

CHAP.

XLIV.

1813.

*August.**Siege of the
castle of St.
Sebastian's.*

The effort on Soult's part had been great, and was deemed so by Lord Wellington, for a Portugueze brigade was withdrawn from the besieging corps during the assault. As soon as the town had been carried, preparations were made for reducing the castle. The enemy still held the convent of S. Teresa, the garden of which, inclosed as usual in such establishments with a high wall, reached a good way up the hill, toward their upper defences; and from thence they marked any who approached within reach of fire, so that when a man fell, there was no other means of bringing him off than by sending the French prisoners upon this service of humanity. The town presented a dreadful spectacle both of the work of war and of the wickedness which in war is let loose. It had caught fire during the assault, owing to the quantity of combustibles of all kinds which were scattered about; the French rolled their shells into it from the castle; and while it was in flames, the troops were plundering, and the people of the surrounding country flocking to profit by the spoils of their countrymen. The few inhabitants who were to be seen seemed stupified with horror; they had suffered so much that they looked with apathy at all around them, and when the crash of a falling house made the captors run, they scarcely moved. Heaps of dead were lying every where, English, Portugueze, and French, one upon another, with such determination had the one side attacked and the other maintained its ground. Very many of the assailants lay dead on the roofs of the houses which adjoined the breach. The bodies were thrown into the mines and other excavations, and there covered over so as to be out of sight, but so hastily and slightly that the air far and near was tainted; and fires were kindled in the breaches to consume those which could not be otherwise disposed of. The hospital presented a more dreadful scene . . . for it was a scene of human suffering; friend and enemy

march till late in the afternoon, and strike before the sunrise.

had been indiscriminately carried thither, and were there alike neglected;.. on the third day after the assault many of them had received neither surgical assistance, nor food of any kind; and it became necessary to remove them on the fifth, when the flames approached the building: much of this neglect would have been unavoidable, even if that humane and conscientious diligence, which can be hoped for from so few, had been found in every individual belonging to the medical department, the number of the wounded being so great; and little help could be received from the other part of the army, because it had been engaged in action on the same day. The hideous circumstances of war were indeed at this time to be seen in S. Sebastian's, divested of its pomp: and to a thoughtful mind its actual horrors were less painful than the brutal insensibility with which they were regarded by men whose nature, originally bad, had been worsened by their way of life. Great exertions were made to stop the excesses which at such times are to be expected; but the utmost exertions can do little among troops who believe themselves privileged by the occasion to break loose from the restraints of military discipline, and who are not more fearless of death than they are, while in health and strength, of judgement. The town was sacked: had it been an enemy's town, it could not have suffered more from its captors. Sentries were placed at all the outlets to make the plunderers lay down their booty, but all that could be secreted about the person was carried off; and the Spaniards of Passages and other places were ready, as at a fair, to purchase the spoils of their countrymen. A reproach was brought upon the British name. The French seized the opportunity of endeavouring to fix upon their enemies the same odious imputation which they themselves were conscious of having deserved; they accused the British of setting fire to the town, indiscriminately murdering friend

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*Excesses
committed
in the city.*

CHAP. and foe, and pillaging the place under the eyes of their officers,
 XLIV. who made no attempt to restrain them. These charges were
 1813. brought forward by that party in Spain who, without inclining
 September. in the slightest degree toward the French, manifested on all
 occasions their jealousy and their envious dislike of England;
 and they added the farther calumny, that the captors had
 plundered the churches, and, by giving way to excess of every
 kind, lost the favourable time for following up their success and
 taking the castle. All was false, except that great excesses had
 been committed: the difference between the conduct of the British
 at St. Sebastian's, and that of the French at Porto, Tarragona,
 and other places, being this, that the crimes which the former
 perpetrated were checked as soon as they could be by the
 officers, acknowledged by the generals as evils which they had
 not been able to prevent, severely condemned by them, and
 punished: those of the French had been systematic and pre-
 determined; the men were neither checked nor reproved by
 their generals; and so far were the generals from receiving any
 mark of disapprobation from their government, that the acts
 themselves were ostentatiously proclaimed in bulletins and
 official reports, in the hope of intimidating the Portuguese
 and Spaniards, and without any sense of shame.

*The gar-
 rison sur-
 render.*

Preparations were immediately made for reducing the castle, the plan being to erect batteries on the works of the town, and breach the Queen batteries, the Mirador, and the keep. On the 3d, some discussion concerning a surrender was entered into with General Rey, which he broke off when it was required that the garrison should lay down their arms and become prisoners of war. These terms the general knew he could obtain at the last moment, and possibly he still entertained some hope of holding out till another effort could be made for his relief; as, even after he had retired into the castle, some artillery and

ammunition reached him there from France, it being impossible, upon such a coast, and when the ports were so near, entirely to cut off the communication. The Convent of S. Teresa was taken on the 5th; by this time the flames, which continued still to spread, had driven the troops from their more advanced stations, and made them retire to the ramparts. By the evening of the 7th, the roofs of such houses and steeples as remained unburnt were prepared for musketry; and on the following morning nearly sixty pieces of ordnance opened on the castle. With great exertions, directed by Captain Smith, of the navy, guns were got up the steep scarp of the islet of S. Clara, and there mounted on a battery, which the sailors manned. The wall of the Mirador was so hard, that the balls at first split upon striking it; nevertheless, it was peeled by the continual fire, and was beginning to come down, when the white flag was hung out. All the enemy's batteries were at that time utterly demolished, those on the sea line alone excepted; the guns dismounted, the carriages knocked to pieces, and the castle in ruins. There were no barracks, nor any covering for the troops except holes, which had been excavated in every nook and corner, to serve for them as splinter-proofs; and of these many were filled with water, much rain having fallen during the preceding week: but for the prisoners, who were in the hands of the garrison, there was no shelter, and many of them were killed by the fire of their friends. The French general might have obtained credit for an act of generous humanity, and of policy as well, if he had released these prisoners, sending a trumpet with them to declare his reasons for so doing, and to express his reliance upon British honour that an exchange should be allowed for them; for this no doubt would have been agreed to, though the advantage was so manifestly to the enemy.

General Rey, on displaying the white flag, said he would

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Sept. 8.

CHAP. send officers to confer on the terms of surrender. Sir Thomas
 XLIV. Graham replied, no others would be offered than what had
 1813. already been stated; the garrison must lay down their arms,
 and be made prisoners of war. During the whole siege they
 had lost about 2400 men, and they had now eaten all their
 horses. Yielding of necessity now, they were especially
 anxious that they should be under British protection, be
 embarked at Passages as the nearest port, and conveyed directly
 to England; and this was promised. One article requested that
 the *Commissaire de Guerre*, having with him the widow and the
 two daughters of his brother, who had died at Pamplona, might
 be allowed to return with them to France, he being their chief
 support. General Rey was indignant that an article about
 women should appear in the capitulation of such a garrison,
 and after such a defence; and this he expressed coarsely, as if
 a soldier disparaged his character by showing any consideration
 for humanity!

September.

Sept. 10.

On the 10th, the Portugueze were formed in the streets of
 the ruined city; the British on the ramparts. The day was
 fine, after a night of heavy rain. About noon the garrison
 marched out at the Mirador gate. The bands of two or three
 Portugueze regiments played occasionally; but altogether it
 was a dismal scene, amid ruins and vestiges of fire and slaughter:
 a few inhabitants were present, and only a few. Many of the
 French soldiers wept bitterly, there was a marked sadness in
 the countenances of all, and they laid down their arms in silence.
 Colonel S. Ouary, the commandant of the place, had been
 uniformly attentive to the officers who had been prisoners.
 When this kindness was now acknowledged, he said that he had
 been twice a prisoner in England; that he had been fifty years
 in the service, and on the 15th of the passing month he should
 have received his dismissal: he was now sixty-six, he said,

an old man, and should never serve again ; and if he might be permitted to retire into France, instead of being sent to England, he should be the happiest of men. Sir Thomas Graham wrote to Lord Wellington in favour of the kind-hearted old man, and it may be believed that the application was not made in vain. Captain Sougeon was recognized at this time, who, on the day of the first assault, had descended the breach to assist our wounded: " There," said he, pointing to his men, " are the remains of the brave 22d ; we were 250 the other day, now not more than 50 are left." Lord Wellington, upon being informed of his conduct, sent him to France. Eighty officers and 1756 men were all the remains of the garrison, and of these 25 officers and 512 men were in the hospital.

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CHAPTER XLV.

OPERATIONS OF THE ANGLO-SICILIAN ARMY. THE ALLIES
ENTER FRANCE. PASSAGE OF THE BIDASSOA, THE NI-
VELLE, AND THE NIVE. TREATY BETWEEN BUONAPARTE
AND FERDINAND, AND CONSEQUENT PROCEEDINGS OF
THE SPANISH GOVERNMENT.

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*The re-
mains of
Romana's
army return
from the
North.*

DURING the siege of St. Sebastian's, some few hundred men, the remains of Romana's army, who had not been able to effect their escape from the North, when their magnanimous general and their comrades went to take part in their country's struggle, and most of them to perish in it, returned to Spain. The resistance to Buonaparte's tyranny, which the Spaniards and Portugueze had begun, had prepared the way for the deliverance of the continent, and thus eventually restored them to their native land.

*Lord W.
Bentinck
invests Tar-
ragona.*

The Anglo-Sicilian army had no sooner returned to Alicante from its ill-conducted expedition against Tarragona, than every exertion was used for enabling it to take the field, and profit by the retreat of the enemy from Valencia. Lord William Bentinck entered that capital on the 9th of July, and leaving General Elio to observe Murviedro, proceeded with his own troops, and such of the Spaniards as he could find means of providing with subsistence, for in this essential point there was the greatest

difficulty. Having arrived at Vinaroz, he detached a corps under Lieutenant-General Sir William Clinton by sea to Tarragona, in the hope of preventing the enemy from dismantling that fortress, if such should be their intention. When the fleet arrived off Tarragona, a French force was discovered in its vicinity; but there were no indications of any such purpose. The detachment, therefore, landed at the Col de Balaguer; and there, Lord William, having crossed the Ebro at Amposta on flying bridges, joined him with the advance of the army, some cavalry, and artillery; the whole then moved forward to the village of Cambrils, and on the first of August they invested Tarragona; that operation was well performed, and cover was obtained three hundred yards nearer than the most advanced point which had been occupied during the previous attack. Preparations were now observable in the place for its destruction; but it was evident that the garrison could not effect this in the presence of the allied army, unless Marshal Suchet came in force to cover the operation. That general was at Barcelona; his troops were at Villafranca and at Villanova de Sitges, being thus divided to lessen the difficulty of subsisting them; and his advance was at Arbos and at Vendrell: sometimes he seemed to be menacing a movement against the allies, and sometimes preparing for a farther retreat. Lord William, with such an enemy in such force so near, would not expose himself to a failure like that of Sir John Murray; and he deferred beginning the siege and landing his heavy artillery, till the Duque del Parque's army should come up, and Sarsfield with his Catalan troops. The Duque joined on the third; the Catalans were actively employed upon the right flank of Suchet's divisions, cutting off his supplies; and on the 7th they surprized a battalion who were guarding the mills at St. Saturni, and occasioned them a loss of 200 men. Sarsfield

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*Col. Jones's
account,
V. 2. 201.*

CHAP. joined on the 11th. But as the appearance of the allies before
 XLV. Tarragona prevented the garrison from demolishing the works,
 1813. so on the other hand it gave Marshal Suchet time for bringing
 August. together as large a force as he thought the occasion required.
 The British general, like Generals Maitland and Murray before
 him, felt all the difficulties of his situation; he was conscious
 that his ill-composed army was far from being efficient in pro-
 portion to its numerical strength; he had no means of feeding
 the Spanish part of that army if the enemy should manœuvre
 upon his flank, so as to cut off the supplies which they obtained
 from the country; he had found it impracticable to throw a
 bridge over the Ebro; and should he be compelled in his present
 situation to retreat, the ships could not take off more than a
 third of his forces. But while the prudence of remaining in
 that situation became a serious question, preparations for
 breaking ground were carried on.

*Suchet
 raises the
 siege.*

Suchet meantime acting as if he were opposed to a much
 greater force, had waited till Generals Decaen, Maurice Ma-
 thieu, and Maximien Lamarque could join him with 8000 men
 belonging to the army of Catalonia; with this accession his
 numbers were estimated at from 27,000 to 30,000. They
 effected their junction at Villafranca on the 14th. The first
 attempt was by the coast road; but Admiral Hallowell effectually
 checked this movement, by stationing his troops as close as
 possible to the low sandy shore in front of the Torre del Barra.
 On the ensuing morning Lord William was informed that a
 large body of the French were advancing through the inland
 country by the Col de Santa Christina; and in the evening a
 sharp skirmish took place between the advance of hussars and
 the cavalry under Colonel Lord Frederick Bentinck, which he
 sent forward to observe their motions: in this the Brunswick
 hussars distinguished themselves, repulsing the enemy and

making several prisoners. Suchet advanced rapidly beyond the Gaya that day, while Decaen advanced upon Valls and the Francoli. Lord William did not deem it prudent to risk a general action before Tarragona; at nightfall, therefore, he commenced his retreat, and when day broke the whole army was out of sight of the city; the British, Germans, and Sicilians, covering the road towards Tortosa, took up a position near Cambrils. Sarsfield occupied Reus; and the Duque del Parque was directed to proceed to the Col de Balaguer, where, if Suchet should push the retreating army so as to make a general action necessary, it was intended to await his attack. But the French commander had no such purpose; his present object was to bring off the garrison from Tarragona, and to demolish its fortifications, so that they might afford no support to the allies. On the night of the 18th the works were blown up; and Marshal Suchet then withdrew for ever from a place where, by the premeditated atrocities which were committed at its capture, he has fixed upon his memory an indelible stain. The demolition was effectual: the artillery consisted of about 200 pieces of brass ordnance and 46 iron mortars; 50 of the former were left uninjured; and he did not tarry long enough to destroy the quantity of warlike stores which he had not the means of removing. Sarsfield on the following day took possession of the city.

Suchet soon fell back upon the line of the Llobregat, having drained the plain of Villafranca of its resources. In a country thus exhausted, General Copons declared it was not possible to provide for the whole Spanish force under Lord William's command; and in consequence of this, and upon erroneous information that part of the French troops had been detached to aid Marshal Soult, the British general, conformably to an arrangement made with Lord Wellington, sent the Duque del

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*The French
abandon
Tarragona.*

*Plans pro-
posed to
Suchet by
Marshal
Sout.*