

CHAP.

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1813.

*September.*

Parque, with the 4th Spanish army, to Zaragoza; and he reinforced the corps, then employed under Elio, in the blockade of Tortosa. Early in September he concentrated the greater part of his remaining force at Villafranca. At this time Marshal Soult had proposed to Suchet that he should cross the Pyrenees with the whole disposable force of the armies of Aragon and Catalonia, and unite with him at Tarbes and at Pau, for the purpose of re-entering Spain together by Oleron and Jaca, and making another effort for the relief of Pamplona. A different project was offered to his consideration by the minister at war, . . . that he should as much as possible occupy the enemy upon the Ebro: in either case a reinforcement of conscripts was to be counted on. The difficulties in the way of the first plan were soon perceived by Soult himself to be insurmountable; and Suchet represented the danger of drawing after him the Anglo-Sicilian army into the southern departments of France, which were defenceless. But as a practicable though a perilous operation, he offered to advance between the Ebro and the Pyrenees, with 70 pieces of field and 30 of mountain artillery, to meet Soult, who might debouche from Jaca with his infantry and cavalry, but without cannon. But for this two things were necessary, . . . that he should have conscripts to place in the garrisons, and that before he marched from Catalonia he should defeat the Anglo-Sicilians.

Lord William's numbers were not equal to those which could be brought against him, the want both of provisions and means of transport having obliged him to leave Whittingham's division at Reus and Valls; but he had no suspicion that Suchet would advance against him. His army was posted at Villafranca and in the villages in its front, as far as the mountains on the Llobregat; the advance, under Colonel Adams, consisting of the 27th British regiment, one Calabrian and three Spanish



battalions, with four mountain guns, occupied the pass of Ordal, on the main road, about ten miles in their front, and the same distance from the enemy's posts on the Llobregat. The pass was so strong, that Lord William was without any apprehension of its being forced, especially as he thought the probable point of attack would be by turning his left at Martorell and San Sadurni, where Copons was posted. Nor, indeed, was it likely Suchet would have confined himself to the front attack of a position which was strong there, but open on both flanks, unless, because such an attack was improbable, he thought the enemy might be taken there by surprize, before they had strengthened the post.

Accordingly, having concerted his plans with General Decaen, he collected the divisions of Harispe and Habert, with his cavalry at the bridge of Molins del Rey, and at eight o'clock on the night of the 12th moved for the pass. The allies were reposing in position, when about midnight their piquets were rapidly driven in, and they were presently attacked in force. An old work which commanded the main road was well defended by the Calabrians, till they were driven from it by the repeated attacks of superior numbers; they rallied then about sixty paces in rear of it, behind some old ruins, and there, in conjunction with the Spaniards, who were close on their left, stood their ground some time longer. But in a night attack the assailants, acting upon ground with which they were well acquainted, and on a concerted plan, had greatly the advantage over a very inferior force who were taken by surprize. Colonel Adam and the two officers next in succession to him were badly wounded, and obliged to quit the field; owing to the changes this occasioned, the regular directions were interrupted, and the ground in consequence was disputed much longer than it ought to have been against a force so greatly superior, both

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Suchet  
surprizes  
the allies at  
the pass of  
Ordal.*



CHAP. British and Spaniards maintaining it so resolutely, that the  
 XLV. right and the centre were nearly destroyed in their position.

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 endeavoured to reach San Sadurni, which Manso occupied  
 with his brigade. Their hope was to rejoin the army by the road  
 leading from thence to Villafranca; but after crossing the river  
 Noya, in front of San Sadurni, they were attacked by a con-  
 siderable column, and forced back toward the Barcelona road:  
 they succeeded, however, in making their way to Sitges, and  
 there effected their embarkation on the following night. The  
 guns were taken by the enemy, but most of the fugitives joined  
 Manso.

*The Anglo-  
 Sicilians  
 retreat.*

As soon as the attack was known at head-quarters, Lord  
 William put the army in motion to sustain his advance; but  
 before any reinforcements could reach the spot, the French had  
 carried every point, and it remained for him then either to retreat  
 without loss of time, or give battle to an enemy superior in num-  
 bers and flushed with success, upon ground which afforded no  
 advantage of position. He determined therefore upon retiring;  
 Major-General Mackenzie, with the 2d division, covered the  
 retreat during the most difficult part of its execution, to the vil-  
 lage of Monjoz; Sarsfield moved to the left of Villafranca, by  
 the hilly and woody country on that side; and the British, Ger-  
 mans, and Sicilians, took the main road by the villages of  
 Monjoz and Arbos. Marshal Suchet expected that Decaen  
 would arrive before Villafranca in time to co-operate with him,  
 and force the allies to an action; but that general had to cross  
 the Llobregat and the Noya, and was delayed also in the defiles  
 by Manso, and by the Calabrese, with whom he fell in when  
 they were making for S. Sadurni. His own cuirassiers and dra-  
 goons, under General Meyer, pressed with very superior num-  
 bers, near Monjoz, upon the cavalry under Lord Frederic



Bentinck, who covered the retreat, and some sabre strokes were exchanged between the two leaders. At length a most timely and vigorous charge was made simultaneously by Lord Frederic with the 20th dragoons, under Lieutenant-Colonel Hawker, and the Sicilians, and by Lieutenant-Colonel Schrader with the German hussars, by which the enemy were driven back, and so completely checked, that they made no farther attempt upon the retreating army; so it reached Vendrells that evening, without any loss. During the night it retired to Altafulla, and on the evening following took up its ground in front of Tarragona, as the nearest protecting situation; the Spaniards, under Sarsfield, moving upon Reus. The ruins of Tarragona could have afforded little support, if the allies had not been better protected by their own strength, and by the opinion which Suchet had learned to entertain of them. He advanced no further than Villafranca in pursuit; and after exacting a contribution from the distressed inhabitants, returned to Barcelona.

At this time the uneasy state of affairs in Sicily, and the ill success of political changes there as premature as they were well-intended, rendered it necessary for Lord William Bentinck to repair thither, and the command of the army devolved upon Lieutenant-General Sir William Clinton. That general was left with an inadequate force, and under discouraging circumstances, to attend to objects which were of no inconsiderable importance to the common cause. He had to provide against the likelihood of Suchet's availing himself of his late success to relieve or to withdraw his garrisons in Valencia or on the Ebro; and he had to occupy the attention of that able commander so as to prevent him from sending any considerable detachment to take part in Soult's operations against Lord Wellington. It was found impracticable to construct a bridge upon the Ebro as low down as Amposta; and if it had not been so, he could not have spared

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*The command devolves upon Sir William Clinton.*



CHAP. troops enough from other more important services, to protect it  
XLV. against the sallies of the strong garrison in Tortosa. The best  
1813. course therefore which he could pursue seemed to be that of  
*September.* repairing the defences of Tarragona, as far as time and means  
permitted, so as to render it a point of support. Well was it  
for the Anglo-Sicilian army that, notwithstanding the credit it  
had lost by Sir John Murray's precipitate retreat, and the recent  
loss which it had sustained at Ordal, it had yet impressed Mar-  
shal Suchet with a most respectable opinion of its ability in the  
field; skilful as he was, nothing but that opinion withheld him  
from acting vigorously against it when he had it so greatly at  
advantage. His disposable force at this time was not short of  
25,000 men, with a large body of cavalry; better troops he could  
not desire; and their supplies were protected by the possession  
of several important fortresses, all which were garrisoned well.  
The Anglo-Sicilian army amounted barely to 12,000 effective  
men, including a small body of cavalry; about half of these were  
British and Germans, the remainder Italians and Sicilians in  
British pay, on whom, though they were not ill-disciplined, the  
same confidence could not be placed in the presence of an  
enemy. There were about 11,000 Spanish troops whose services  
General Clinton might have commanded, if there had been  
means for rendering them available, but they were in a state  
almost of destitution; without pay, ill-clothed, and worse fed;  
and he had no control (as his predecessors had had) over the  
first Spanish army, which army also was prevented by its wants  
from taking the field, except occasionally, and then from keeping  
it, except for a very short time. With the commander of that  
army, General Copons, and with the other leaders, the best  
understanding prevailed; nor indeed were there among all the  
Spaniards better men or more distinguished officers than some  
of them, . . . the names of Manso and Eroles will be held in honour



as long as the Catalans retain any of that national spirit by which they are so honourably distinguished. They might be expected to check any movement of the enemy on the side of Lerida, or towards Tarragona; and to interrupt their communication with France along the inland road, by which their supplies were principally brought; but direct co-operation was not to be looked for where there was no unity of command, and . . . on the one part . . . all but a total want of means. Even the troops in British pay suffered great privations, their communication with the depots at Malta and Gibraltar being interrupted because of the plague. But the tide of the enemy's fortunes had now turned; and all difficulties were met cheerfully by the allies, in the sure hope that their perseverance would soon be crowned with success. As soon as arrangements were made for restoring the works at Tarragona, and for supplying as far as possible the Spaniards who were attached to the Anglo-Sicilian army, head-quarters were established at Villafranca; the troops which had been cantoned at Reus, Valls, and other places in the environs of Tarragona, were ordered to occupy an advanced line of cantonments: a force, consisting of cavalry, with some field-artillery, and Sarsfield's Spanish division of about 5000 infantry, were stationed at Villafranca; the enemy's movements on the Llobregat were narrowly observed; and the remainder of the allied troops (with the exception of those who carried on the works at Tarragona) were so distributed, that, upon any emergency, they could be assembled at Villafranca in four and twenty hours.

Meantime, on the opposite side of the peninsula, an interval of seeming inactivity had followed the capture of S. Sebastian's; but the time, though marked by no military movements, was busily employed in preparing for them, by closing up the troops, replacing the ammunition, and re-organizing those divisions which had suffered most. The opposing armies were in sight of

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*Position of  
the armies  
on the Py-  
renean fron-  
tier.*



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each other. There was something mournful as well as impressive to a thoughtful mind in the contrast between the stupendous scenery of the Pyrenees, and the diminutive appearance of field works, and large armies upon such a theatre: "the little huts, and the less beings who inhabited them," might have been overlooked as mere specks in the prospect, had it not been for the more mournful knowledge that these tens of thousands were collected there for life or for death; one party having been sent thither by the wicked will of an individual drunk with ambition, and the other brought there by the duty and necessity of resisting his lust of power. The troops who covered the blockade of Pamplona suffered severely from wet and cold, and were unavoidably subject to privations from which their more fortunate comrades near the coast were exempt. When the clouds opened, they could see the fertile country of the enemy beneath them, in sunshine. During the weeks of hard, irksome duty, passed thus in a situation where exertion and enterprize were not required, but in their stead continual vigilance and patience, desertions became frequent; they were most numerous, as might be expected, among the Spaniards, because they were in their own country; and least, in a remarkable degree, among\* the Portugueze.

*Levy ordered in France for Soult's army.*

*Speech of M. Regnaud.*

It was now no longer in Buonaparte's power to allot conscripts by the hundred thousand for the consumption of his war in the Peninsula. A levy of 30,000 was all that could be ordered to reinforce Soult's army; "the armies in Spain, it was admitted, having been compelled to yield before superior numbers, and the advantages which the enemy drew from their maritime com-

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\* The weekly average of desertions I find thus curiously stated: 25 Spaniards, 15 Irish, 12 English, 6 Scotch, and half a Portugueze.



munications, needed reinforcement: for England, while in the north of Europe it lavished its intrigues and its promises, was not less lavish in the south of its resources and sacrifices. The proposed levy, however, raised in the departments adjacent to the Pyrenees would suffice to stop the successes upon which the enemy were congratulating themselves too soon; it would suffice for resuming the attitude which became France, and for preparing, the moment when England should no longer dispose of the treasures of Mexico, for the devastation of both the Spains!" This was the language of M. Regnaud de St. Jean d'Angely in an official speech; and the senator, M. le Comte de Beurnonville, making a report in the name of a special commission, spake in the same strain, . . . a strain that becomes doubly curious when compared with the events which were so soon to follow. "England," said he, "who intrigues much and hazards little, has not dared to compromise her land forces by sending them to combat in the north of Germany, and uniting them with the Russian and Prussian phalanxes; she feared reverses which she could not but foresee, and which for her would be irreparable. In this thorny conjuncture, and that it might have the air of doing something for the powers whom it had set to play, the cabinet of London had preferred mingling the English troops with the Spanish and Portugueze *bands*, being sure that it could withdraw them without inconvenience, according to its interest. Hence that sudden augmentation of its force, which had determined our armies to a retrograde movement; and these *bands*, encouraged by some ephemeral successes, have carried their audacity so far as to invest the places of St. Sebastian's and Pamplona." . . . Buonaparte's ministers never thought proper to inform the senate that these *bands* soon carried their audacity a little farther, and took them both. "The proposed levy," it was added, "would enable

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CHAP. the French armies of the Peninsula to resume their ancient  
 XLV. attitude.”

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*Lord Wel-  
 lington's  
 orders upon  
 entering  
 France.*

The orator, and the special commission for whom he spake, were mistaken: it was England who resumed her ancient attitude, . . . who re-asserted and resumed her military superiority upon that ground where her Plantagenets had displayed it. Her victorious armies were at this time preparing to plant their banners in France, leading thus the way to the general invasion of what the French in the pride of their military strength had called the sacred territory. As soon, indeed, as the enemy had been driven beyond the Pyrenees, the army had looked forward to this with all the pride of the military spirit, and of excited national feeling: the Spaniards and Portugueze talked of retribution and revenge; and among the British the question was discussed whether or not they were to be freebooters. That question was answered by Lord Wellington in the general order which he issued as soon as the troops encamped among the Pyrenees. “The commander of the forces,” said he, “is anxious to draw the attention of the officers of the army to the difference of the situation in which they have been hitherto, among the people of Portugal and Spain, and that in which they may hereafter find themselves, among those of the frontiers of France.” After observing that every military endeavour must thenceforth be used for obtaining intelligence, and preventing surprize, he proceeded to say that, notwithstanding the utmost precautions were absolutely necessary, as the country in front of the army was the enemy's, he was particularly desirous that the inhabitants should be well treated, and private property respected, as it had been till that time. The officers and soldiers of the army, said he, must recollect, that their nations are at war with France solely because the Ruler of the French nation will not