

to do than to talk of its errors, complain of its abuses, and speculate upon its hopeless condition; whereas the Guerrilla leaders led a life of incessant activity and animating hope, and most of them were impelled to that course by a strong feeling either of their country's injuries or of their own.

CHAP.

XLI.

1812.

April.

*Mutual re-
taliation.*

At this time, Lord Wellington's successes had animated the Spaniards with a hope of deliverance, and made the French more intent upon extirpating those persons who, by keeping up the national spirit in what they deemed the subjected provinces, occupied a large part of the invading force. They attempted to surprise the Junta of Aragon, as they had that of Burgos, and a detachment from Palombini's troops nearly effected this at Mochales, in the lordship of Molina: the Junta escaped, but the enemy sacked the village, stripped the women in the market-place, and hung the alcalde and two other persons; in reprisals for whom, Jabarelli, the late commandant at Calatayud, and ten other prisoners, were shot by the Spaniards. Vicente Bonmati, the leader of a Guerrilla party, had been put to death at Petrel, in Valencia, with circumstances of peculiar cruelty; the French having tied his hands, transfixed them with a bayonet, and then parading him through the streets, pricked him with their bayonets till he died. Upon this the Camp Marshal Copons, provincial commandant-general in that kingdom, gave orders to shoot the first prisoner who should be taken, and informed the nearest French commandant, that for every other such execution, twenty prisoners should be put to death. Such reprisals were but too characteristic of a vindictive people, capable of inflicting as well as enduring any thing; but they were evidences also of that high-mindedness which the Spaniards retained in their lowest fortune; never abasing themselves, never submitting to the insolent assumption of authority, nor for a moment consenting that might should be allowed to sanction injustice. Their

CHAP.
XLI.

1812.

May 5.
Guerrilla
*exploits.**May 28.**May 30.**April 9.*

parties, meantime, acquired a confidence from their own experience, and from the success of their allies. Mendizabal appeared before Burgos, and drove the enemy from the monastery of Las Huelgas and the hospital del Rey. Duran entered Tudela by escalade, and destroyed a battering train of artillery which had been brought thither from Zaragoza, with the intent, he supposed, of laying siege to Ciudad Rodrigo. The Empecinado attacked the French in Cuenca; they withdrew from it in the night, and he destroyed their fortifications there, and set fire to the Inquisition. Mina received information that a strong convoy was about to set forth from Vittoria for France, escorting some prisoners taken from Ballasteros. He determined to intercept them upon the plains of Arlaban, which had been the scene of one of his most successful exploits in the preceding year; and in order to deceive the enemy, he wrote letters which were thrown into their hands, declaring his intention of marching upon the river Arga, to form a junction at the foot of the Pyrenees with two of his battalions. The enemy, supposing that this dreaded commander was far distant, began their march: his orders were, after one discharge to attack with the bayonet, and that no soldier should touch the convoy on pain of death, till the action was ended. It was of no long duration; the vanguard were presently slaughtered; the centre and the rear, consisting of Poles and of Imperial Guards, made a brave but unavailing resistance; from 600 to 700 were slain, 500 wounded, and 150 taken with the whole convoy, and about 400 prisoners set at liberty. M. Deslandes, the Intruder's private secretary, was in the convoy; he got out of his carriage, and endeavoured to escape in a peasant's dress, with which it seems he had provided himself, in anticipation of some such danger; but this disguise cost him his life, which would have been saved had it been known in time who he was. His wife, an Andalusian lady,

with two of her countrywomen who were married to officers in the enemy's service, fell into Mina's hands. Very few would have escaped if the French had not erected a fort at Arlaban, in consequence of their last year's loss, and this served as a protection for the fugitives.

CHAP.
XLI.
1812.
April.

Some letters from the Intruder were found upon his secretary. One was to Buonaparte, reminding him how, when he returned to Spain at his desire twelve months before, his Imperial Majesty had told him, that at the worst he could quit that country in case their hopes should not be realised, and that then he should have an asylum in the south of the empire. "Sire," said he, "events have deceived my hopes; I have done no good, and I have no hope of doing any. I entreat your Majesty, therefore, to let me resign into your hands the right to the crown of Spain, which four years ago you deigned to transfer to me. I had no other object in accepting the crown than the happiness of this vast monarchy, and it is not in my power to effect that. I entreat your Majesty to receive me into the number of your subjects, and to believe that you will never have a more faithful servant than the friend whom nature has given you." There were other letters of the same date to his wife, whom he had left in Paris, and who was to deliver that which he had written to the Emperor only in case the decree for uniting to France the provinces beyond the Ebro should have been published; otherwise she was to await his farther directions. In another letter to her he said, that if the Emperor made war against Russia, and thought his presence in Spain could be useful, he would remain there, provided that both the military and civil authority were vested in him; otherwise his desire was to return to France. Should there be no Russian war, he would remain with or without the command, provided nothing were exacted from him which could make it believed that he

*Intercepted
letters from
the In-
truder.*

CHAP. consented to a dismemberment of the monarchy; provided also
 XLI. that troops enough and territory enough were left him, and
 1812. that the monthly loan of a million, which had been promised,
 were paid. In that case he would remain as long as he could,
April. thinking himself as much bound in honour not to quit Spain
 lightly, as he should be to quit it, if, during the war with England,
 sacrifices were required from him which he neither could nor
 ought to make, except at a general peace, for the good of Spain,
 of France, and of Europe. A decree for uniting to France
 the provinces beyond the Ebro, if it arrived unexpectedly, he
 said, would make him depart the next day; and if the Em-
 peror should adjourn his projects till a time of peace, he must
 supply him with means of subsistence during the war. But if
 he inclined either to his removal, or to any of those measures
 which must cause him to remove, it was then of great con-
 sequence that he should return to France on kindly terms with the
 Emperor, and with his sincere and full consent; and this was
 what reason dictated to him, and what was more conformable to
 the situation of the miserable country over which he had been
 made king, and to his own domestic relations. In that case, he
 asked from the Emperor a domain in Tuscany, or in the south,
 some three hundred leagues from Paris. The course of events,
 and the false position in which he found himself, so con-
 trary, he said, to the rectitude and loyalty of his character,
 had greatly injured his health: he was growing old; nothing
 but honour and duty could detain him where he was, and his
 inclination would drive him away, unless the Emperor explained
 himself in a different manner from what he had hitherto done.
 There was also a letter to his brother Louis, expressing a hope to
 see him one day in good health, and with the happiness which
 arises from a good conscience. . . That happiness the intrusive
 king Joseph might well envy! It is little excuse for him that he

was more weak than wicked, and in mere weakness had consented to be made the instrument of his brother's insatiable ambition. Even in these letters, where he manifested a full sense of his humiliating situation, no consciousness is expressed of its guilt. For the sake of his own credit, and no doubt of his own personal safety, he protested against any immediate dismemberment of Spain; but he would have been contented to serve his brother's purpose, by nominally retaining the kingdom, till a pretext could be found for dismembering it at a general peace.

But how long he should retain it depended upon something more than the will and pleasure of Napoleon Buonaparte, and this he was soon made to apprehend. Lord Wellington was not about to remain idle with his victorious army; he prepared for offensive operations, and the first step was to interrupt the communication between the armies of Soult and Marmont. All the permanent bridges on the Tagus below that of Arzobispo had been destroyed; and the only way which was practicable for a large army was by a bridge of boats at Almaraz, in the line of the high road, where the noble bridge erected in Charles the Fifth's time, at the city of Plasencia's cost, had been demolished. For the protection of this important post, the French had thrown up strong works on both sides of the river: they had formed a flanked *tete-du-pont* on the left bank, riveted with masonry and strongly intrenched; and on the high ground above it they had constructed a large and strong redoubt, called Fort Napoleon, with an interior intrenchment, and a loop-holed tower in its centre; here they had mounted nine pieces of cannon, and had garrisoned it with between 400 and 500 men. On the right bank, there was a redoubt called Fort Ragusa, in honour of Marshal Marmont, of the same strength and construction, except that the tower had a

CHAP.
XLI.

1812.

April.

Sir Rowland Hill's expedition to the bridge of Almaraz.

CHAP.

XLI.

1812.

May.

double tier of loopholes; this flanked the bridge, and between the redoubt and the bridge there was a *flèche*. For farther security, the invaders had fortified an old castle commanding the Puerto de Miravete, about a league distant, being the only pass for carriages of any kind by which the bridge could be approached. A marked alteration of climate is perceptible upon crossing the narrow mountain ridge over which the road here passes. Coming from Castille, the traveller descends from this ridge into a country, where, for the first time, the gum-cistus appears as lord of the waste, . . . the most beautiful of all shrubs in the Peninsula for the profusion of its delicate flowers, and one of the most delightful for the rich balsamic odour which its leaves exude under a southern sun; but which overspreads such extensive tracts, where it suffers nothing else to grow, that in many parts both of Portugal and Spain it becomes the very emblem of desolation. The old castle stood at little distance from the road, on the summit of the sierra: the French had surrounded it by a lower *enceinte*, twelve feet high; they had fortified a large *venta*, or travellers' inn, upon the road, and had constructed two small works between the inn and the castle, forming altogether a strong line of defence.

Sir Rowland Hill, to whom this important service had been intrusted, broke up from Almandralejo on the 12th of May, with part of the 2nd division of infantry, and six of the 24-pounder iron howitzers which had been used against Badajoz. The Marquis de Almeida, who was a member of the Junta of Extremadura, accompanied them, and from him and from the people, Sir Rowland received the most ready and effectual assistance which it was in their power to bestow. On the morning of the 16th they reached Jaraicejo, an old and decayed town, about eight miles from the summit of the pass; and on the same evening they advanced in three columns. . . the left,

under Lieutenant-General Chowne, toward the castle of Miravete; Sir Rowland himself, with the right under Major-General Howard, toward a pass through which a most difficult and circuitous footpath leads by the village of Romangordo to the bridge; and the centre, under Major-General Long, along the high road, to the Puerto. The artillery was with the centre: both the flank columns were provided with ladders, and it was intended that both should escalate the forts against which they were directed; but the difficulties of the way were such, that it was found impossible for them to reach their respective points before daybreak: as the enemy, therefore, could not be taken by surprise, Sir Rowland judged it best to defer the attack till they should be better acquainted with the position and nature of the works; and the troops bivouacked on the sierra. It was found that the castle, because of its peculiar situation, could not be carried without a long operation: a false attack therefore was directed to be made upon it by Lieutenant-General Chowne, and Sir Rowland, with the right, and the 6th Portugueze caçadores (about 2,000 men in all), on the evening of the 18th began to descend by the mountain path which he had originally proposed to take. They were provided with twelve scaling-ladders of sixteen feet in length; and he relied, as in this case he well might do, upon the valour of the troops, to supply the want of artillery. Although the distance was little more than six miles, the way was so difficult, that notwithstanding all the exertions of officers and men the head of the column did not arrive near the fort till it was break of day, and it was two or three hours later before the rear came up; but during this time the troops were completely concealed by the hill, and the feint against the castle had induced the enemy to believe that the bridge forts would not be attacked till the pass should have been forced, and a way made for the guns.

CHAP.

XLI.

1812.

May.

CHAP.
XLI.

1812.

May 19.

Could the attack have been made before day, it was intended that the *tête-du-pont* should have been escaladed, and the bridge destroyed, at the same time that Fort Napoleon was assaulted; but well knowing how much depended upon celerity, Sir Rowland did not wait till the troops who were appointed to this part of the operations could come up; with the first battalion of the 50th and one wing of the 71st, he escaladed the fort in three places nearly at the same time. At first a determined resistance was made, but the enemy soon slackened their destructive fire: they took to flight as soon as the assailants were on the top of the parapet; they abandoned the tower, and were driven at the point of the bayonet through their intrenchment, and through the *tête-du-pont*, and across the bridge. The commander of Fort Ragusa on the opposite bank, with a cowardice rarely shown among French officers, but with a selfish disregard for the soldiers which was too common among them, cut the bridge, in consequence of which many leaped into the river and perished, and 259 were made prisoners, including the governor and sixteen officers; and acting with farther folly in his fear, he evacuated his own fort, which was perfectly safe from any attack, and retired with his garrison to Naval Moral, three leagues off, for which he was brought to summary trial at Talavera and shot. . . Both forts were entirely destroyed by the conquerors, and the whole apparatus of the bridge, and the stores, which were in such abundance as to prove that this point had justly been considered a most important station by the enemy. The loss in this signal enterprise was, two officers and 31 men killed, 13 and 131 wounded.

The garrison ought to have been prepared for such an attack; for Marmont had apprehended it, and in that apprehension had marched a detachment to the Puerto del Pico, with the view of reinforcing Talavera in case the bridge should be

lost. Sir Rowland retired by Truxillo to his former position in front of Badajoz; and on the second day after his success, a division of the central army, under General d'Armagnac, crossed the Tagus by the Puente del Arzobispo, to relieve the isolated garrison at Miravete. Both Soult and Marmont had put their forces in motion as soon as they were informed of Sir Rowland's march: the latter arrived upon the Tagus too late to prevent the evil, and without the means of repairing it; the former, when he found that the allies had passed Truxillo on their return, gave up the hope of intercepting them. He returned to Seville, and, regarding with uneasy apprehension the enterprising spirit of an enemy whom he had once affected to despise, gave directions for strengthening the line of the Guadalete, lest a force should be landed at St. Roque's or at Algeziras, and endanger his communication with the besieging army before Cadiz. Bornos, as the most important point upon the line, was fortified with great care. Ballasteros thought to interrupt the progress of the works, and accordingly brought all the force he could muster, consisting of about 6,000, to attack the French division there of 4,500 under General Corroux. Collecting his troops at La Majada de Ruiz, and marching from thence early in the afternoon of one day, he succeeded in fording the Guadalete unperceived at dawn on the next. The attack was made bravely, but, with the usual ill fortune and ill discipline of a Spanish army, some mistake led to confusion, and confusion was followed by panic: the French were not strong enough to pursue them beyond the river, and Ballasteros retired with the loss of about 1,000 killed and wounded, and half as many prisoners, . . . a fourth of his whole force.

Meantime Badajoz had been fully supplied; the means of transport which had been used for that service were then employed in storing Ciudad Rodrigo; a month's consumption for

CHAP.
XLI.

1812.

*May.**Ballasteros
defeated at
Bornos.**June 1.**Lord Wel-
lington ad-
vances into
Spain.*