

these prisoners to the other side of the sea, gave a proof as authentic as it was great, that the Spaniards had not wholly forgotten the art of subduing and binding the French. This was the first day of good fortune that rose on Spain after five months of disasters, . . . others followed. In vain did Soult, hardly escaping from our allies at Porto, come with the relics of his beaten division to succour the weakened Ney. Harassed in their marches, decimated in their parties, cut off in their communications, and baffled in their hope of fighting great actions, these arrogant Generals despair of conquest, and execrate a war in which their men are consumed without glory. Weary of struggling against a physical force which every day strengthened, and a moral resistance which had made itself invincible, they fled at last from your soil in a state of miserable exhaustion, giving to Castille a new and great example that it is not possible to force the yoke upon a people who are unanimous in resisting it.

“*The Spaniards do not yet know what war is*, said those traitors to their country, who under the mask of a false prudence concealed their guilty selfishness. With such disheartening language they endeavoured to repress the generous impulses of loyalty. Base and pusillanimous men, we know what war is now! this terrible lesson is written upon our soil with the finger of desolation, it is engraved in our hearts with the dagger of vengeance. The execrable criminals whose instruments you have made yourselves have in their atrocities exceeded all that your perfidious mind could have foreseen, all that your terrified imagination could have foreboded. Transport yourselves to Galicia, if ye dare do it, ye miserable men, and there learn what is the standard of the true Spanish character! The blood which has there been shed is still steaming to heaven, the houses which have been burnt are still smoking, and the frightful silence of depopulation prevails over a country which was lately covered with villages and

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hamlets. But ask those families who, wandering among the mountains, chose rather to live with wild beasts, than communicate with the assassins to whom you had sold them: ask them if they repent of their resolution; seek among them one voice that shall follow you, one vote that shall exculpate you!

“People of Galicia, you are free! and your country, in proclaiming it, effaces with her tears of admiration and tenderness the mournful words wherein, in other times, she complained of you. You are free, and you owe your freedom to your exaltation of mind, to your courage, to your constancy. You are free, and Spain and all Europe congratulate you the more joyfully in proportion as your case had appeared desperate. All good men bless your name; and in holding you up as a model to the other provinces, we regard the day of your deliverance as a fortunate presage for the country.”

CHAPTER XXIII.

CATALONIA. BATTLE OF VALLS. DEATH OF REDING. BLAKE APPOINTED TO THE COMMAND. BATTLE OF ALCANIZ. FLIGHT OF THE SPANIARDS AT BELCHITE. COMMENCEMENT OF THE GUERRILLAS.

THREE circumstances had materially contributed to the success of the Galicians : the aid and confidence which they derived from the British ships, whereby they were assisted first in recovering Vigo, and afterwards at the Bridge of S. Payo ; the rare virtues of Romana, whose single thought was how to serve his country, and who for that object shrinking neither from responsibility nor obloquy, acted always with promptitude and decision upon his own judgement ; and, lastly, the very condition, or rather destitution of his army : its name and presence had a powerful effect in rousing and encouraging the people, while the troops themselves felt and understood their utter inability for any other mode of warfare than that which their leader was pursuing, and thus derived strength from the very knowledge of their weakness. In Catalonia the people were not less brave and patriotic ; there was a stronger British squadron off the coast ; and the army was respectable for numbers, sufficiently equipped, and in a state of discipline not to be despised. But the Generals in succession were deficient either in military skill or natural talent, or that vigour of mind without which all other qualifications in a commander are of no avail.

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*Proceedings
of the
French
after the
fall of Za-
ragoza.*

Neither in Aragon nor in Catalonia had the French been able to follow up their success. They had paid dearly for Zaragoza: even the army of observation had been so harassed during that ever-memorable siege, that it was necessary to allow them some repose. Having possessed themselves of Jaca by the treachery of the governor, and of Monzon, which was evacuated by the garrison because Lazan had taken no effectual measures for supplying it with provisions; they were repulsed in three attempts upon Mequinenza. They summoned Lerida, thinking to intimidate the inhabitants by the fate of the Zaragozans; but that example had produced an effect which neither Buonaparte nor his Generals were capable of anticipating; they estimated every thing by success, and with them to be unfortunate was to be despised and miserable. Marshal Lasnes was told in answer to his summons, that Zaragoza, unprotected as it was, had held out ten months against its besiegers, and that Lerida was a strong place. The Spaniards were also reminded that the Prince of Condé had been baffled before that fortress. It was expected by some of the Spanish officers that St. Cyr, in conjunction with the French from Aragon, would besiege the city without delay; that he would afterwards attack Tarragona, and then marching from conquest to conquest, proceed against Valencia. Others supposed, that for the more immediate object of securing the communication between France and Barcelona, his first measure would be to get possession of Hostalrich. Orders were indeed sent to St. Cyr to undertake with his corps the sieges of Gerona, Tarragona and Tortosa, at the same time; enterprises so much beyond his means, that the order made him doubt whether it was an error in the ciphers of the dispatch, or an act of folly in those who dictated instructions which could not have been obeyed without exposing the army to some great and inevitable disaster. That General had as little reason to be satisfied with his situation,

*Cabañes,
c. 14.**St. Cyr,
130.*

as with the cause in which he was employed. Having exhausted the resources within reach, he was obliged to quit his position at Martorell, S. Sadurni, Villa Franca, and Vendrell, and draw nearer to Tarragona, Reus, and Valls. His great object was to bring on another action, for the purpose of establishing the superiority of the French arms in the feelings of his own army, as well as of the Spaniards; for notwithstanding the splendid successes which he had achieved, that opinion was daily losing ground while the Catalans confined themselves to a system of desultory warfare.

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St. Cyr,
118.

Upon such a system Reding had resolved to act in conformity to the opinion of all his best officers. Hope, enterprise, and activity, were thus excited; and the spirit not of the irregular force alone, but of the troops, was raised, as every day brought tidings of some partial and animating success. Meantime he exerted himself in endeavouring to bring the army into a state of discipline, acting when that was in question with a decision which he wanted at other times. One regiment he broke for having refused to obey a Swiss officer in action. His character stood so high with the Catalans, that this vigorous measure did not injure his popularity; for he had the full support of public feeling and of the local authorities. The Junta of Tarragona coined not only the plate of individuals, but that of the churches also, for the pay of the troops; and for two months the hospitals received their whole supplies, and the army the whole of their pay, clothing, and food from the inhabitants of that faithful city. It was at this time that one of the best and ablest men whom these calamitous times forced into action, the Baron de Eroles, D. Joaquin Ybañez, resigned his place in the Superior Junta, and putting on the Miquelet uniform, took the command of a body of those troops, believing that he could serve his country more effectually in the field than in council. Throughout the

*State of the
Catalan
army.*

Cabañes,
c. 14.

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1809.

New levies.

whole subsequent course of the war no Spaniard made himself more conspicuous, nor has any one acquired a higher or more irreproachable name.

A conscription of every fifth man throughout the principality was called for, without distinction of ranks, in obedience to the decree of the Central Junta; the men were willing to serve, but an error was committed in embodying them with the regular troops, because the Catalans disliked that service, and were proud of the name as well as attached to the privileges of the Miquelets. Some attempt was made to bring this irregular but most useful force into a better state of order and uniformity, for which purpose the camp-marshal, D. Josef Joaquín Martí, was appointed their commander-in-chief; but this proved altogether abortive. Even the proper returns of the men who were to be under his command could not be obtained; and though he had ability as well as zeal to qualify him for the charge, nothing could be done, when means of every kind were wanting. The province, however, was in arms. The people, knowing their own physical strength, and impatient of seeing their country oppressed by a handful of invaders, began to murmur at the General's inactivity: he was assailed by anonymous writings, accusing him of incapacity or treason; and this General was as sensitive to such attacks as he was sensible of the difficulties that surrounded him. Brave, honourable, humane, and well acquainted with the art of war, he wanted the main qualifications for it when entrusted with command; having neither fortitude to persevere against vulgar clamour in the cautious system which he was sensible was best suited to the time, nor promptitude to act with vigour and decision when he departed from it.

Cabañes,
c. 14.

Reding de-
termines to
act on the
offensive.

The Central Junta had sent D. Tomas de Veri, one of its members, as its representative to Catalonia. A like measure had been adopted in the tumultuous times of the French Revo-

lution; the circumstances in Spain were altogether different, and these missions appear neither to have produced good nor evil. On the present occasion Veri was in favour of active operations; and that opinion, which had necessarily much weight with Reding, was strengthened by assurances that an insurrection would be attempted in Barcelona as soon as any movements on his part should be made to favour it. The Camp-marshal Marti was called upon to form the plan of a general attack; his own judgement was decidedly opposed to it, but Reding had determined upon action in deference to the popular cry. He did not like to hear it remarked that the troops were more willing to eat their rations than to march against the enemy; and he wished also to ascertain in the field whether any reliance might be placed upon the Somatens, and upon that general enthusiasm which he did not participate, and in which he had no faith. If he entertained any hope, it was founded upon the promised effort in Barcelona, . . . which of all hopes had the least foundation; . . . for the fortresses having now been well victualled, the time was gone by when it might have been of advantage to have got possession of the city. But even after his resolution to act on the offensive was taken, the movements of the army were delayed by that ominous mood of mind which draws on ill fortune more surely than it foresees it. And in strange opposition to what happened in all other parts of the Peninsula, all Reding's plans were perfectly well known to the French, while he obtained no information of their movements or of their numbers on which he could rely. On the other hand, by a singular perversion of principle, the Catalans whom the French had in their pay made it a point of honour and conscience to communicate full and true intelligence. The task was not difficult; for Reding, in the certainty that his intentions were betrayed as soon as they were formed, gave up all hope of secrecy; and every thing was

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*Staff. Befreiungs
Krieg der
Katalonier,*
p. 148.

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The Spaniards driven from Igualada.

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St. Cyr, 103-106. Cabañes, c. 14.

Failure of the French attempt against the Abbey of the Creus.

talked of in public, with a desperate carelessness, as if it were useless to observe even the rules of common prudence.

The Spaniards occupied a line from Martorell to Tarragona, through Bruch, Capelladas, S. Magi, and Col de S. Cristina; the head-quarters, under Camp-marshal D. Juan Bautista de Castro, being at Igualada: this line covered the whole south of the principality, and touched upon the north at Valls, where the levy in mass was to be effected. St. Cyr waited till the Spaniards had weakened themselves to his desire by extending their line so far as to render it vulnerable in many points: then leaving Souham's division at Vendrell to observe the troops at Col de S. Cristina and near Tarragona, he with the divisions of Pino, Chabot, and Chabran, attacked the Spaniards on their left at various points; and though at one time Chabot's division was in danger of being routed, succeeded in driving them back upon Igualada, where, with an imprudence which experience had not corrected, large magazines had been assembled. They had neglected to occupy the road from Llacuna in sufficient strength, though it was the key to all their positions on the way to Barcelona; by this road they found themselves attacked in the rear, when falling back already dispirited and in confusion; and it was only by flight that they escaped in the directions of Cervera, Cardona, and Manresa. Castro was removed from his command, for the want of skill or of zeal which he had manifested in these operations. His subsequent conduct confirmed the worst suspicions that could then have been entertained; for he entered the Intruder's service, and holding a military command under him, became, as far as his power extended, the scourge of his countrymen.

It was part of St. Cyr's plan that Souham, when he was apprised of the success of these operations, either by the ceasing of the fire, or by any other means, should beat the detachment at Col

de S. Cristina, and join him at Villarradoña, when it was hoped that the Spaniards might be driven from all their positions, in utter rout, once more within the walls of Tarragona. To effect this the French commander proceeded with Pino's division against a body of Spaniards under Brigadier D. Miguel de Iranzo, who occupied the position of S. Magi. The distance had appeared trifling upon the map: it proved long and difficult, the road during great part of the way being so narrow that the troops, foot as well as horse, could only defile man by man: they did not reach the position till four in the afternoon; the attack lasted till night closed, and the Spaniards then, unable to maintain their ground, retreated under cover of the darkness. Here, however, an unexpected difficulty impeded the conquerors; they were not acquainted with the country, nor had they been able, with all their exertions upon the march, to find any person who could serve them as a guide. From this perplexity they were relieved by a circumstance which would not have occurred if St. Cyr had not deserved and obtained a reputation, most unusual among Buonaparte's generals in Spain, for observing the humanities of war. A Spanish officer, who had been wounded and taken prisoner in this last affair, relying upon the French commander's character, entreated that he would let him be carried to Tarragona: St. Cyr not only granted his request, but finding from him that he was able to direct those who bore him, added, that as there were no peasants to be found at S. Magi or in the adjoining parts, he would send him as far as the Convent of the Creus. By this act of compassion the French were extricated from the difficulty in which they had placed themselves. The wounded officer gratefully acknowledged this kindness, little thinking in what manner he was to serve the enemy. On the morrow accordingly he was sent forward; two or three persons at convenient distances behind observed his

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CHAP. way, and the French by their direction followed the unconscious
 XXIII. guide. During the whole day they did not fall in with a single
 1809. person; but in the evening when they drew near the monastery,
 February. instead of finding there, as they had expected, good quarters
 and comfortable stores for the troops, who stood in need of both
 after four days' exertions, they discovered that Iranzo had fallen
 back to this very point, and occupied it in strength. The French
 immediately saw that the post could not be forced without ar-
 tillery, and they had none with them; they made, however, a
 feint of attacking it, with the intention of attempting an escalade,
 if the Spaniards should betray any want of alacrity in the defence.
 But the walls of the inclosure, the windows of the buildings, the
 roof of the church, and the tower, were presently manned; and
 a fire was opened upon them from two *violentos*, . . pieces of small
 artillery, so named from the manner in which they are used; they
 are fired not less than twelve times in a minute, and the
 exertion which this requires is so great, that the strongest and
 most expert artillerymen cannot continue it more than a quarter
 of an hour.

St. Cyr,
107-111.

Reding
takes the
field, and
collects his
scattered
troops.

The French had learnt at Zaragoza what it was to attack the
 Spaniards where there were walls and buildings to be defended;
 and St. Cyr was not a man who would throw away the lives of
 his soldiers. His men, instead of the good quarters and better
 fare which they had promised themselves, were fain to bivouac
 upon the heights; and in the morning when the General had
 determined to cross the Gaya for the purpose of getting into a
 more open country, and effecting his junction with Souham's
 division, they were obliged to defile under a sharp and well-
 directed fire of musketry from the Convent. When they reached
 Villarrodona, to their great disappointment Souham was not
 there; the dispatches which had been sent to him had been all
 intercepted, and a day and half were lost in waiting till he