

about 30 officers, great numbers dispersed in the woods, and the conscripts took the desired opportunity of escaping. On the preceding day a detachment under Captain Coode of the Porcupine took or destroyed a numerous flotilla, which had been equipped in haste, and which before the arrival of the British squadron had threatened the coast of Medoc, and Bourdeaux itself. Among the prizes was a splendid barge designed for the Emperor when he visited that city, with his name on the stern, and his golden eagle on the prow; this the sailors humbly requested might be presented with their duty to the Prince Regent. Another corps of 600 seamen and marines under Captain Harris of the Belle Poule landed, marched more than fifty miles in six and thirty hours, reduced and dismantled five forts, destroyed 47 pieces of cannon and 17 mortars, and re-embarked without any loss. The Regulus and the smaller vessels which had sought protection with it, were attacked and burnt, and by the 9th of April the river was cleared as high up as Blaye. General Merle held out in that fortress till the 16th; when the news that had arrived induced the Admiral to agree to an armistice with him, and the Gironde was then opened from its mouth to Bourdeaux.

Meantime another restoration, which once might have been deemed as little likely as that of the Bourbons in France, had taken place. When Ferdinand and his counsellors at Valençay found that neither San Carlos nor Palafox returned from their mission, they represented to Laforest that the best mode of removing all difficulties would be for the Emperor to let Ferdinand depart unconditionally, relying upon his honour to fulfil the treaty, if the obstacles to it should not be insurmountable. Suchet had given advice to the same effect, seeing that at that time, when there was no longer a hope of retaining any hold on Spain, it was of great consequence to withdraw from thence the

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*Proceed-
ings at
Valençay.*



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garrisons, and that they could be extricated only by this means. If Ferdinand were honourable enough to restore them to their country upon being put in possession of the places which they occupied, the great and only advantage which was now desired would be obtained; if he should refuse to do this, or be unable to effect it, doubtful as it was what his authority might be, nothing would be lost, nor ever risked by the experiment. This the French government saw; and they were not without hope that the presence of Ferdinand in his own country might lead to a civil war, which would have the effect of at least embarrassing the English, and probably of impeding their operations in Gascony.

Ferdinand and his counsellors might have escaped from any imputation of bad faith in this transaction, if they had not themselves claimed credit for acting with duplicity. When they said the fulfilment of the treaty might be relied on, if there were no insurmountable obstacles, they well supposed that such obstacles existed in their relations to the allied powers; “but,” says the Canon Escoiquiz, “not knowing this of a certainty, we had a right, when treating with so perfidious a person, to put it in doubt; and by this just dissimulation to obtain the object of our wishes, which was the King’s liberty. Skilfully to deceive with truth a man so false was not an evil deed, but an excellent one; and this was our maxim*.” They represented farther that an unconditional liberation was of all

* *Bien suponiamos que lo habria, por las relaciones con las Potencias aliadas; pero no sabiéndolo de cierto, teniamos derecho, tratando con hombre tan perfido, para ponerlo en duda y conseguir con este justo dissimulo el fin de nuestros deseos que era la libertad del Rey. Engañar mañosamente con la verdad á un hombre tan falso, era una obra no mala sino excelente: tal era nuestro maxîma. Idea Sencilla, 114.*

things most likely to conciliate Ferdinand's entire good-will; that it would moreover make the allied powers believe Buonaparte to be sincere in his desire of peace, and which was of more consequence, gratify the French nation, who had always indignantly regarded the war with Spain; that if Ferdinand should find it impossible to confirm the peace with France, it was not his interest that France should be dismembered, and to prevent any such danger he would only carry on an illusive war, merely to save appearances; that even if it were his desire to carry it on with vigour, he must of necessity be less able to do this than the Regency, because of the changes which his arrival in Spain could not but produce; finally, that his farther detention would occasion the Emperor a great and useless expense, and must also be a matter of some anxiety, when it was so possible that he might be delivered by the arms of the allies. Buonaparte, indeed, seems at one time to have been sensible either of the reproach which he had brought upon himself by his treachery toward Ferdinand, or of the likelihood that some successful plan might be formed for his escape; and it was once his intention to have shipped him off for Mexico, or for any other part of the Spanish colonies which he might have preferred, with Charles IV. and the Queen, the Infantes, his brothers, the Queen of Etruria, and as many other members of the family as he could collect, and to have given them large possessions there; but upon discovering that none of those colonies were at his disposal, as he had hoped them to be, and considering moreover that Ferdinand might easily from thence find his way to Spain, and there protest against the validity of his renunciation, he abandoned this project. At present, willing to be rid of him, knowing that his presence now could do him no hurt any where, desiring to get his soldiers out of Spain, which he had no hope of effecting by any other means,

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cilla, 78.*

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 XLVI. create new troubles in that country, he readily assented to the
 1814. proposal; and Laforest was instructed by the first post after the
 receipt of his dispatch to inform Ferdinand and the Infantes, that they were at liberty to depart unconditionally, and that orders had been given for forwarding to them the necessary passports.

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*Ferdinand
 is set at li-
 berty.*

Ferdinand had endured captivity as contentedly as if his patience had been the effect of philosophy or of religion. Nothing, however, could have rejoiced him more than this reply; and, as if believing that his return would be not less a matter of joy to the Regency, he determined that as soon as the passports came, Zayas should precede him by three or four days, and travel with all speed to notify his approach, that preparations might be made for receiving him. This happiness was but of six hours' duration; for on the evening of the same day, San Carlos arrived with the refusal of the treaty. To conceal this was impossible, the utmost publicity having been given to it by the Spanish press; and as it was likely to irritate Buonaparte, whose violent temper was well known to his ministers, Laforest proposed that San Carlos himself should be the first bearer of the intelligence, and present with it such representations as might tend to appease him, and if possible avert his displeasure. The Duque accordingly, who had come post from Madrid, set off without delay, and at the same speed for Paris. Buonaparte was then with the army in the neighbourhood of Troyes; the ministers at Paris had withheld the passports till they should receive fresh instructions, and not allowing the Duque to proceed, sent him back to Valençay. Laforest, however, was of opinion that he should repair to the Emperor's quarters: San Carlos again departed; failing to find, and perhaps not being able to follow him in the rapidity of his movements,

he communicated his business by letter: the course which Laforest recommended coincided with the advice given by Suchet, in whom Buonaparte had great confidence, and the result was that orders were sent to Paris for forwarding the passports without delay. They reached Valençay on the night of March 7; San Carlos arrived on the 9th; Zayas set out for Madrid the next day. He bore a dispatch to the Regency, wherein Ferdinand said that their letter, which he had now received by Palafox, had filled his soul with satisfaction: he saw in it how anxiously the nation wished for his return, which he desired not less ardently, that he might devote all his powers to the good of his beloved subjects, to whom he was so greatly indebted on so many accounts. Then, after notifying his speedy departure, he said that the re-establishment of the Cortes, concerning which the Regency had informed him, and the other measures for the good of the realm which had been adopted during his absence, deserved his approbation, because they were in conformity with his own royal intentions. On the following Sunday, March 13, Ferdinand and the Infantes commenced their journey towards Perpignan.

Marshal Suchet received them in that city. His instructions from the minister at war were, that he should send Ferdinand to Barcelona, and cause all the places which the French still possessed in Spain to be delivered up, taking, however, securities and precautions for the return of the garrisons to their own country. Hence the Marshal concluded that there was not such entire confidence placed in this Prince as might otherwise have been inferred from the manner of his liberation. Both parties, however, were desirous of smoothing all difficulties, which may always best be done by fair dealing; and this was now the interest of both. San Carlos gave Suchet a full account of the temper of the Cortes, and their determination to control the King, or to resist

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*March.**Idea Sencillo, 113, 119.**Arrangement with M. Suchet.*

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him, if he should be found refractory; and he expressed his belief that the Generals, whether they were influenced by their fear or their opinions, would not acknowledge his authority until they received orders from Madrid. Ferdinand's desire was to proceed without delay, and not to enter Barcelona, but go on to Valencia; and he promised to expedite as much as he could the deliverance of the garrisons in exchange for the places which they occupied. The Marshal frankly stated the difficulty wherein he was placed by his instructions, these being to conduct the King to Barcelona, and take securities for the deliverance of the garrisons; he had written to Paris, he said, for farther explanations, and till these should arrive, it was agreed that the Infante, Don Carlos, should remain at Perpignan, and that the King should pass the frontier without delay. Accordingly, on the 22d, Ferdinand re-entered his own country. The rain had so swoln the streams, that he was detained two days at Figueras; during this delay, the Marshal addressed a note to him, requesting that the treatment of the French prisoners might be improved, and pressing for the deliverance of the garrisons. An assurance was given that there should be an immediate alteration in the condition of the prisoners, and a promise was given respecting the garrisons, to which Ferdinand affixed his signature. This answer was returned from Figueras, where he was still in the hands of the French; but, that it might appear more evidently his own free act and deed, he dated it from Gerona. Upon receiving this, Suchet immediately dispatched orders for letting the Infante, Don Carlos, proceed from Perpignan; thus he conferred an obligation, by releasing a hostage whom it would have been useless to detain; all questions concerning the fortresses and garrisons being, as by a tacit understanding, waived on both sides, there being a third party, without whose consent the

garrison of Barcelona could not be dismissed ; for Sir H. Clinton was then with the Anglo-Sicilian army blockading that city. A little before this time, instructions had been received by that General to embark one portion of his troops, including the Calabrians, for the coast of Italy, there to be employed in an expedition under Lord William Bentinck ; and with the remainder to march, by way of Zaragoza and Pamplona, into France, there to reinforce Lord Wellington. Sir Henry took upon himself the responsibility of not obeying these instructions : and his conduct in so doing was fully approved by Lord Wellington ; for, if that army had been withdrawn, the Spaniards in Catalonia could not have prevented Suchet from collecting and bringing off the whole of his remaining garrisons.

As soon as the waters permitted, Ferdinand proceeded towards Gerona. General Copons had been apprized of his coming. Marshal Suchet escorted him to the Fluvia. The French troops were drawn up in a semicircle on one side of the river, the Spaniards on the other ; and, having crossed it amid salutes of artillery, and the joyful sound of martial music, and the acclamations of the surrounding inhabitants, who had flocked thither from all sides, Ferdinand found himself then indeed free, . . . in his own country, among his own people, and a King. There was no difficulty about his reception ; his retinue consisted only of Spaniards, among whom there were none to whom any exception could be taken, if Copons had been disposed to offer it. The General delivered into his hands the Regency's letter, and the documents which accompanied it ; and when Ferdinand came the same day to Gerona, he acknowledged them in a letter to the Regency announcing his arrival, saying that he should make himself acquainted with the contents of their papers ; meantime he assured them that his greatest wish was to give them proofs of his satisfaction, and of his lively

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*March.**Suchet, 2.
375-8.**March 24.**Ferdinand
writes from
Gerona to
the Re-
gency.*

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desire to do every thing which might conduce to the happiness of his subjects. It was a comfort indeed for him, he said, to see himself in his own country, in the midst of a nation and an army to whom he was beholden for a fidelity as constant as it was generous.

*Ferdinand
goes to Za-
ragoza.*

The Cortes had regulated Ferdinand's route; and as it was understood that he would proceed by the line prescribed for him, which was straight by way of Valencia, the Governors of Barcelona, Tortosa, and Murviedro, received instructions to commit no hostilities when he should pass. But Ferdinand was in no haste to proceed; he needed time for consideration, and for such rest as the critical position in which he now found himself would allow: he halted, therefore, a few days at Gerona. On the 30th, he passed through the blockading army in front of Barcelona, the enemy firing a salute, the allies receiving him with all honours, and the people with every possible manifestation of joy. It was believed that he was proceeding to Valencia; but, altering his intention on the way, he made for Zaragoza, meaning to remain there till he should have determined how to act.

*Soult re-
sumes the
offensive.*

This restoration Buonaparte regarded at this time with indifference; but there was nothing which he dreaded so much as the progress of that feeling which had manifested itself at Bourdeaux; for peace, upon some terms, he thought himself always sure of obtaining, as long as the allies forbore to take up the cause of the Bourbons. Soult saw how likely it was that this feeling should spread from the Gironde to the Loire, and had resolved upon carrying the war back toward the Pyrenees, more with the view of occupying the English force at a distance from those parts in which he knew that the existing tyranny was borne with most impatience, than for the sake of the succours which he could draw from Catalonia. Not being acquainted

with the success of Marshal Beresford's movement upon Bourdeaux, he expected thus to frustrate it, and that Lord Wellington would find it necessary to recall all the detachments which he had sent in that direction. He had, indeed, written to the Minister at War, saying he did not think the British General would dare to weaken himself by sending a force against that city. With this intention, he resumed the offensive; and, having sent most of his incumbrances to Toulouse, moved by Lembege to Conchez and Viella, on the right flank of the allies, drove in Sir Rowland's piquets, and made a demonstration as if intending to attack him with his whole force. Sir Rowland, upon this, took a position behind the Gros Lees, extending from Aire to Garlin, on the road to Pau. Lord Wellington quickly moved two divisions to his support, and prepared to concentrate the army in the neighbourhood of Aire. Marshal Soult did not then feel himself strong enough to venture upon an attack, and not finding his situation secure, retired in the night toward Lembege, keeping his advanced posts toward Conchez; and on the 15th, he halted his main body in position near Burosse, covered by a strong rear-guard at Mascarras; but, on the approach of a single brigade, they retired upon Vic Bigorre, not offering to maintain their ground, though in a country peculiarly defensible. The various detachments which Lord Wellington had sent out, and the reserves of cavalry and artillery from Spain, did not join him till the 17th. On the morrow the army marched; the right by Conchez, the centre by Castelnau, the left by Plaisance; and Sir Rowland drove in the enemy's outposts upon Lembege. The French retired in the night, but held a strong rear-guard in front of Vic Bigorre, posted in the vineyards that encircle that town, and extend for several miles around it. There they made a stand, with a show of resolution which was not supported; for Sir Thomas Picton,

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Suchet, t. 2.
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He retreats
upon
Tarbes.

Colonel
Jones's Ac-
count, 2.
262.