

CHAP. ventured to advance if he had not despised the Valencians.  
 XXXIX. With an abundant population, brave and patriotic enough to  
 1811. offer themselves to any danger and submit to any sacrifices, . .  
 and with resources greater than those of any other province  
 from its redundant fertility, Valencia had scarcely made an  
 effort in favour of its neighbours. When, at the earnest requisition of the British naval commander on that coast, a body of its troops had been detached into Catalonia, they were embarked without muskets, because there was an established regulation, that before they left the province their arms must be deposited in the arsenal. After arms had been provided for them, it was judged necessary to march them into Aragon; but they refused to enter that kingdom, because they had not been sent with that intention, and in consequence they returned to Valencia without having faced the enemy. Whenever, indeed, the Valencian army had faced them, some glaring misconduct had appeared, and some lamentable disaster been the necessary result. The spirit of provincialism ceased to paralyse them when the enemy was within their own territory, but Suchet still calculated upon want of discipline in the men, and want of skill in the leaders: some reliance too he placed upon those means of seduction by which France had triumphed as often as by her arms.

*The French  
 repulsed in  
 an assault.*

The day after he reached Murviedro, he assaulted the fort at two in the morning; in three places the escalade was attempted, but the French were repulsed at all points with the loss of their ladders, and of more than 400 killed and wounded. Suchet was induced to make this dangerous attempt by his engineers, who discovered two old breaches which had not been effectually repaired, and who were sensible of the great difficulties they should have to encounter in a regular siege. His men too, he says, since their exploits at Tarragona, regarded it as pastime to march to an assault; but the way there had been

*Mem. 2.  
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prepared for them by corruption. They kept possession of the town, broke through the party walls of the houses, that they might communicate without exposing themselves to the garrison's fire, barricadoed the streets, and planted guns in those houses which looked toward the fort. This was not effected without loss, and they had not yet brought up their battering train; it was to come from Tortosa, and the little fort of Oropesa in their rear commanded the road. Suchet gave directions for reducing this, and acted in the meantime against the troops in the field. Obispo was attacked on the 30th at Seneja, and driven back upon Segorbe; there he rallied, but reinforcements came to the enemy, which again gave them the superiority; they entered Segorbe in pursuit of his broken troops, put all who resisted to the sword, and drove him towards Liria. The next object of Suchet was to drive Carlos O'Donnell's division beyond the Guadalaviar. On the night of October 1st he marched against it; the advanced guard was attacked and routed at Betero; the main body at Benaguacil. Little loss was sustained by the Spaniards in these actions, but they did not contribute to raise the character of the Valencian troops in the eyes of their enemies; and Suchet, who knew that the struggle would be with Blake, endeavoured to provoke that general into the field, by reproaching him for having remained idle in Valencia while two divisions of his army were defeated.

He had made himself, however, already so far master of the field, as to continue his operations against Murviedro without interruption. Oropesa surrendered on the 11th, after a cannonade of a few hours; Captain Eyre, in the *Magnificent*, had just arrived to assist it, but he came only in time to bring off the garrison of a tower about a mile distant. Artillery and tools could now be safely brought from Tortosa; and a week afterwards a practicable breach was effected. Twice in the

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*Oropesa  
taken by  
the enemy.*

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*A second as-  
sault re-  
pelled.*

course of a day and night the French attempted to storm it, and were repulsed with great slaughter. The fort, though, according to the inveterate habit of procrastination which has for centuries been the reproach of Spanish policy, its works were incomplete, yet was capable of making a very formidable resistance; for it was so constructed as to form four parts, each of which might be defended after the others were taken. Blake calculated upon the impetuosity of the enemy, the steadiness of the garrison, and the patriotism of the governor; the two former did not deceive him: and he had laid down for himself a wise plan of operations; which was to abstain from battle, in hope that the French would weaken themselves in the siege, and might be compelled to retreat by movements upon their flank and on the side of Aragon.

*Guerrilla  
movements  
in aid of  
Murviedro.*

It was part of this plan to surprise the French in Cuenca, and thus cut off Suchet's communication with Madrid; this expedition was committed to General Mahy, with whom the Conde de Montijo was to co-operate. The attempt proved ineffectual, and Mahy returned with his division to join the commander-in-chief. In Aragon the Spaniards were led by men of a different stamp, and their movements would have led to very different results, if the spirit of provincialism, and that insubordination which long habits of military independence can scarcely fail to produce, had not frustrated fair beginnings, and bright prospects of success. A decree of the Cortes had attached the Guerrilla parties to the armies of their respective districts, and given rank to their leaders, leaving them to pursue their own system of warfare at their own discretion, but subjecting them thus to a military superior whenever they should be called upon. By virtue of this decree, Duran and the Empecinado, who commanded, the one in Soria, the other in Guadalaxara, each with the rank of brigadier, had been ordered by Blake to

unite and enter Aragon, which Suchet had drained of troops for his expedition against Valencia. It was not easy to bring these irregular companies under any restraint of discipline: the Junta of Guadalaxara were not willing to part with the Empecinado's band; the men themselves were not willing to leave what they considered as their own district; disputes broke out among them when their leader was not present; they turned their arms upon each other at Villaconejos: after an affray in which some were killed and many wounded, the rest dispersed, were overtaken by the French, and suffered great loss; and Cuenca was in consequence again entered by the enemy, who committed their usual enormities there. The Empecinado, however, was soon heard of again: he formed a junction with Duran, and their collected force was computed at about 4000 men. With the greater part of this force they appeared before the city of Calatayud, where the enemy had a garrison of between 800 and 900 men. Not expecting so bold a measure on the part of the Guerrillas, the French upon sight of them sent out a detachment, who took post upon an eminence before the city, where there was a ruined castle. Of that detachment about fifty were killed, and as many made prisoners, not a man escaping. The garrison then, and all the persons connected with them, took shelter in the convent of the Mercenarios. This edifice had been fortified, and was one of those posts which gave them military possession of the country. The Spaniards had no artillery, and having in vain attempted to burn it, began to mine. This was a branch of warfare in which they had little skill and less experience; . . . on the third day the mine was ready; it was exploded, and produced no effect; two others were immediately commenced. Meantime a reinforcement of 200 foot and fifty horse, the precursors of a larger force from Zaragoza, came to relieve the besieged. . . the Empecinado hastened to meet them, routed them,

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*Dispersion  
of the Em-  
pecinado's  
troops.*

*M. del Pa-  
lacio, Tras-  
lado a la  
Nacion Es-  
panola,  
p. 19.*

*His subse-  
quent suc-  
cesses in  
conjunction  
with Duran.  
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Oct. 3.

and chased them as far as Almunia, taking the colonel who commanded, and more than 200 of their muskets and knapsacks, which they threw away to disencumber themselves in flight. On the sixth day of the siege, the match was laid to the second mine, which produced little more effect than the first: the third, however, was more successful; it brought down part of the wall of the church, and the French then capitulated, on condition that the officers should be sent to France on their parole. Five hundred men were made prisoners, and about 150 killed and wounded were found in the convent. There were found here provisions and money which had been collected by the intrusive government: the grain was sold at a fair price to the inhabitants of the district for seed; this Duran and the Empecinado thought necessary, that they might lessen as much as possible the evils arising from the state of waste to which that part of the country was abandoned. Soon afterwards more than 3000 French arrived, hoping to recover the plunder; but the Guerrilla chiefs gave them no opportunity of effecting this, and the next day the enemy returned into Navarre, whither they were recalled to resist Espoz y Mina.

*A price set upon the heads of Mina and his officers.*

Aug. 21.

General Reille, with two divisions, had used his utmost endeavours to destroy this most enterprising of the Guerrilla chiefs; and Mina, compelled once more to break up his little army into small bodies, had for three and fifty days eluded the enemy, by continual marches and counter-marches among the mountains, suffering hunger, nakedness, and every kind of fatigue and privation, with that unconquerable spirit of endurance which is the characteristic virtue of the Spaniards. To effectuate his long-desired object, the French general, in the spirit of the wicked government which he served, set a price upon the heads of these gallant men, offering 6000 dollars for that of Mina, 4000 for Cruchaga's, and 2000 each for those of Gorriz, Ulzurrun, and Cholin. This detest-

able expedient failed also. A traitor, by name D. Joaquin Geronimo Navarro, then offered to treat with the Guerrilla chief, and win him over to the intruder's cause ; or, if he failed in this, to seize him at a conference. Mina obtained intelligence of this second part of the plot, and when he was invited to confer with Navarro upon matters which, it was said, nearly concerned his own interest, and that of his men, and the welfare of the kingdom, he replied, that Navarro must come and treat with him in person. The traitor accordingly appointed a meeting at the village of Leoz, whither he came, accompanied by D. Francisco Aguirre Echechuri, D. Jose Pelon, and Sebastian Irujo de Irocin. Mina, with his adjutant Castillo, met them, partook of a supper which they had prepared, listened to their proposals : then being beforehand in the intended surprisal, seized them, called in his assistants, and delivered them over to a council of war, by whose sentence they were put to death.

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Sept. 14.

Lord Wellington's movement upon Ciudad Rodrigo at this time compelled Marmont to withdraw his troops from Navarre. Immediately Mina reunited his men, and occupied Sanguesa. "Vengeance," he cried, "for the victims who have been sacrificed because they performed their duty to their country! While some of these are at rest in the grave, others in dungeons, or led away into captivity in France, I will take vengeance for their wrongs. Arms and ammunition, arms and ammunition, . . . I ask arms and ammunition of the nation and of all Europe, for public and for private vengeance! My division will carry on the war as long as a single individual belonging to it shall exist." From Sanguesa he looked about him where to annoy the enemy with most effect: while Duran and the Empecinado were employed on the right bank of the Ebro, he thought he might act upon the left, by cutting off the French garrisons. The first which he assailed consisted of forty foot and seventy horse at Egoa de

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*Mina's suc-  
cess at  
Ayerbe.*

Oct. 16.

los Caballeros, who kept close within their fort, in fear of such a visit. While he was mining the fort, the enemy during the night broke through the wall on the opposite side, and fled. The sudden cessation of their fire gave cause for suspecting what they had done; they were pursued, and twenty of the cavalry were all who effected their escape to Zaragoza. He then marched against Ayerbe, and began to mine a convent which the French had fortified there. While he was thus employed, 1100 French, with forty horse, came from Zaragoza to relieve the besieged, and cut off the Navarrese, who were only 900. Mina drew off his men as soon as he heard of their approach, and posted the infantry upon a height above the road; sending out parties to harass the enemy, and then fall back upon the main body. The French advanced, mocking the brigands, as they called them, and telling them to go to Valencia for bayonets, and they encouraged each other to attack with the bayonet, saying the brigands were without that weapon: but they were repulsed in their attempt to win the height, leaving nineteen dead and forty-nine wounded upon the field. They then proceeded to Ayerbe, received a supply of ammunition there, and being joined by twenty horse from the garrison, took the road to Huesca. Mina, though inferior in numbers, was superior in cavalry, having 200 horse, and of this superiority he made full use. With 160 horse he followed close upon the rear of the enemy, and impeded their march in the plain till his infantry came up. Part under Cruchaga got upon their left flank, another column under Barena menaced them in the rear, a flank company supported this movement, and on the right and in front Mina brought his cavalry. Unlike the French generals, who, whenever they boasted of victory, showed the baseness of their own nature by depreciating and vilifying their opponents, Mina bestowed the highest praise upon the courage and discipline of

the enemy in this action. They formed themselves into a square, closing their files with the utmost coolness as fast as the men fell. Three times the Spaniards broke them, pouring in their fire within pistol-shot. They formed a fourth time; Cruchaga then, after pouring in a volley, attacked them with the bayonet; at the same moment they were assailed in the same manner by the rest of the infantry; they were again broken, and the cavalry began to cut them down. The commander, seventeen officers, and 640 men laid down their arms and were made prisoners. The French cavalry also surrendered; but thinking that they saw a favourable opportunity for escaping, they wounded some of the unsuspecting Spaniards, and rode off. This conduct met with its merited punishment; they were so closely pursued, that five only reached Huesca, and two of those were cut down at the gates; the remaining three were all who escaped of the whole detachment. Among the Spaniards Lizarraga fell, who commanded the cavalry that day. Mina, whose horse had been shot under him, immediately advanced to Huesca; the garrison had fled, leaving behind them some of their effects, and five Spanish officers, who thus received their liberty from the hero of Navarre.

Mina was now embarrassed with his prisoners; he marched them to the coast, in hopes there to find means of embarking them for Coruña, and fortunately the Iris, Captain Christian, was in sight, and took 400 of them on board. While he was thus employed, Cruchaga learnt that the French had collected considerable stores of grain in Tafalla, relying in perfect security upon the fortifications, where they had mounted four pieces of cannon, and upon the situation of that city on the road to Zaragoza, within reach of succour from Pamplona and Caparrosa. From Sanguesa he watched the motions of the French. By a rapid march he reached S. Martin de Ujue, two short hours

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*Cruchaga  
carries off  
the enemy's  
stores from  
Tafalla.*



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distant from the city, and he took such effectual means for keeping his movements secret, that no intelligence could be given to the enemy. At day-break, he approached Tafalla with that silence which he said was peculiar to his troops; they surprised the guard, the French retired within their fort, and Cruchaga entered with music before him as in triumph, and loaded the grain upon beasts which he had brought with him for the purpose. It had not been his intention to attempt any thing against the enemy's works: but his men heard that a priest, a number of peasants, and about thirty women, were confined in a fortified convent, because they had relations in the service of their country, or were suspected of favouring their country's cause; and they attacked the convent. The French abandoned it, and fled to their other works, leaving good spoil behind them to the conquerors. They, however, rejoiced more in having delivered their countrymen from these oppressors, than in the important stores which they obtained by the day's expedition; and before they left Tafalla, they drew up in the centre of the city, and the band played, to comfort, Cruchaga said, the hearts of the Spaniards!

Mina's object in soliciting for military rank.

Mina had obtained military rank for himself and his officers, and was now colonel and commandant-general of the division of Navarre, under which appellation his troops were considered as attached to the seventh army under Mendizabal. Pre-eminent as were the services of this chief and his followers, they did not obtain this rank without repeated solicitations, and the direct interference of the Cortes; for the Regency at first would only concede them the title of *urbanos*\*, or local militia.

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\* *Por Urbano se debe entender en mi concepto, said Sr. Aner in the debates upon this subject, aquel que se halle armado para conservar la tranquilidad de los pueblos, y quando mas para la defensa interior de una provincia, sin tener que salir jamas de ella.* Diario de las Cortes. T. 4. p. 103.