four times as strong as his own, and retire thither on any emergency, to laugh at their efforts to dislodge him. During the spring of 1810 he steadily devoted himself to the organization of the British and Portuguese armies. He was wholly left to his own resources. The government at home could send him no reinforcements. He had no support in their confidence that he would surmount the difficulties by which he was encompassed. At the end of October, four questions were put to him by lord Liverpool,‡ which required all his prudence and sagacity to answer upon his own responsibility. Wellington thought:—1. That if the Spaniards were commonly prudent, the enemy would require a very large reinforcement before they could subjugate the country: 2. He thought that if the French did not make an immediate attack upon Portugal, they would require an army of seventy or eighty thousand men to succeed, but he believed they would make the attack: 3. He thought that if

* "Supplementary Despatches," vol. vi. p. 372. † *Ibid.*, p. 361. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 412.

they made the attack at once they would be successfully resisted: 4. He was convinced that if defeated his army could embark.* At the end of 1809 intelligence had arrived of the defeat of two Spanish armies; and then lord Liverpool talks as if all the efforts of the British and Portuguese armies for the defence of Portugal would be unavailing.† In March, lord Liverpool apprises lord Wellington, "That a very considerable degree of alarm exists in this country respecting the safety of the British army in Portugal;" and that he "would rather be excused for bringing away the army a little too soon, than, by remaining in Portugal a little too long, exposing it to those risks from which no military operations can be wholly exempt."‡ He could not "recommend any attempt at what may be called desperate resistance." It must have been a satisfaction to Wellington, who cared very little for "alarm in England," and was not easily depressed by ministerial timidity, to have received the encouragement of the stout-hearted old king to persevere in the course which appeared right and safe in his own judgment. Colonel Herbert Taylor was then the official secretary to George III., who was nearly or totally blind. He had read to the king a private letter from lord Wellington to lord Liverpool; and he conveys to the minister his sovereign's sentiments upon the correspondence which had taken place. This letter of colonel Taylor, dated April 21, lord Liverpool forwards to lord Wellington. It contains the following passage: "The king observed that the arguments and remarks which this letter contains, the general style and spirit in which it is written, and the clearness with which the state of the question and of prospects in Portugal is exposed, have given his majesty a very high opinion of lord Wellington's sense, and of the resources of his mind as a soldier; and that as he appears to have weighed the whole of his situation so coolly and maturely, and to have considered so fully every contingency under which he may be placed, not omitting any necessary preparation, his majesty trusted that his ministers would feel with him the advantage of suffering him to proceed according to his judgment and discretion in the adherence to the principles which he has laid down, unfettered by any particular instructions which might embarrass him in the execution of his general plan of operations."§ The worry from Downing-street continued, especially from the Treasury. In June, Wellington asks this question of the ministry—"Are we at war with France for the existence and independence of the country, and is it advisable to maintain the contest

* "Supplementary Despatches," vol. vi. p. 423. † *Ibid.*, p. 465. ‡ *Ibid.*, p. 493. § *Ibid.*, p. 515.