

CHAP.

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1809.

March.

found that the French fired securely from the old fortification while they themselves were exposed; upon this they entered, and, with fixed bayonets, advanced to storm the castle. Mendizabal was at their head; a ball passed through his clothes without wounding him. He summoned the enemy to surrender, and upon their hesitating what answer to return, repeated the summons with a threat, that if they refused, every man should be put to the sword. The white flag was then hoisted, and a negotiation begun, which the French were conducting with a view to gain time, till the Spanish commander cut it short, by allowing them a quarter of an hour to surrender at discretion. Upon this they submitted; Mendizabal then, as an act of free grace, permitted the officers to keep their horses and portmanteaus, and the men their knapsacks; and the colonel-commandant of the French, in returning thanks for this generosity, complimented him upon his good fortune in having captured the finest regiment in the Emperor Napoleon's service. The prisoners were about 800. The Spaniards lost two officers and thirty men, eighty-two wounded. The result of the success was, that the Bierzo was cleared of the French, who fell back from the neighbouring part of Asturias upon Lugo, there to make a stand, supported by their main force, which was divided between Santiago, Coruña, and Ferrol.

*Efforts of
the Galicians.*

Marshal Ney had still a predominant force in Galicia after Soult's army was departed; there were garrisons in every town which was sufficiently important, either for its size or situation, to require one, and the French had military possession of the province. But they had yet to subdue the spirit of the people; and the Galicians, who had no longer an example of panic and disorder before their eyes, carried on the war in their own way. Captain M'Kinley in the Lively frigate, with the Plover sloop under his command, arrived off the coast to assist them. He

discovered none of that apathy for their own country, none of that contented indifference who was to be their master, none of that sullen and ungrateful dislike of the English, of which the retreating army had complained so loudly ; he heard from them only expressions of gratitude to the British government and praise of the British nation ; he perceived in them the true feelings of loyalty and patriotism, and saw in all their actions honest, enthusiastic ardour, regulated by a cool and determined courage. The invaders attempted, by the most unrelenting severity, to keep them down. On the 7th of March a party of French entered the little towns of Carril and Villa Garcia, murdered some old men and women in the streets, set fire to the houses of those persons whom they suspected of being hostile to them, and then retreated to Padron. To lay waste villages with fire, abandon the women to the soldiery, and put to death every man whom they took in arms, was the system upon which the French under Marshals Ney and Soult proceeded. Such a system, if it failed to intimidate, necessarily recoiled upon their own heads ; and the thirst of vengeance gave a character of desperation to the courage of the Galicians. About an hundred French were pillaging a convent, when Don Bernardo Gonzalez, with two-and-thirty Spaniards, fell upon them, and did such execution while the enemy were in disorder and encumbered with their plunder, that only sixteen escaped. During three days the French attempted to destroy the peasants of Deza and Trasdira ; the men of Banos and Tabieros came to aid their countrymen, and the invaders at length retreated with the loss of 114 men. A party from Pontevedra entered Marin : here the Lively and the Plover opened their fire upon them, and as they fled from the English ships, their officers fell into the hands of the peasantry. In this kind of perpetual war the French were wasted ; a malignant fever broke out among them, which raged

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*Barrios
sent into
Galicia.*

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particularly at their head-quarters in Santiago, and many who had no disease died of the fatigue which they endured from being incessantly harassed, and kept night and day on the alarm.

D. Manuel Garcia de Barrios, who held the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, had arrived in Galicia early in March with credentials from the Central Junta authorizing him to take such measures as he might deem expedient for its recovery, . . . and this was all with which the government could furnish him. He had, however, two brave and able officers under him, D. Manuel Acuña and D. Pablo Morillo, then a young man, who had already distinguished himself upon the Tagus. These officers took the coast and the interior in this military mission, while Barrios took the southern part of the province ; and they communicated with Romana and Silveira. Barrios was with the latter General when the French approached Chaves, and, being prevented by an accident from leaving the town with him, was shut in there during its short siege. Aware that if the enemy recognized him they would probably put him to death, or at best compel him to choose between imprisonment and taking the oaths to the Intruder, he escaped over the walls when they entered the place, and remained for some days secreted in a cottage, suffering severely from a fall and from want of food, and having lost every thing, even his papers. He made his way, however, to the Valle Real de Lobera, where he thought Romana would have taken some measures for raising men ; and there he found the spirit which he expected. His report of himself and of his commission was believed, though he had no credentials to produce : a Junta was formed, volunteers were raised, and there, in a confined district, where they were half blockaded by the enemy, plans were laid for the deliverance of Galicia, Barrios having for his coadjutors the abbots of S. Mamed and Couto. Their communication with Romana was impeded by the French at Lugo ; but they received

tidings of co-operation in another quarter where they had not looked for it, and prepared with all alacrity to take advantage of the opportunity that offered.

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The Portu-
guese and
Galicians
blockade
Tuy.

March 10.

While Soult was before Chaves a party of Portuguese, under Alexandre Alberto de Serpa, crossed the Minho near its mouth, and were joined at Guardia by the peasantry; in a few days some thousand men had collected; the Mayorazgo, D. Joaquin Tenreyro, put himself at their head, and their parish priests acted as officers. The two Abbots, who had taken the title of Generals, and disputed which should be called Commander-in-chief of Galicia, compromised their difference by electing Barrios commandant-general of the province of Tuy and division of the Minho, and they set out with all the force they could muster to join one party of these insurgents who blockaded the French in Tuy, while Murillo and Acuña were directed to join the others, who, officered as they were, undisciplined and ill equipped, had proceeded to besiege the enemy's garrison in Vigo. It had been Soult's intention, neglecting all points of less importance, to concentrate in Tuy all the troops belonging to his army whom he had left in Galicia. But when a column of about 800 men, under the *chef d'escadron* Chalot, bringing with it the heavy baggage of the general officers and the military chest, was on the way thither from Santiago, General Lamartiniere ordered them to Vigo, where the resources were greater both for the men and horses.

The town of Vigo is situated in a bay, which is one of the largest, deepest, and safest in the whole coast of the peninsula. It is built upon a rock; but, notwithstanding the severe loss which the Spaniards, during the War of the Succession, suffered in that port, no care had been taken to fortify it; it had merely a wall, a fort flanked with four bastions on the land side, and an old castle, equally dilapidated, toward the sea. The neighbourhood

Vigo.

CHAP. of Ferrol has made it neglected as a naval station, and Galicia
 XIX. is too poor a country for foreign commerce. There was, how-
 1809. ever, a manufactory of hats there, which were exported to Ame-
March. rica; and a fishery was carried on so extensively as to afford
 employment for thirty mercantile houses. It derived some im-
 portance also from being the seat of government for the province
 of Tuy. The population amounted to 2500. Sir John Moore
 had at first fixed upon this port as the place of his embarkation,
 and ordered the transports there; and the delay occasioned by
 waiting till they came round Cape Finisterre to join him at
 Coruña gave time for the French to come up, and for that
 battle, which, while it redeemed the character of the army,
 proved fatal to himself.

*The Spani-
 ards appear
 before Vigo.*

Captain Crawford, in the *Venus* frigate, was off the port, and
 he wrote to Captain M'Kinley, who was then at Villa Garcia, in
 the *Lively*, telling him how much the presence of his ship would
 contribute to the success of the Spaniards. Meantime Morillo
 arrived to examine the state of the siege. He learnt that a
 reinforcement of 1800 French were at this time in Pontevedra,
 about four leagues off. They had to cross the bridge of St. Payo,
 over a river which discharges itself into the head of the Bay
 of Vigo, and Morillo immediately took measures for defending
 the passage. From Don Juan Antonio Gago, an inhabitant of
 Marin, who was at the head of 500 peasants, he obtained two
 eight-pounders, and from the town of Redondella one twenty-
 four and two eighteen-pounders. With these means of defence
 he entrusted this position to Don Juan de O'Dogherty, a lieu-
 tenant in the Spanish navy, who had the command of three gun-
 boats. While he was taking these necessary measures, part of
 Romana's army, which Soult boasted of having destroyed a
 fortnight before, drove the enemy back from Pontevedra, and
 took possession of the town. Morillo joined them; and being

of opinion that the reduction of Vigo was the most important object which could then be undertaken, they proceeded to that place.

The French governor Chalot, a *chef d'escadron*, had replied to every summons which Tenreiro sent him, that he was not authorised to surrender to peasantry. Captain M'Kinley having now arrived, he was again summoned to surrender, and negotiations were begun, which continued till the third day, when Morillo joined the besiegers with the force from Pontevedra, consisting of new levies and retired veterans, 1500 of whom had come forward to assist in the deliverance of their country; a council of war was held, by which Morillo was appointed commander-in-chief, and requested to assume the title of colonel, for the sake of appearing of more consequence to M. Chalot, whose complaint it was, that he was not summoned by an officer of sufficient rank. Having been thus promoted to accommodate the *chef d'escadron*, he sent him a summons in due form to surrender within two hours. Chalot replied, that he could not possibly capitulate till he had heard the opinion of the council of war, of which he was president; the members were at present dispersed, and he required twenty-four hours to collect them. Morillo returned a verbal answer, that he granted him another two hours, and the French, after ineffectually attempting to prolong the term, delivered in their proposals of capitulation, which were, that they should march out with arms, baggage, the whole of their equipage, and with the honours of war; that they should be conveyed in English vessels to the nearest French port, on parole not to bear arms against Spain or her allies till exchanged, or till peace should have taken place; that the money belonging to the French government, and destined for the payment of the troops, should remain in the hands of the paymaster, who was accountable for it; and that the papers relating to the accounts

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Recapture
of that place

March 26.

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CHAP. of the regiments should be preserved; finally, that the troops
XIX. should not lay down their arms, nor the town and forts be
1809. delivered up, till the moment of embarking. Morillo, with
March. the three French officers who brought these proposals, and
two Spaniards, went on board the *Lively*, to lay them before
Captain M'Kinley, and answer them with his concurrence.
The answer was in a spirit becoming England and Spain. The
garrison were required to ground their arms on the glacis, and
surrender themselves prisoners of war, the officers being allowed
to retain their swords and wearing apparel, nothing more. The
demand respecting the money was refused; the place was to be
taken possession of as soon as the French grounded their arms,
and if these articles were not ratified within an hour, hostilities
were to recommence.

The officers who were sent to negotiate agreed to these terms,
but the ratification was delayed beyond the hour allotted; and
the Spaniards, who were prepared to execute what they had
threatened, began the assault between eight and nine at night;
while those who had muskets kept up a fire upon the enemy,
others began to hew down the gates. An old man particularly
distinguished himself at the gate of *Camboa*, by the vigour with
which he laid on his strokes, splintering the wood, and when a
ball went through him, by the composure with which he died,
happy to have fallen in the discharge of his duty, and in the hour
of victory. D. Bernardo Gonzalez, the commanding officer of
the detachment from *Pontevedra*, sprang forward, and taking up
the axe of the dead, continued the same work, notwithstanding
he was thrice wounded; till a fourth wound disabled him, and he
was borne away: seven Spaniards fell at this point. Meantime
Morillo was informed that the capitulation was now ratified, and
forcing his way through the ranks amidst the fire, with great
difficulty he made himself heard, and put a stop to the assault.

On the following morning, when Morillo had made preparations to enter and occupy the place, information was brought him from the little town of Porriño, that a reinforcement from Tuy was on the way to the French. Porriño is about a league to the eastward of the road between these two places, and equidistant about two leagues from both. News, therefore, could not be brought so soon but that the troops must closely follow it. Morillo instantly sent off a part of his force as secretly as possible to intercept them, and he remained hurrying the embarkation of the French, by telling them that he could not restrain the rage of the peasantry. How well they had deserved any vengeance which the peasantry could inflict the garrison were perfectly conscious, and were therefore as eager to get on board as Morillo was to see them there. In this haste, the baggage could not be examined conformably to the capitulation, for the hurry of both parties was increased by hearing a firing from the town. The troops from Tuy had arrived under its walls, and, to their astonishment, a fire was opened upon them. They were attacked, routed, and pursued with such vigour, that out of 450, not more than a fifth part escaped; seventy-two were taken prisoners, and sent on board to join their countrymen; the rest were either killed or wounded. The military chest, containing 117,000 francs, had been delivered up according to the terms; but an examination of the baggage was thought necessary; about 20,000 more were discovered, and the whole of both * sums was distributed among the troops and peasantry. Never had a more motley army been assembled: . . . men of all ranks and professions bore arms together

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* It is said that there were some articles of very great value in the baggage, particularly some jewels of which General Lahoussaye had possessed himself at the Escorial, and which Chalot was supposed to have secreted.—Campaign of 1809, p. 20.

CHAP. at this time in Galicia ; among those who distinguished them-
 XIX. selves were soldiers and sailors ; D. Francisco Sanchez Villa-
 1809. marin, the Alferez of a band of students from Santiago ; the
March. Abbot of Valladares, and the first preacher of the Franciscans,
 Fr. Andres Villagelvi.

*Blockade of
Tuy.*

The French had at this time 5000 men at Santiago, where they were fortifying themselves. Morillo hastened to place Pontevedra in a state of defence against them, and to secure the bridge of S. Payo, that they might not be able to form any farther junction ; for they were now calling in all their smaller detachments, and General Lamartiniere had then collected about 3300 men in Tuy, including some 1200 invalids. A fire which was opened against that place across the river from Valença was soon silenced, and the efforts of the disorderly besiegers were not more effectual. Report magnified their numbers to 20,000 ; but when Barrios arrived to recompose the dispute between the General-Abbots, by taking the command, he found only a fifth part of the estimated force, and only a fourth of these provided with muskets. Having obtained six pieces of cannon from Salvatierra and Vigo, and a scanty supply of ammunition from the same places, from Bayona, and from his Portuguese neighbours at Valença and Monçam, he carried on the blockade in spite of all the efforts of the garrison.

*The Portu-
guese re-
cross the
Minho.*

Marshal Sault was under no small anxiety for this place ; he had recommended it to Ney's especial care ; but he had reason to fear that Ney would have sufficient employment for all his force ; and he knew what effect the fall of a second garrison would produce not upon the people of the country alone, but also upon his own men ; for he was not ignorant that the better spirits in his army detested the service upon which they were employed, and that many even of the worst dreaded it. After

entering Braga he dispatched a party of horse in that direction, for of the many messengers whom he had sent to Tuy since he marched from thence on his expedition into Portugal, not one had returned. They learnt at Barcellos that it was blockaded, that it had thrown shells into Valença, and that the garrison were strong enough to sally and incommode the besiegers. Soult could take no measures then for their relief, and he supposed that the news of his success in Portugal would alone relieve them to a considerable degree, by drawing off the Portuguese from the blockade: so in fact it proved; they recrossed the Minho as soon as they heard of his entrance into Braga, and it was their departure which enabled Lamartiniere to make his unfortunate attempt for relieving Vigo.

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Having removed his sick and wounded from Braga to Porto, for they were safe nowhere but under the immediate protection of the army, the Marshal sent Generals Graindorges and Heudelet to relieve Tuy and subdue the intermediate country, where the Portuguese General Botelho had put the Corregidor of Barcellos to death for having welcomed the French on their former reconnoissance from Braga. They entered Ponte de Lima after some resistance; the weak and dilapidated fortress of Valença was surrendered to them, and Barrios, who upon tidings of their movements had made an unsuccessful attack upon Tuy, retired during the night to S. Comba. The French boasted that Lapella and Monçam, Villa Nova and Caminha had opened their gates to them, and that the fort of Insoa, at the mouth of the Minho, had capitulated: the names carried as lofty a sound as if the places were of any strength, or possessed any importance, or could have been defended against them, or held by them. But in fact the only advantage expected or derived from the expedition was that of removing with all speed the garrison and all the

*The French
in Tuy re-
lieved and
withdrawn.*

April 8.

April 10.