

land all the others there, from whence they might be removed at leisure. The possession of Langeland had now been secured, but Nyborg was an insecure position; it was reported that some thousand French had collected upon the shores of the Little Belt; and these, with the Danes in Funen, and the garrison of Nyborg, might seriously impede the embarkation from that town, or perhaps succeed in cutting off the rear-guard. It was judged expedient, therefore, to spike the guns there, and remove the troops to a neck of land called Slipshavn, about a league distant; and from thence they were shipped with as much expedition as the unfavourable weather permitted.

CHAP.  
XII.

1808.

*August.*

Two of the regiments which had been quartered in Funen were cavalry, mounted on the fine, black, long-tailed Andalusian horses. It was impracticable to bring off these horses, about 1100 in number; and Romana was not a man who could order them to be destroyed lest they should fall into the hands of the French: he was fond of horses himself, and knew that every man was attached to the beast which had carried him so far, and so faithfully. Their bridles, therefore, were taken off, and they were turned loose upon the beach. As they moved off, they passed some of the country horses and mares, which were feeding at a little distance. A scene ensued such as probably never before was witnessed. The Spanish horses are not mutilated, and these were sensible that they were no longer under any restraint of human power. A general conflict ensued, in which, retaining the discipline that they had learnt, they charged each other in squadrons of ten or twenty together; then closely engaged, striking with their fore-feet, and biting and tearing each other with the most ferocious rage, and trampling over those which were beaten down, till the shore, in the course of a quarter of an hour, was strewn with the dead and disabled. Part of them had been set free on a rising ground at some distance;

*Fate of the  
horses.*

CHAP. they no sooner heard the roar of the battle than they came  
 XII. thundering down over the intermediate hedges, and catching  
 1808. the contagious madness, plunged into the fight with equal fury.  
August. Sublime as the scene was, it was too horrible to be long contemplated, and Romana, in mercy, gave orders for destroying them; but it was found too dangerous to attempt this; and after the last boats quitted the beach, the few horses that remained were seen still engaged in the dreadful work of mutual \* destruction.

Aug. 11.  
*The Spaniards are landed in the Isle of Langeland.*

On the second morning all were safely on board, but the wind detained them in the harbour; and there, on the evening of that day, the regiment from Aarhus joined them, in four vessels, which they had seized. The one at Randers did not succeed in making its escape. The south part of Langeland was in possession of the Spaniards. As soon as the wind permitted, their fellow-soldiers were landed there. The whole number was about 9000 men, with some 230 women and children. Stores and water were to be laid in for their voyage to Gottenburg. The Danish Governor, General Alsfeld, agreed not to molest them, and withdrew his troops to the northern part of the island, promising, that if any French were known to arrive in Funen, he would then deliver up their arms. It was thought necessary to demand them the ensuing day, upon a rumour that this had occurred; and also because a body of Danish cavalry had appeared as if observing the Spaniards for some military view; and because the escape of the French Commandant had been facilitated by the General. Some of the troops refused to obey, a detachment was therefore marched against them to enforce obedience, and this demonstration of force was sufficient.

Aug. 13.

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\* I give this remarkable story from that very meritorious journal 'The Plain Englishman,' (vol. i. 294,) where it is related by the editor on the authority of Sir Richard Keats himself.

They took the horses also, having only about 200 of their own, which had been brought from Svendborg; but they voluntarily promised that these arms and horses, and whatever else belonged to the Danes, should be left upon the beach at their departure. Some robberies, which a few of the men committed, were instantly punished, and restitution made; and a just price was fixed for the provisions which were demanded: they were supplied, therefore, without reluctance. Meat was in abundance, but there was a difficulty in obtaining bread; and the water lay at a distance from the shore, . . . a thousand men, and all the carriages that could be procured, were employed in conveying it. Their situation was still an anxious one: an attack was to be apprehended from the opposite port of Svendborg; it was known that the Danes could collect as many as four-and-twenty gun-boats there, and the channel would not admit of frigates to defend it: a flotilla, indeed, came out from thence one night, and kept up an idle cannonade upon the Spanish encampment. It was reported that French troops had arrived there, and of this no certain information could be obtained, for not a peasant in Langeland could be induced by the offer of any reward to go and ascertain the fact; an instance of national honour which may more than counterbalance the unworthy conduct of the Danish Government at this time. That the French were not inactive was certain. Proclamations from Bernadotte were introduced into the camp, endeavouring to deceive the Spaniards with regard to the state of affairs in their own country, to excite suspicion of the English, and to make them arrest their leaders; but these papers provoked only the contempt which they deserved.

On the sixth day after their landing Admiral Saumarez arrived, and in three days more, every thing being ready, the troops were re-embarked. The arms and horses which they had

CHAP.  
XII.  
1808.  
August.

*They sail  
for Gotten-  
burg, and  
there em-  
bark for  
Spain.  
Aug. 18.*

CHAP. taken from the Danes were left in the batteries. Before they  
 XII. departed a flag of truce was sent to Copenhagen, requiring, on  
 1808. the part of their Commander, that the regiments which were de-  
September. tained should be allowed to depart. The vessels from Aarhus,  
 being manned by Danes, were supplied by the British Admiral  
 with stores for eight days, and released. Those from Nyborg  
 were manned from the fleet, and an offer was made to send them  
 back from Gottenburg with the crews of two Danish vessels  
 which had been captured, provided the Danes would release  
 an equal number of British prisoners in exchange. But these  
 measures were not met with a corresponding temper by the  
 Danish Government, and the convoy was fired at as it passed  
 the battery of Slipshavn. They reached Gottenburg in safety;  
 and the Spaniards there received the first intelligence of the  
 successes which their countrymen had obtained. They were  
 landed, for the sake of health and comfort, upon the islands in  
 the harbour; transports from England arrived in a few days,  
 and this little army then sailed for their own country, full of  
 ardour, . . . to lay down their lives in its defence.

*Romana  
 lands in  
 England.*

While the convoy proceeded on its voyage to Coruña, Ro-  
 mana landed in England, for the purpose of consulting with  
 the British Government. It was there determined that his force  
 should be disembarked at Santander, to be incorporated with the  
 Galician army; and to avoid all immediate difficulty concerning  
 its support, the existing armies in the present disorganized state  
 of Spain being raised and subsisted by their respective pro-  
 vinces, Great Britain undertook to pay and feed it for two  
 months, by which time it was supposed the Central Junta would  
 be ready to perform this part of its duties. These were troops  
 on whose discipline and courage entire reliance might be placed;  
 and Romana's intention was to triple the infantry, by forming  
 upon each battalion a regiment of three. And as it was designed

that a British army should advance to bear its part in the first brunt of the great contest, the intention was, that, if possible, it should act with Romana on the left flank, and Castaños on its right. With both these officers it was justly thought the service might proceed in the true spirit of confidence and good will; the reputation of both stood deservedly high, and their disposition was even of more importance, when operations were to be carried on by concert between the generals, not by a paramount and controlling command. For, by a strange error, the Spanish Government had resolved to make the commands independent of each other. This error seems to have been committed less from want of judgement, than in deference to the provincial Juntas, and in fear of offending them; yet at that time public opinion would have supported them had they appointed Castaños commander-in-chief.

CHAP.  
XII.  
1808.  
September.

*Error of the Spaniards in not appointing a Commander-in-chief*

It was not, however, the abilities of any single general, however pre-eminent, which could have saved the Spanish armies, constituted as they then were, from inevitable defeat, unless a strong British force had been ready to have acted with them. Preparations upon an adequate scale had been promised and intended by the Central Government; but when they had raised men and embodied them, the difficulty of maintaining them occurred, a difficulty which has at all times been greater in Spain than in any other civilized country. Our own commissariat was then far from effective; for great experience, as well as great activity and talents, are required in the business of providing an army: it is not then to be wondered at that the Spaniards, under their complicated embarrassments, should have been grievously defective in this main branch of the military art; but this was one cause why the number of their armies fell far short of their computed force, many young recruits returning

*Difficulty of feeding their armies.*

CHAP. to their homes, when they saw how miserably they fared in the  
 XII. camp. It would have been most desirable to have followed up  
 1808. the first successes with vigour, and have attacked the enemy  
*September.* while the impression made upon them by so many humiliating  
 failures was fresh, and before farther reinforcements should enable  
 them to resume the offensive. But this had not been possible.  
 The French were strongly posted, and well provided with all the  
 means of war; and their cavalry gave them complete command  
 of the plains of Castille. They had ravaged the land from  
 Burgos to Astorga, and driven in contributions from the very  
 gates of the latter city. Blake could oppose no resistance to  
 them in that open country without cavalry, and for want of that  
 essential arm was obliged to alter his intended plan of operations,  
 and pursue, at considerable risk, a different course. He resolved  
 to take a position between Bilbao and Vitoria, and menace the  
 right flank and rear of the French, while the army of Aragon  
 should act on their left.

*Bilbao  
 taken and  
 retaken.  
 Sept. 20.*

Bilbao had remained a month in possession of the enemy; it was then retaken by the Marques de Portazgo, and if his advanced posts had not begun to fire too soon, the garrison might have been surprised and made prisoners. After an action of three or four hours they effected their retreat, losing some 400 men. But considerable bodies of French had now passed the Pyrenees; and Marshal Ney, who came at this time to take the chief command till Buonaparte himself should arrive, feigning to retreat upon Vitoria for the purpose of deceiving Portazgo, suddenly marched with the centre of his army upon Bilbao. The Marquis drew off in time, without losing a man or a gun, and took up a position at Valmaseda. There he was joined by a detachment of the Galician army, and Blake immediately made preparations to recover the city; but General Merlin, whom

Ney had left to command there, knew that the place was not tenable against a superior force, and evacuated it on the night of Oct. 11.

The French force at that time amounted to about 60,000; and the Spanish Generals knew, by an intercepted dispatch, that 72,000 more would enter Spain before the middle of November.

The Spaniards were nominally 130,000, but the effective number was very far short of this. With the left or western army Blake occupied a line from Burgos to Bilbao. The eastern army, that of Aragon and Valencia, under Palafox, was stationed, part near Zaragoza, and part was as far advanced as Sanguessa, on the left of the enemy, outflanking them on that side, as Blake did on the west. The head-quarters of the central army, under Castaños, were at Soria; . . . so that the whole formed a crescent. The Spaniards now began to experience the ruinous effects of that false policy which had exaggerated their successes and their strength, and had represented the final deliverance of the country as an event soon and certainly to be looked for. This delusion made the people clamorous for the accomplishment of their expectations, and the government itself either partook or yielded to this impatience. The wise precautions with which the Junta of Seville began the war were disregarded, and the Central Junta called upon the Generals to hasten their operations. However strong, they said, might have been the reasons for delay, loss of time had already proved injurious, and must be more so if the enemy should receive their expected reinforcements. An end therefore must be put to this inactivity. And, as if dissatisfied with their generals, they appointed D. Francisco Palafox to go as their representative to the armies, with the Marques de Coupigni and the Conde de Montijo under him. He was to be received with the same honours as a Captain-General of the army, to confer with the Commanders, concert operations with them, and himself

CHAP.  
XII.

1808.  
October.

*Position of  
the armies  
in October.*

*Commis-  
sioners sent  
to the Span-  
ish armies.*

CHAP. XII. 1808. October. decide upon the plan of attack. Another reason for this mission was, that Castaños and Palafox differed totally in opinion concerning the measures which ought to be pursued. The latter was eager for action, because he believed that every thing might be accomplished by zeal and courage; the former understood the art of war better, and knew how little these qualities alone were to be trusted in the open field against an enemy strong in cavalry, equal in numbers, and superior in discipline. The commissioners were sent to determine between them. Of all the measures of the Central Junta this was the worst. It was taken a few days before Romana arrived in Spain. Had he been present, his authority, coming in aid of the opinion of Castaños, which was decidedly but warily expressed, might have prevented so preposterous a mission, and averted the evils which were thus precipitated.



## CHAPTER XIII.

PROCEEDINGS OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT. CONFERENCE  
AT ERFURTH. PROPOSAL FOR PEACE. BUONAPARTE EN-  
TERS SPAIN.

It had always been Buonaparte's system, and therein it was that the strength and wisdom of his policy consisted, to ensure success, as far as the end can be rendered certain by the employment of adequate means. Having stripped Spain of its best troops, introduced his armies into the heart of the country, seized the most important fortresses, inveigled into captivity the whole Royal Family, and extorted from them a formal renunciation of the crown in his favour; the people, he thought, if they dared attempt any partial opposition, would be effectually intimidated by the first slaughter, and the military executions which should follow it. His calculation was erroneous, because the Spanish character, and the strength of good principles, had not been taken into the account. He had never dreamt of a national resistance; and the defeat of armies, till that time irresistible, affected him the more deeply, because he felt that the measures which had drawn on these disasters were as infamous as he now perceived that they were impolitic. The reverses which befell him in the latter part of his bloody career he bore with the coldest insensibility; but he was distressed by these, and all but cast down.

1808.

*Buonaparte  
is deeply af-  
fected by the  
reverses in  
Spain.*

*Marshal  
Gouvion  
St. Cyr, 12.*

CHAP.  
XIII.

1808.

*He conceals  
them from  
the French  
people.*

But it was too late to recede ; the infamy was indelible, it remained only to secure the prize, and this he believed there would be no difficulty in effecting. His first care was to conceal from the French all knowledge of the mortifying failure his arms had experienced, till he should have secured the subserviency of the other continental powers, and collected fresh armies to pour into the peninsula. His system of government was founded upon falsehood as well as force. While all Spain was in arms, the French papers represented it as joyfully welcoming its new sovereign. "The disturbances," they said, "which broke out in a few provinces were completely quelled : they had been occasioned only by the common people, who wished to pillage the rich : the disaffected had got together some bands of smugglers, opened the prisons, and put arms into the hands of the felons : these wretches had committed great excesses upon their peaceful countrymen, but every thing was now quiet. The captains-general, the magistrates, and the polished part of the nation, displayed the best sentiments, and the greatest repose and best state of mind prevailed. At Cadiz the public tranquillity did not experience a moment's interruption ; the inhabitants of that interesting city had resisted all the insidious offers of the English. Throughout the peninsula, indeed, only a few insignificant individuals had been led astray by the spies of England. But the Council of Castille, and the most respectable persons, had exerted their influence with all ranks, to crush the seeds of sedition before they should shoot forth ; and their efforts had been completely successful." Over great part of France and of the continent these accounts would be believed ; wherever, indeed, a vigilant tyranny could keep out all information except its own. But at Bayonne it was not possible that the truth could be concealed ; and by the falsehood which was officially circulated in that part of the country, it