

CHAP. I. might at any moment take advantage of his situation and force him to retreat.

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At Salamanca, therefore, Sir John Moore was surrounded on all hands by circumstances of peril. Yet part of his difficulties must be admitted to have proceeded from his own arrangements. Deceived by an imperfect survey of the roads in Portugal, while the infantry proceeded by Almeida, the cavalry and artillery were directed to advance by Merida and Truxillo; and the consequence was, that the difficulty of collecting his army was prodigiously enhanced, and Sir John Moore was compelled to remain above a month inactive at Salamanca. Precious time was thus lost. The thoughts of the General were bent only on retreat. The army did not move till the eleventh hour, and action was unfortunately delayed till the precise period when action could no longer be available.

Had Sir John Moore, when he first announced the resolution of retiring on Portugal, adhered steadily to his purpose, we know not that the measure, in a merely military point of view, could be held liable to censure. An army on certain calculations had been advanced into Spain. These, by

a succession of unforeseen events, had been utterly nullified. The relative conditions of the hostile parties, which had formed the very basis of the measure, had undergone a sudden revolution. The Spanish forces had not only been defeated, but dispersed; and a retreat on Portugal might only be regarded as the withdrawal of an army from a point where its services could be of trifling avail, to another where it might operate with greater efficacy on the fortunes of the war.

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But, in such a case, the measure of retreat cannot be regarded as an independent military operation. The moral influence it could not fail to exert must likewise be regarded. The Spanish nation would have considered it as a disgraceful dereliction of their cause. It would have depressed the spirit of the people; and thus would have operated injuriously in every quarter, where resistance was yet offered to the enemy. To that enemy it would have lent encouragement; nor do we think, in a comprehensive view of all the circumstances, the step would have admitted of vindication, unless it could be satisfactorily proved that the safety of the army imperiously demanded its adoption. It

CHAP. I. is in *necessity* alone that a full justification of  
1809. retreat could be found; and it is by a reference  
January. to the existence or non-existence of such neces-  
sity, that its wisdom must be judged.

In this view of the question, it has been matter of regret to many, that Sir John Moore was not led to regard with a more favourable eye the project of defending Galicia. No part of Spain offers equal advantages for a defensive war. Its natural strength is very great; and, by judiciously occupying its almost impracticable defiles, an army could maintain its ground against an enemy of immense numerical superiority. The geographical position of Galicia is likewise highly favourable. By means of its numerous sea-ports, an easy and rapid intercourse, might be maintained with England. Protected by a strong frontier from the direct line of the enemy's operations, its proximity to it was still so great, as continually to endanger his communications. A victory achieved at any time by an army on the border of Galicia, must have paralysed the operations of the enemy throughout the whole peninsula. The mere presence of a British force in that quarter must have prodigiously increased the dif-

facilities of Napoleon. It would have demanded the continual employment of an army greatly superior, to watch its operations ; it would have narrowed, cramped, and hampered the whole schemes of the enemy ; it would have lent new spirit and vigour to the Spanish people ; it would have constantly acted as a powerful diversion in favour of the Spanish armies in every part of the peninsula.

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The documents given in the Appendix to Colonel Napier's history, abundantly prove that it was to this quarter that the anxieties of Napoleon were chiefly directed.\* In the preceding campaign he repeatedly expresses his conviction that it was by the Gallician army alone that a blow could be struck by which Madrid might be endangered. In a communication, written under his dictation to Savary, he expresses his opinions on this matter very strongly. He declares that the occurrence of the smallest reverse to Marshal Bessieres—then commanding in Leon—would cut off the whole

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\* Vide page 233 of the first volume, in which some extracts relative to this subject are given.

CHAP. I. communications of the army, and even compromise its safety.

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Such being the importance of Galicia, and such the extended influence which an army, posted on its frontier, must have exercised on the war in every part of the peninsula, it will probably, we think, to an impartial observer, appear extraordinary, that Sir John Moore, with this important province within his grasp, should never have adopted any serious measures for its occupation. That the subject was brought under his consideration, the following extract of a letter from Sir David Baird, will shew.

Dated.  
Dec. 8.

“It has often occurred to me,” says that distinguished officer, “that in the event of our being obliged to adopt defensive measures, it might be more advantageous for the combined British army to cover Galicia and part of Leon, than by my proceeding to join you at Salamanca, to abandon the defence of these provinces. The Asturias might be occupied by the troops of the Marques de la Romana, and, if you judged it proper, by a flank movement, to join us in the neighbourhood of Astorga, I entertain a confident belief that, by occupying the strong ground behind it, we should be able to cover the country in our rear, and might wait until it is seen what efforts

the Spanish nation is disposed and determined to make in defence of the national independence. The royal road from Corunna to this place (Villa Franca) and Astorga is remarkably good, although mountainous; and, with the sea open to us, we should be able to receive with facility such reinforcements and supplies as the British Government might deem it proper to send. I do not think much difficulty would be experienced for a few months, from a want of provisions. The country abounds with cattle: bread indeed would be required; but flour might be obtained from England; and, in the meantime, Galicia would have an opportunity of arming under our protection, and our presence in Spain would furnish a rallying point, and act as a stimulus to the Spaniards, &c."

To the project, thus enforced by Sir David Baird, Sir John Moore stated no objection. His reply was as follows:—

"I am much obliged to you, for your opinion on the Gallicias and Vigo, and it is that which now probably I shall follow, should such a measure become necessary. I am, therefore, most anxious that magazines should be formed on that communication. I have written home to direct

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CHAP. I. that all transports, &c. should call at Corunna, and go to Vigo, unless otherwise directed. Corunna must be the place for all supplies from England. The communication through Portugal is difficult and tardy.”

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Unfortunately, Sir John Moore seems to have regarded the assumption of a defensive position on the Gallician frontier, and the permanent defence of that province, as a sort of *dernier resort*, to be adopted only when the more perilous experiment of advancing on Valladolid or Saldanha should have been tried. The experiment was tried, and failed. The British army retreated, not to defend Galicia, but to their ships. No minute and accurate knowledge was acquired of the localities of the country; no positions had been fortified; no depots established; and, indefatigably pursued by a powerful enemy, the contemplated project of defending Galicia—if seriously contemplated it ever was—at once vanished into thin air.

But Galicia did not afford the only sphere of operation, in which the army might have been employed with comparative benefit and safety. Sir John Moore might have retired across the Tagus, where, in a country of great strength

his army might have served as a rallying point, and a protection to the Spaniards in the southern provinces, to which the enemy had not yet penetrated. There it was that he was most dreaded by Napoleon, and there he would have created a diversion at least as efficacious as that of the advance on Saldanha, without incurring the inordinate risks by which that operation was attended. It is no objection to the policy of this measure to assert, that the opportunity thus afforded to the people of rallying round the standard of their country, would probably have been neglected. This may be so, and Sir John Moore was professedly a nullifidian in Spanish energy and patriotism; but the true question is, would not the army, if thus employed, have afforded a greater quantum of protection to our allies, with a smaller quantum of risk than was incurred by the advance to Sahagun, consequent on the concentration of the army.

Of that operation we would now speak. That it was one of extreme temerity is scarcely to be denied; that it was productive of the most calamitous consequences we unfortunately know.

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Sir John Moore had proceeded to Alaejos, with the intention of concentrating his forces in the neighbourhood of Valladolid, when the information derived from an intercepted despatch, induced him to change his plans, and advance against Soult at Saldanha, in hope of bringing him to action before the arrival of reinforcements. Never surely was an offensive operation undertaken on the chance of a more improbable contingency. Sir John Moore could scarcely calculate on the blunders of an opponent so skilful and experienced in the game of war. Yet, by some gross and inconceivable blunder alone, could Marshal Soult have suffered himself, in the circumstances of his army, to be drawn into a battle. Soult's policy manifestly was to retreat, not to fight; to induce his enemy to advance, and thereby give time for the coming up of forces, already on the march, by which his retreat would be cut off. On the advance of the British, Soult, as a matter of course, would have fallen back on Burgos, where his corps would have effected a junction with that of Junot. Nothing, therefore, could be more visionary than the prospect of defeating Soult, while nothing could be more imminent than the

danger which the British were certain to incur in the attempt of bringing him to action. Indeed it was to the Spanish General alone that the British army was indebted for its safety. Had Romana not communicated the information that the enemy, under Napoleon, were in full march from Madrid, the advance on Carrion and Saldanha would have taken place, and the retreat of the army would, in all probability, have been cut off. As it was, Sir John Moore was barely able to extricate himself from the danger he had so imprudently courted, by a rapid and precipitate movement. But the very letters of the General afford abundant proof, that, even in his own opinion, the advance on Saldanha could be productive of no beneficial result. Why then was it undertaken? Why was a gallant army thus ingloriously perilled, and subsequently compelled to seek safety in one of the most calamitous retreats of which history bears record? *Not* with the hope of animating and invigorating the spirit of the Spanish nation, because that spirit was believed by Sir John Moore to have been utterly broken and subdued, but because it was considered "*necessary to risk the army, to convince the people of England, as well as*

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CHAP. I. *the rest of Europe, that the Spaniards had*  


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 1809. *neither the power nor the inclination to make*  
 January. *any efforts for themselves!"*

Such was the object, for the attainment of which alone, the misfortunes attendant on the retreat to Corunna were inflicted on the British army and nation. Thank God that object was not attained. Had it been so, history would have been deprived of one of its most memorable lessons, and the brightest records of British glory would have been excluded from her annals.

Having said thus much on the previous operations of the army, we would say little of the retreat. That it was conducted with unnecessary rapidity, and that to this circumstance is attributable the greater part of its concomitant misfortunes, are points, we believe, on which the great majority of military authorities are agreed. Had the information of the General, with regard to the country traversed by his army, been more accurate and extensive, he would have known that there was no road leading to Betanzos and Corunna, by which the enemy could at any season have advanced with rapidity sufficient to have endangered his communications. In

fact, the roads on the right and left of that occupied by the British, most difficult at any season, must, at the period in question, when covered with deep snow, and intersected by swollen torrents from the mountains, have been utterly impracticable. At all events, no measures were taken to ascertain whether these roads were occupied by detachments of the enemy or not. Sir John Moore relied only for safety on the celerity of his marches; no attempt was made to impede the progress of the pursuers, by destroying the bridges which led across the numerous ravines; the soldiers, worn by incessant privation and fatigue to the lowest pitch of exhaustion compatible with life, became utterly demoralized; and all the proud attributes of a British army, save that of innate and indefeasible courage, were unnecessarily sacrificed.

We feel it to be superfluous to enter on more detailed criticisms on the minuter features of the retreat. Whatever may have been the errors of Sir John Moore, it must be admitted that fortune also was against him. The elements were his opponents; and those most deeply conversant in warlike operations, will be the first to acknowledge how easily the wisest calcula-

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tions may be overthrown by the occurrence of contingencies which human prudence could neither foresee nor avert. During his retreat, Sir John Moore lost no trophy in fight. He led his army to their ships. He declined to sacrifice the honour of his country by proposing a convention. He closed a life of honourable and distinguished service on the field of battle; and his reward was the shout of victory which met his dying ear.

From the moment he entered Spain, Sir John Moore was surrounded by difficulties. He saw at once that the British Government were deceived with regard to the state of the peninsula. He was directed to co-operate with armies which seemed to melt at a breath, and retain nothing of material existence. He was thwarted in his schemes by those on whose opinion he had injudiciously been made dependent. He received no support from the authorities of the country. He felt it to be impossible to realize the expectations of the British Government and nation. His spirit, almost morbidly sensitive, shrank from the breath of censure which even blameless failure, for a time, might draw on his fair fame. Unfortunately, such feelings—the

feelings of a generous and proud soul—gathered force as the prospect darkened around him, and disposed his mind to despondency. Something perhaps he wanted of fitting confidence in his own great powers ; something too of that elastic buoyancy of spirit, which danger and difficulty tend rather to stimulate than depress.

But enough. Such as Moore was, England is proud of him ; and the moral perceptions of her people must indeed be blunted, when they shall cease to regard his memory with love and honour.

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## CHAPTER II.

## OPERATIONS OF THE FRENCH ARMIES.

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CORUNNA capitulated on the twentieth of January, and was immediately occupied by the French troops. A division of the army was detached against Ferrol, which, notwithstanding its extreme strength, was treacherously surrendered.

In these places the French became masters of an immense supply of arms, artillery, ammunition, and stores of all descriptions, which enabled them to overrun the remainder of the province. Soult was then ordered to advance into Portugal, leaving the corps of Ney to secure the subjugation of Gallicia. But it is necessary we should now turn our attention to the events passing in the interior of Spain.

The advance of the French armies had compelled the Supreme Junta to retire from Aranjuez to Talavera, and subsequently to Seville, in which city they assembled on the seventeenth of December. A strong edict was issued, pronouncing sentence of death against every officer or soldier who should fail immediately to rejoin his colours. All who harboured them were declared liable to confiscation of property; but amnesty was offered to those who, within fifteen days, should present themselves to the nearest authority, with the view of being forwarded to the army.

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This decree was not without effect. A considerable number of the fugitives, from the Spanish armies on the Ebro, were again collected under General Galluzo, on the south of the Tagus, who made dispositions for defending the four bridges, by which alone the river can be crossed from the side of Talavera. Of these communications, that of Almaraz is the most important. On the approach of Lefebvre's corps, Galluzo attempted to destroy the bridge, but without success; and the French, under a demonstration of crossing at Arzobispo, effected their passage



CHAP. II. at Almaraz; and, taking the Spanish divisions,  
 1808. too much separated, in detail, drove them as far  
 December. as Merida. There the progress of Lefebvre was  
 arrested, by an order to march northward in  
 pursuit of Sir John Moore. Galluzo, whose in-  
 capacity had already been sufficiently established,  
 was superseded in command by Cuesta.

1809. Towards the close of January, the Estrama-  
 January. duran army, having greatly recruited its strength,  
 was enabled to assume the offensive. It was  
 posted with its van-guard on the left branch of  
 the Alamonte, between Truxillo and Xaraicejo,  
 about half a league to the south-west of the lat-  
 ter place. The French had pushed their advanced  
 parties close to the Spanish army; but they  
 were repulsed and driven beyond Miravete.  
 Cuesta then took possession of the pass upon  
 that mountain; and the French, not being in  
 sufficient force to maintain their position on the  
 left of the Tagus, crossed the river, and fell back  
 on Talavera.

While these events were passing in Estrama-  
 dura, the Duke del Infantado, with the wreck of  
 the army of Castanos, augmented by the levies re-  
 cently raised in Granada and Andalusia, advanced

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from Cuenca, in hope of surprising a body of French cavalry at Aranjuez and Tarancon. Information of this movement no sooner reached Victor at Toledo, than he set out with his corps in search of Infantado and his army. The French directed their march on Ocana, and reached that town without gaining any intelligence relative to the object of their pursuit. But on the morning of the thirteenth, either by accident, or by some blunder of the guides, the French suddenly found themselves in front of a body of the Spanish army, under Venegas, which occupied the crest of a hill near the village of Ucles. The Spaniards were driven from their position by the bayonet, and fled in great disorder towards Alcazar. Here again fortune was against them. The division of General Ruffin had accidentally deviated from the line of march, and, unawares, had gained the rear of the enemy. The retreat of the fugitive Spaniards was thus cut off. The consequences were disastrous. Several thousands were made prisoners. The loss, in killed and wounded, was very great, and forty guns were captured by the enemy. The small remnant which escaped, throwing away their arms, dispersed in various directions. Had Latour

CHAP. II. Maubourg's division of cavalry, which had been  
 1808. in march from day-dawn, not been prevented  
 December. by fatigue from following up the pursuit, the  
 consequences would have been still more fatal.

Rocca. The inhuman barbarity with which the prisoners, made in this unfortunate battle, were treated, merits record. These unhappy wretches were marched to Madrid. Many of them sank under their fatigue—others died of inanition. When they could proceed no farther, they were shot without mercy. The inhabitants of Ucles had taken no part in the action, yet their town was made the theatre of atrocities which humanity shrinks from relating. Plunder, murder, torture, and violation, were among the evils inflicted on this unhappy people.

Immediately after the defeat of Ucles, Victor, with his corps, entered the province of Cuenca; and, after some operations, terminating in no marked result, retired to Madrilejos and Consuegra, where his troops went into cantonments.

We now turn to the operations in Catalonia.

At this period, the events in that principality may rather be considered as an important episode, in the general progress of the war, than as

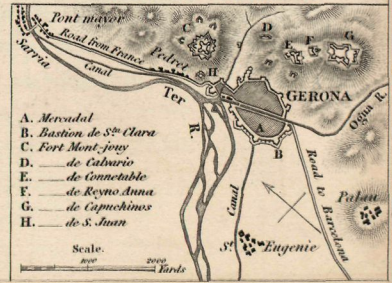


MAP OF  
**CATALONIA.**

Great roads ———  
Carriage roads ———  
Mule roads ———

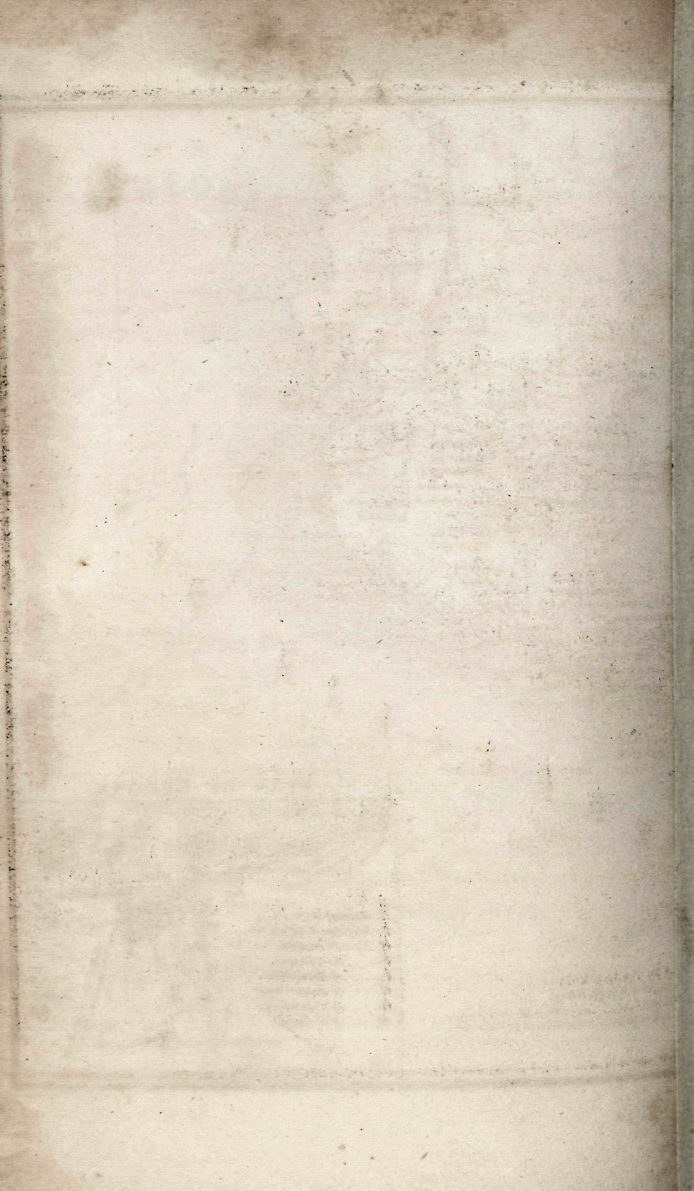


**PLAN OF GERONA.**



- A. Arsenal
- B. Bastion de S<sup>te</sup> Clara
- C. Fort Mont-jouy
- D. — de Calvario
- E. — de Conestable
- F. — de Reyno Anna
- G. — de Caymichins
- H. — de S. Juan

Scale.  
1000  
500  
Fards



influencing, in any very powerful degree, the general fate of the kingdom. Still, it cannot be denied, that its possession would have eminently contributed to the consolidation of the French power in Spain; and it is the opinion of a high authority, that, at the commencement of the war, Napoleon would have acted more wisely had the greater proportion of his forces been employed for the reduction of Catalonia.

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St. Cyr.

No part of Spain, perhaps, opposes so many obstacles to an invading army. Its general character is rugged and mountainous; the plains are of small extent; and it abounds in regularly fortified places of great strength. Catalonia, therefore, was geographically strong, and yet stronger in the courage, hardihood, and fine spirit of her population. The prospect of becoming a province of France was one most repugnant to the pride of the Catalans,—and they were prepared by every sacrifice to avert the advent of so dreaded a misfortune. That Napoleon contemplated the dismemberment of Catalonia from Spain there can be no doubt. Its acquisition would have been most favourable to the augmentation of the commerce and naval power of France in the Mediterranean. With this view,

CHAP. II. he forbade his generals in the principality, to  
 1808. correspond with Joseph or his ministers, though  
 September. he deemed it prudent to refrain from any public  
 annunciation of his design.

The efforts hitherto made for the reduction of Catalonia had signally failed. At the end of August the French only retained possession of Barcelona and Figueras. By the Marques Palacio new levies were organized with all possible rapidity. The leading Junta of the province had issued an ordinance, directing forty *tercios* or battalions of Miquelets to be embodied; and part of these were already in the field. Reinforcements had been received from Majorca, Minorca, and Granada; and these, with the four thousand troops which had recently arrived from Portugal, augmented the regular army in Catalonia to about twenty-eight thousand men, exclusive of the garrisons of Hostalrich, Rosas, and Gerona.

The chief object of the Catalans was to recover Barcelona; and the attention of Palacio was exclusively occupied with preparations for a siege. With this view he collected magazines at different points on the Llobregat; and, in order to secure their safety, he took up an in-



trenched position on a mountain in rear of San Boy. Duhesme, alarmed by these measures, determined on driving the army of Palacio from the Llobregat. With this purpose, on the night of the first of September, he marched out from Barcelona; and on the morning of the second commenced an attack on the line occupied by the enemy. A severe engagement ensued. The progress of the assailants was repeatedly checked by the courage of the Miquelets; but the camp of San Boy was carried, and three guns, with a considerable quantity of provisions, clothing, and other stores, fell into the hands of the French.

The Catalan army were far from being dispirited by this misfortune; and Palacio, having determined to proceed by blockade, took up a new position on the mountains in rear of St. Vicensa and Molino del Rey, which commanded the point of junction of the roads to Lerida and Tarragona. There are only two other principal *debouchés* from the plain of Barcelona. To guard these a division was encamped on the mountains in front of St. André. The other roads which traverse the high chain which extends from the Besos to the Llobregat, are im-

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CHAP. II. passable for carriages ; but, in order to guard  
1808. them, posts were established at suitable distances  
October. along the ridge, and along the two rivers, to the  
points at which they disembogue into the sea.

Palacio's head-quarters were at Villa Franca ; and hopes were entertained that, by a general rising of the inhabitants, the garrison would be forced to surrender. Magnificent offers were made to Lecchi, governor of the city, to induce him to betray his trust—offers which that General rejected with honourable indignation. In the meanwhile, the danger of Duhesme was daily increasing. His force was weakened to such a degree, by frequent contests with the blockading army, that he could no longer venture on a sortie. A deficiency of provisions was already felt in the city, and the prospects of the garrison were becoming daily more cloudy and unhopeful.

Such was the situation of affairs in Catalonia, when a new force, under command of General Gouvion St. Cyr, entered the province. It amounted to about eighteen thousand men, chiefly drawn from the army in Italy, commanded by Eugene de Beauharnois. During

September, and the early part of October, this corps had assembled at Perpignan; but the requisite arrangements for its advance were so tardily completed, that the troops did not quit their cantonments till the beginning of November.

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 November.

The first operation of St. Cyr was to invest the town of Rosas. Rosas stands at the lower extremity of a fine bay, about four leagues east of Figueras, where the plain of Ampourdan touches the skirts of the Pyrenees. The possession of this place was considered indispensable, because, while the fine anchorage which it commands was open to the British, it was nearly impossible to re-victual Barcelona by sea; and the route by land was obstructed by Gerona and Hostalrich, both of which places were held by the Spaniards.

Nov. 6.

On the sixth, St. Cyr established his headquarters at Figueras, where he formed a junction with the corps of Reille. To this General the conduct of the siege was committed, and, uniting the Italian division of General Pino to his own, Reille took up a position near the town. On the day following, the French took possession of the heights which encompass the whole bay;

CHAP. II. and the troops and peasants from the neighbouring villages were driven into the town.

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The works of Rosas were in a feeble and dilapidated condition. The injuries sustained in the former siege had been but imperfectly repaired. Yet the garrison were resolute, and animated with the determination of firm and unshrinking resistance. A small British squadron was in the bay. It consisted of the Excellent of fifty guns, and the Lucifer and Meteor bomb-vessels. In order to assist the defence, a small body of marines was sent into Fort Trinidad; and the remainder, with fifty seamen, were thrown into the citadel.

Reille had expected to carry Rosas by a sudden attack; but this hope soon vanished. Preparations were then made for a regular siege. The heavy artillery was brought up, though not without some difficulty from the state of the weather and the roads. General Souham's division was posted between Figueras and the river Fluvia, to watch the movements of the enemy on the side of Gerona. General Chabot was moved to Espolla Rabos, with the view of covering the rear of the besieging force, and keeping in check the hostile population.