

CHAP. stores*, which they carried in for some time without being
 XXXIII. suspected.

1810.

October.

*Lili's pre-
 parations
 for defence.*

Suchet meantime could make no progress in the siege of Tortosa; though the Valencians left him undisturbed on their side, he could undertake no serious operations till the other part of his army could be brought down to complete the investment of the place, and till Macdonald should be in a situation to cover the besieging force, which that General could not do till he received reinforcements, his strength being wasted by the losses which he was continually suffering in detail, and by the numerous desertions which took place. Doyle's address to the foreigners in the French service, in their respective languages, had produced no inconsiderable effect; copies of it were fired from the town in shells, and by that means scattered among the besiegers. As soon as it was known that the enemy's heavy guns had arrived at Xerta, Lili issued a proclamation to the inhabitants, requesting that all who were not able to take arms and bear an active part in its defence would withdraw, while a way was yet open; the place, he said, had no shelter for them when it should be bombarded, nor could provisions be afforded them. But the invaders, he added, deceived themselves if they supposed that his constancy was to be shaken by the fears and lamentations of old men and children and of a few women, or if they expected to find another Lerida in Catalonia; for he and his garrison had sworn, and he now repeated the vow, that Tortosa should not be yielded up till it had surpassed, if that were

Sept. 7.

* When this practice was discovered, and some of them searched in consequence, a mortar was found in one of them. These boats had forfeited all claim to indulgence, in the first year of the war, when they boarded a British prize, and carried her in.

possible, the measure of resistance at Zaragoza and Gerona. He issued an order also that as soon as the first gun should be discharged against the place, the door of every house should be open day and night, and vessels of water kept there in readiness for extinguishing fires, . . . and lights during the night.

CHAP.
XXXIII.
1810.
October.

Buonaparte's birthday recurred about this time, and the French general sent a letter into the city, informing the governor that it would be celebrated in due form with a discharge of cannon. Lili corresponded to this courtesy by sending a similar communication on the eve of Ferdinand's anniversary; at the same time he sent the official notice which had reached him that the yellow fever had broken out in certain ports of the Mediterranean, and that some ships were infected with it: this information, he said, was given as humanity required, in order that the enemy might take all possible precautions against the contagion in those parts of the country which were occupied by their troops. The holiday was observed with its usual solemnities and pageants, as if there had been no hostile encampment without the walls: in the morning there was service in the churches; in the afternoon the holy girdle, a relic of which Tortosa boasted, was carried in procession, a masque of giants going before it, accompanied by persons performing a provincial sword-dance, and followed by all the corporate bodies, civil and ecclesiastical, and by the military, with music, and banners displayed. Bull-fights with young animals who were neither tortured with fire-works (as is the manner in the serious exhibitions of that execrable sport) nor slaughtered, were held in the streets, and the day concluded with a ball, a banquet, and an illumination.

*Ferdinand's
birthday ce-
lebrated in
Tortosa.*

Oct. 14.

The next communication of Lili to the French general was not received so courteously by Harispe, who at that time was left in command of the besieging army. The Spaniards sent him copies of the decree issued by the Regency in consequence of

*Conduct of
the French
general con-
cerning
Marshal
Soult's de-
cree.*

*See vol. ii.
p. 699.*

CHAP.
XXXIII.

1810.

October.

Soult's infamous edict against the Spanish armies, both edicts being printed on one sheet, in parallel columns; Lili sent them with a flag of truce, saying it was his duty to put the French general and his commander-in-chief in possession of this royal decree. Harispe replied, that he should always receive the Spanish commander's messengers with pleasure, when they were the bearers of decent and useful communications; but in the present instance he must detain them prisoners of war, inasmuch as they seemed to have no other object than that of scattering satirical writings. If this reply had not been accompanied by an act in violation of the laws of war, it would have been satisfactory to the Spaniards; for the French general could not more plainly have shown the opinion which he entertained of Marshal Soult's decree, than by thus affecting to believe that it was spurious. The besieging army, however, had given some examples of that merciless system upon which the intrusive government required its generals to act; . . . for the bodies of some peasants were taken out of the river, with many bayonet wounds about them, and their hands tied: they were interred in the city, where the circumstance and the solemnity made a strong impression upon the people. There was a Piemontese, who, having resided more than twenty years in Tortosa, went over to the French, and rendered them all the service which his knowledge of the place and the country enabled him to perform. This treason on the part of a naturalized foreigner excited a strong desire for vengeance; some peasants watched his movements, laid wait for him, surprised him, and carried him prisoner into the city, where he was tried, and condemned to be shot in the back, under the gallows; that mode and place of death being chosen as the most ignominious, there being no hangman there. The besieged were gratified by another act of vengeance. An officer in the French army, before the serious business of the

siege began, amused * himself, from a favourable station, with bringing down such individuals as came within reach of his gun. At length a deserter gave information that this unseen marksman's stand was in a house called *la Casilla Blanca*, upon which the commandant of artillery, D. Francisco Arnau, went with his piece to a good station on the bank of the river, and getting aim at him while he was engaged in his murderous sport, had the satisfaction of seeing him fall.

CHAP.
XXXIII.

1810.

October.

Though the enemy had established two bridges with a tete-du-pont to each between Mequinenza and Tortosa, they had not been able to render the passage of the river secure. Their boats were sometimes intercepted and sometimes sunk; and everywhere a system of war was carried on by which the armies of Macdonald and Suchet were so harassed, that the operations of the siege were impeded during five months. Some brilliant achievements were performed in the Ampurdan by Baron Eroles, an officer who rendered himself so obnoxious to the enemy by the activity and success with which he discharged his duty to his country, that there was an order in the French army to hang him as soon as he should fall into their hands. The German troops in Catalonia had at this time been reduced by deaths, captures, and desertions, to such a state of inefficiency, that the few survivors were permitted to leave Spain, and stationed on the south coast of France; there, in the enjoyment of rest and a benign climate, to recruit their broken health, before they returned to their respective countries. Some troops only were left in the garrisons of Lerida and Barcelona, . . . the remainder, a few hundreds only of as many thousands, gladly departed from a country in which they had committed and suffered so many

*Successes of
Eroles.*

* *Se preciaba de buen tirador, y se divertia en esto.* Diario de Tortosa.

CHAP.
XXXIII.

1810.

December.Dec. 6.

evils. Their place in the Ampurdan was supplied by a reinforcement of 5000 French, under General Clement; the new general, to signalize his entrance, entered Olot with 3000 men, and got possession of the stores which were deposited there, with which, and with the spoils of the town, he departed early on the second day, having thus far successfully effected his purpose. Eroles was at Tornadis at this time, where he had collected his troops; and they were receiving their rations when intelligence was brought him that the enemy had left Olot, and were on their way to Castellfullit. A cry arose from the Catalans that they did not want their bread and their brandy then; what they wanted was cartridges, and to kill the French. The men knew their commander, and he knew his people, for what kind of service they were fit, and how surely they might be relied on in that service. The enemy had had two hours' start, but they were impeded with artillery and plunder, and apprehending no danger, had made no speed: the Catalans had the desire of vengeance to quicken them, and performing in less than an hour and half what is estimated at a three hours' journey, they came up with the rearguard at Castellfullit, attacked and routed it. The French rallied, took a position on the plain of Polligé, where they were protected by the cavalry and their guns, and thus awaited for Eroles to attack them. His dispositions, however, as soon as he had reconnoitred the ground, were made for turning both their flanks; and when to prevent this they attacked his centre, their cavalry were repulsed, the attempt wholly failed, and they retreated to another position near S. Jayme. From thence they were driven, and fell back upon a battalion which had now formed in the plain of Argalaguer, and were protected by the buildings in that village; but supposing the few horse which Eroles then brought forward to be part of a greater force, Clement withdrew his men to a near wood, on the other

side of a stream. Encouraged by success, the Catalans attacked them there also, drove them successively from thence and from Besalu, and did not give up the pursuit till night closed. In this affair Clement lost more than a thousand men, the Spaniards twenty-five killed and fifty wounded: scarcely any prisoners were taken; the French were persuaded that no quarter would be given, and in that persuasion some had run upon the bayonets of the Spaniards, and some had thrown themselves down a precipice near Castellfullit. The whole detachment would have been destroyed if Eroles had had his cavalry, but they had been detached before he knew of the enemy's movements, and the utmost exertions did not suffice to bring them up in time. The Baron observed with satisfaction, in his dispatches, that they had been favoured with this victory by the patroness of Spain, on the * festival of whose conception it had been won.

CHAP.
XXXIII.
1810.
December.

Such, indeed, was the spirit which the French found in Catalonia, and such the exasperated temper on their part which this unexpected and brave resistance had occasioned, that they said it would be necessary to exterminate one-half the Catalans in order to intimidate the other. They found a similar spirit in Aragon; but there the country had not the same natural strength, nor was there a single fortress to afford protection to the people. The army, however, under D. Joze Maria Carvajal, was again in activity; and though, owing to the incapacity of their commanders in the first years of the war, and the want of means in the utter destitution wherein it was afterwards left, it was never fortunate enough to perform any splendid or signal service, it

* Major Von Staffe (340-2) dates this affair in November, instead of the following month. If there could be any doubt between his authority and that of Eroles's dispatch, this circumstance would determine it.

CHAP. deserved this praise, that for patience and constancy under the
 XXXIII. most trying circumstances, this of all the Spanish armies was
 1810. that which during the contest deserved most highly of its country.

*Edict
 against the
 Junta of
 Aragon.*

The severest means were used to intimidate the Aragonese, but in vain. Suchet, as governor-general of that kingdom for the intrusive government, published a decree, saying, it had come to his knowledge that a set of senseless men, who had the ridiculous audacity to style themselves the Junta of Aragon, had fixed themselves in the village of Manzanera, from whence they endeavoured to disturb the tranquillity of the Aragonese, by their incendiary libels, and despotically took possession of the public revenues and stores: he gave orders, therefore, that they should be pursued, delivered over to a military tribunal, and be sentenced within twenty-four hours: that the people of Manzanera, or of any other place to which they might betake themselves, should drive them out, or, failing so to do, receive an exemplary punishment, the Ayuntamiento and the parochial priest being responsible in their goods and persons for the behaviour of the inhabitants in this point: every place which received them was to be punished irremissibly, and the authorities to suffer ignominious death by the gallows. The Junta of Aragon, to show how they regarded this decree, printed it in their own Gazette, well knowing that nothing could contribute more to keep up that feeling in the nation which it was their duty to encourage and to direct. They called attention also to the important circumstance, that this decree was issued not in the name of Joseph the Intruder, but in that of the Emperor of the French, King of Italy, and Protector of the Confederation of the Rhine, of whose intention to include Spain, if he could, among the states subjected to him, no equivocal indication was here afforded. The intrusive government, however deceitful in its promises, was always sincere in its threats. Of this every province had abundant proofs, and none more than

that in which Suchet commanded. The city of Molina de Aragon in an especial manner provoked the vengeance of the invaders by the disposition which the inhabitants manifested, who, as often as the French entered it, took refuge in the woods and mountains: the enemy at length set fire to it on all sides, and three parts of the city were consumed. But acts of this kind, which proved the intention of the invaders to reduce Spain to a desert rather than leave it unsubdued, served only to confirm the Spaniards in that resolution which rendered their subjugation impossible.

CHAP.
XXXIII.
1810.

Molina de
Aragon
burnt by the
French.
Nov. 1.

While Carvajal impeded Suchet's operations from the side of Aragon, some efforts were made from Valencia; a province where, with ample means, little exertion had been found, and less ability to direct it. The Regency relied upon the unexhausted resources which existed there, believing that if the Valencian force were well employed, even though it should not undertake any grand operations, Tortosa could not be taken by less than 30,000 men. But when Bassecourt arrived to take the command there, he found the army in a miserable condition both as to equipments and discipline, which might have made him hopeless of success in any other warfare than that desultory one, wherein inexperienced troops may be trusted, and in which nothing is lost if they find or fancy it necessary to disperse and provide every man for his own safety. Some field-pieces had been sent from Valencia to the army of Aragon: the French obtained intelligence of this, and a strong detachment under the Polish General Chlopisky entered Teruel to intercept this artillery, when General Villacampa, for whom it was intended, was at Alfambra, six hours distant: . . . the officer in charge of the guns endeavoured to retreat with them, but was pursued and overtaken at Alventosa, and the whole fell into the enemy's hands. After this success Chlopisky sought to inflict another

Bassecourt
takes the
command in
Valencia.

Oct. 31.

CHAP. blow upon Villacampa's division, and an affair took place
 XXXIII. between Villed and La Fuensanta, which the Spaniards con-
 sidered as a victory on their part, because, though compelled to
 1810. retire from the ground, they had not been pursued, nor had any
November. dispersion taken place. Somewhat better fortune attended a
Nov. 12. maritime expedition from Peñiscola, which was planned by
 General Doyle and executed by his aide-de-camp, Lieutenant-
 Colonel San Martin; by this force the strong tower of S. Juan,
 which commanded the Puerto de los Alfaques, was surprised,
 and immediately garrisoned and stored; and thus the enemy
 were deprived of a port in which their corsairs and coasters
 found protection. A land expedition, undertaken at the same
 time in the hope of cutting off a French detachment at Tray-
 guera, failed altogether; the French had withdrawn in time, and
 receiving a timely reinforcement, compelled the Spaniards in
 their turn to retreat. No loss was sustained in this attempt.
 General Bassecourt was less fortunate in an enterprise of greater
 moment; he projected an attack upon Suchet's army, which, if
 it succeeded, should have the effect of breaking up the siege; . .
 this general had not yet learnt how little either his men or
 officers were to be relied on in any combined or extensive opera-
 tions; in full expectation* that every thing would be executed
 as exactly as it had been planned, he left Peñiscola at night, put
 himself at the head of his central division, and reaching the
 bridge over the Servol, beyond Vinaroz, halted there to give
 time for the movements of his right, under Brigadier Porta,

*Defeat of
 the Valen-
 cians at
 Uldecona.*

Nov. 26.

* *No era imaginable frustrase mis calculos, atendida la circumspeccion con que se formaron, la exactitud de los datos, y el valor de las tropas; pero casualidades funestas, que no pueden entrar en la prevision de un gefe superior, que fia una parte de sus esperanzas á la suerte, y á manos subalternos, hicieron inutilis mis tareas.* Thus he expresses himself in his official dispatch.