1809. March.

CHAP. IV. In Spain, the current of events had been unfavourable to the patriots. In La Mancha, the Duke del Albuquerque had distinguished himself in some affairs, of which the results would have been greater, but for the ill-judged interference of Cartoaial, in whom the chief command was vested. The utter incompetence of this person was fully evinced at the battle of Ciudad Real, where his army was completely routed by

Mar. 27. Sebastiani. In this engagement no strenuous resistance appears to have been made. The Spaniards were at once driven from their position in utter confusion. Three thousand of their number were killed in the pursuit, and four thousand prisoners and eighteen guns were captured by the enemy.

On the day following, a disaster still more fatal befell the Estramaduran army, under Cuesta. On the eighteenth, Victor had succeeded in forcing the defences of the Puente del Arzobisbo, and drove back the troops, which had been posted there, to Miravete. He then succeeded in reestablishing the bridge at Almaraz, which, owing to the cowardice or treachery of Henestrosa, who commanded at that point, was effected without difficulty. Victor was thus enabled to pass over

his artillery, and collect his whole army at Trux-CHAP. IV. illo, where he gained possession of the magazines of the Spanish army.

1809. March.

Cuesta, having retired to Santa Cruz, was reinforced by a detachment of about four thousand men, under the Duke del Albuquerque, and at length determined to give battle. With this view, he took up a position near Medellin, forming his whole force in a single line, about a league in extent, without any reserve. The ground thus occupied, was singularly ill-chosen. It consisted of a wide and open plain, without cover of any kind; and the same unhappy qualities which had distinguished Cuesta at Rio Seco, were again conspicuously displayed at Medellin.

The Spanish army consisted of about twenty thousand infantry and two thousand cavalry. The left wing was commanded by Henestrosa, which occupied ground somewhat higher than the rest of the position. The centre was commanded by Don Francisco Trias; the right by Don Francisco de Equia. The cavalry were on the left, where the enemy presented the greatest force.

The army of Victor, though infinitely superior

1809 March.

CHAP. IV. in the quality of the troops, was somewhat numerically inferior. It consisted of about eighteen thousand foot and two thousand five hundred horse, and was formed in an arc, extending between the Gaudiana and a cultivated ravine, which reaches from Medellin to the village of Mengabril. Victor placed his cavalry on the right, and the front was covered by six batteries, each of four guns.

Mar. 28.

The action commenced by an attack on the Spanish centre, supported by a brigade of cavalry. This was gallantly repulsed, and the Spanish line advancing, succeeded in taking one of the enemy's batteries on the left. The French left wing gave way, and was followed with effect for two hours. The cavalry was ably manœuvred by General Lasalle, who retired slowly, and having gained a favourable position, turned on the Spanish horse, and put them to the rout. The attack on the centre was then renewed, and the infantry disheartened gave way. Panic spread through the ranks, and the soldiers, casting away their arms, sought safety in flight. Every effort of Cuesta to restore order proved abortive. The French followed up their success, giving no quarter in the pursuit.

1809

March.

In this disastrous battle the loss of the Span-CHAP. IV. iards was very great. It has been stated at twelve thousand killed, and seven or eight thousand prisoners; but this is probably an exaggeration. Nineteen pieces of cannon were taken by the French, whose loss in the action amounted, by their own account, to four thousand.

Calamitous as the battles of Medellin and Ciudad Real unquestionably were, neither the Supreme Junta nor the people were disheartened by the misfortunes of their armies. The proceedings of the former evinced no symptom of alarm or despondency; a vote of thanks was passed to Cuesta and his army; and so little had that General declined in the opinion of his countrymen, that he speedily received the appointment of Captain-General of the province. In the meanwhile, he retired to Almandrelejo, where he succeeded in collecting a force nearly

as imposing as that with which he had encounter-

ed the enemy at Medellin.

CHAPTER V.

ATTACK AND CAPTURE OF OPORTO BY THE BRITISH.

1809. April.

CHAP. V. On the twenty-second of April, Sir Arthur Wellesley reached Lisbon, and was invested with the supreme command in Portugal. From the period of that event a new era commences in the war. His appointment gave unity of action and purpose to the British and Portuguese forces, and at once put a stop to those unfortunate jealousies and distractions, which had already occurred but too frequently between the leaders of the allied armies.

> The forces of the enemy, against whom he was to act, were on the other hand divided. Soult had concerted with Victor a combined attack on the unconquered provinces of Portugal. The former was preparing to advance through Coimbra upon Lisbon, while Victor was to co

operate by marching from Alcantara on Abran-CHAP. v. tes, and, having secured that fortress, to continue his progress to the capital.

1809.

April.

Many delays occurred, however, in the execution of this project, which, had it been promptly carried into effect, must, in all probability, have caused the embarkation of the English army, and given a new aspect to the war. But Soult remained long inactive at Oporto, influenced at once by the dread of committing his army by an unsupported operation, and by the increasing embarrassments of his position. The bridge of Amarante was in possession of the Portuguese, and thus his only line of communication with Spain to the east had been cut off.

A body of six thousand men, under Delaborde and Loison, were accordingly despatched with orders to gain possession of the bridge, at any sacrifice. General Silveira was at Penafiel, from which town he withdrew on the approach of the enemy, and fell back to the Campo de Manhufe. On the two following days some skirmishing took place, and Silveira deemed it prudent to fall back to Amarante, and limit his efforts to defending the passage of the bridge. The town, which stands on a declivity on the right bank of the

1809. April.

CHAP. v. Tamega, was instantly attacked and carried by the enemy. Every effort was then made to gain possession of the bridge; but so firm was the resistance of the Portuguese troops, and so strong were the works by which it was defended, that the enemy were uniformly repulsed, and at length driven from the town. In this affair Lieut.-Colonel Patrick, an English officer, who had recently accepted a commission in the Portuguese service, was killed.

On the day following, the French regained the town, and a fortified convent in front of the bridge. The Portuguese, however, still kept possession of the suburb on the other side of the river, and their batteries commanded the approach. Delaborde, despairing of success from the heavy loss he had already sustained, had issued orders for the construction of a wooden bridge at some distance from the town; but an officer of engineers, having proposed the construction of a mine, the experiment was tried with success. A breach was effected in the works, which the French infantry successfully assaulted; and the cavalry, having crossed the river, drove the Portuguese from the suburb on the opposite bank. In these engagements the

native troops behaved with distinguished gal- CHAP. v. lantry and resolution.

1809. April.

The reader must now be aware of the general state of affairs in the Peninsula, when Sir Arthur Wellesley landed in Portugal. He at once perceived that the numerical superiority of the enemy was neutralized by the separation of their corps; and while the movements of Lapisse and Victor were cautious and hesitating, he determined, by a prompt and rapid advance, to attack Soult, and drive him from Oporto. This resolution was communicated to Cuesta, who was requested to content himself with keeping Victor in check, until the return of the British from Oporto, when the two armies might act in combination on the south of the Tagus.

In pursuance of the project thus ably conceived, a division, commanded by General Mackenzie, and a brigade of heavy cavalry under General Fane, were left at Abrantes, to watch the movements of Victor; and the rest of the army was put in motion on Coimbra. In that city, the whole British force was assembled on the fifth of May; and on the ninth it continued its advance. The division of General Hill was directed to embark at Aveira for Ovar, in order

May 9.

CHAP. v. to take the enemy in flank, and force them back

1809. May. from the Vouga; and Beresford, with a strong detachment, chiefly composed of Portuguese, moved upon Vizeu, to cut off the retreat of Soult by Amarante. The main body proceeded by the direct route; and on the tenth encountered the enemy's advanced posts, which were driven back. On the day following, two divi-

May 11. driven back. On the day following, two divisions, strongly posted on the heights above Grijon, were dislodged from their position, and pursued with success till nightfall, when the British army halted with their advance, on the heights beyond Cavalleros, about two leagues from the Douro. During the night the enemy continued their retreat.

In the meanwhile, the object of Sir Arthur Wellesley in these movements, could not be supposed to escape the penetration of Soult. He saw the danger of being speedily enclosed in the north of Portugal; and determined to extricate himself from the increasing perils of his position, by evacuating the country. Measures were accordingly adopted for this purpose. Preparations were instantly set on foot for removing the sick and the baggage; and having destroyed the pontoon-bridge across the Douro, and given orders that

1809.

May.

all the boats should be brought to the right CHAP. V. bank of the river, he imagined himself secure from immediate attack. He imagined, too, that Sir Arthur Wellesley would avail himself of his maritime resources, and embarking his troops, endeavour to effect a landing near the mouth of the Douro. This would have allowed time for the leisurely retreat of the army; and orders were despatched to Loison, requiring him to maintain his ground at Mezamfrio and Peza da Ragoa, in order to prevent the passage of the river being effected at either of these points.

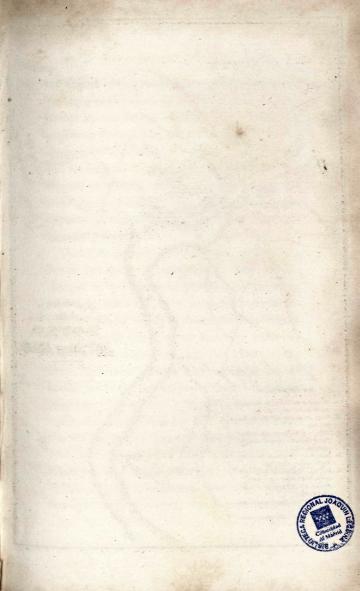
Had the calculations of Soult been realized. with regard to his enemy's intentions, no obstruction would have existed to his retreat into Gallicia; or by advancing on Beresford with his whole force, he might have crossed into Beira. But Sir Arthur Wellesley had bolder measures in contemplation. He determined at once to cross the river, and drive the enemy from Oporto. With this view, General Murray was detached to Avintas, a ford about five miles higher up. where he was directed to cross the river with his brigade, and send down any boats which he might be able to procure. The brigade of

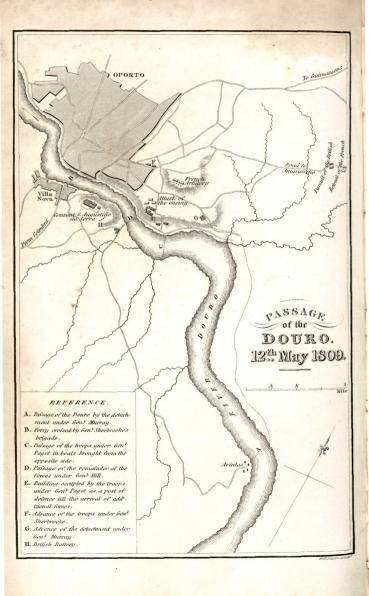
1809. May.

CHAP. V. Guards, under General Sherbrooke, received orders to cross the ferry below the city at Villa Nova. The main body, under his own immediate command, were to attempt a passage at the Convent of St. Augustino da Serra, which occupies a height nearly opposite to the town. The Douro was at that spot nearly three hundred yards broad, extremely rapid, with considerable heights on the right bank, and a large unfinished building designed for the Bishop's palace, which could be made serviceable as a post of defence by those who first landed, till sufficient numbers should have crossed the river to enable them to advance on the town. To protect the passage, several guns had been planted in the garden of the Convent.

May 12.

By aid of the inhabitants, two boats had been procured from the opposite side of the river, and in these, three companies of the Buffs immediately passed the river. Other boats were speedily despatched by the zeal of the people; and the embarkation of the troops was rapidly continued. General Paget was among the first detachment; he immediately took possession of the unfinished building already mentioned, and defended it with great gallantry, till





the arrival of the forty-eighth, sixty-sixth, and a CHAP. v. Portuguese battalion, when the contest was continued on more equal terms. Early in the engagement General Paget lost an arm, and the command devolved on General Hill, who was still warmly contesting the ground, when the brigade of Guards and the twenty-ninth regiment appeared on the enemy's right; and in the opposite direction the troops were seen approaching from Avintas.

1809. May.

Under these circumstances, the enemy's columns fell back in confusion. The British charged up the streets of Oporto, making many prisoners, amid the most animated demonstrations of joyful welcome from the inhabitants. Handkerchiefs were waved from the balconies and windows,-blessings were breathed on the brave deliverers of the city, mingled, on all hands, with shouts of joyful and triumphant greeting.

Confusion and disorder had spread through the whole French army. The panic seemed even to increase when they gained the open country; and Major Harvey, with a single squadron of the fourteenth dragoons, charged through three battalions of French infantry, CHAP. v. marching in a hollow road, and brought off

1809.

May. erable loss.

Unfortunately, however, it was found impossible to take full advantage of the panic of the enemy, by continuing the pursuit. The army were without supplies of any kind; the rapidity of the advance from Coimbra having outstripped the most active exertions of the commissariat. The fatigue the troops had undergone rendered repose necessary; and the pursuit was, therefore, relinquished at the approach of evening. Had these obstacles not intervened, there can be little doubt that the whole army of Marshal Soult would have been destroyed.

As it was, however, nothing could exceed the boldness and the brilliance of the operations of Sir Arthur Wellesley. The Douro had been passed in open day, in the very face of a powerful enemy. One of the ablest and most experienced of the French Marshals had been taken by surprise, and his army driven from Oporto, with the loss of its sick and wounded, of a great part of its baggage, and of a considerable number of guns.

In truth, the very boldness and danger of the CHAP. v. attempt contributed to its success. British Generals had acquired the reputation of being cautious, and averse from that daring policy which seeks great achievement through great hazard. So little, indeed, did the enemy contemplate even the possibility of Sir Arthur Wellesley attempting the passage of the Douro, that when a chef de bataillon gave notice that the English were passing, his assertion was disregarded. Nor did Marshal Soult receive intelligence of the event, till General Foy, who was severely wounded in the action, from the height opposite to the Convent, observed the troops actually crossing, and the Portuguese making signals to them from the walls. Never was so complete a victory obtained at a smaller expense of life on the part of the victors. The loss of the English army amounted only to twenty-three men killed, and ninety-eight wounded.

Driven from Oporto, Soult's first object was to effect a junction with Loison, and retire through Amarante on Zamora. But at Penafiel he learned that Beresford, having effected a junction with Silveira, had dislodged Loison from his position on the Tamega, and thus suc-

1809. May.

1809. May.

CHAP. v. ceeded in cutting off his intended line of retreat. The situation of Soult was now in the highest degree precarious; and, marching hastily on Braga, he directed Loison to retire in that direction.

> At Guimaraens, Soult learned that the English army were endeavouring, by forced marches, to reach Braga before him, and thus cut off his retreat on Gallicia. Pressed on all sides, by hourly-increasing difficulties, Soult promptly determined to sacrifice his artillery, his baggage, and even his military chest, and escape by paths across the mountains impassable for a regular army.

May 16.

In the meanwhile, Beresford had directed his march on Chaves, to intercept the enemy in that quarter, while the British pushed forward on the other roads. At Salamonde a skirmish took place with the rear-guard of the French, and some prisoners were made. Soult continued his retreat with unrelenting rapidity along the main road, to a point where a footpath, branching off to the left, enabled him to avoid Chaves, where the Portuguese waited his approach.

Though it was impossible for Sir Arthur Wel-

1809.

May.

lesley to come up with an enemy, who, for the CHAP. v. sake of rapid movement, had sacrificed everything which constitutes an army; yet the French army, during the whole retreat, was subjected to very serious losses, by the armed peasants of the country. Masses of the people continually hovered on their flanks, and fired on them from every favourable position. A body of May 17. peasants, on the seventeenth, were endeavouring to destroy the bridge of Saltador, which crosses the Cabado, when the advanced-guard of the French came up. They were driven back with facility; and the army was proceeding on its march, when the sound of cannon was heard from the rear, and panic instantly spread through the whole column. The cry arose that the British were at hand. The cavalry pushed on through the ranks of the infantry, increasing the confusion. All were anxious to pass the bridge to escape from the approaching enemy. The army became a vast mob. The greater part threw away their arms, and everything which could encumber their movements. Many were precipitated into the torrent and drowned,-and many also were slain by the peasants, who con-

CHAP. v. tinued firing from the rocks. All the baggage, which had escaped destruction at Guimaraens, 1809. was here lost. May.

In this lamentable and disgraceful state, the French army continued its march along footpaths, frequently indented by the furrows of mountain torrents, and obstructed by masses of rock which the cavalry found great difficulty May 17. in surmounting, and at night reached Montelegre, a town about a league distant from the Gallician frontier. Here Soult discovered that the rapidity of his movements had been barely sufficient to secure his escape. The fires of the Portuguese were seen on the mountains, in the direction of Chaves; and leaving the cavalry to protect the rear from attack, Soult, after a few hours' halt, pushed forward across the frontier in the direction of Orense.

> Here the pursuit terminated. Other and more important objects claimed the attention of Sir Arthur Wellesley in the south; and the army, by leisurely marches, retraced its steps.

> Thus terminated this brief but glorious campaign. It comprised but a period of ten days; yet how much of honourable achievement is comprised within that narrow space! The liberation

of Portugal had been effected. The enemy had CHAP. v. been chased from its frontier with the loss of their sick, baggage, and artillery; and Soult, with his dispirited, disorganized, and fugitive band, was forced to seek refuge in the very province from which, but a few months before, he had witnessed the disastrons embarkation of a British army.

1809. May.

Though the operations of Sir Arthur Wellesley, from the first moment when he put his army in motion on Oporto, are worthy of all admiration, they can scarcely with safety be considered as a precedent for future generals. To pass, in open day, a river so broad, so deep, and so rapid as the Douro, by means of a few boats, and in presence of a powerful enemy, must be held one of those felicitous violations of military rule, which it occasionally belongs to genius to make, but which men of more limited powers can scarcely hope to imitate with success. power of detecting at a glance the moment when the ordinary rules of art may be happily disregarded, is the exclusive attribute of a bold, original, and powerful mind. Yet the triumph of Oporto is not more attributable to the skill and promptitude of Wellesley, than to the ne1809.

May.

CHAP. V. gligence of his opponent. That Marshal Soult should have suffered himself to be taken by surprise, and that the requisite precautions were not adopted for the safety of his army, must remain a blot on his military reputation. From the commencement of his retreat, however, all his operations are marked by talent and decision. A commander of lower qualities would probably have sunk under the difficulties by which he was environed; Soult rose and overtopped them. He unhesitatingly adopted the only measure by which his army could be rescued from their danger; and by the prompt sacrifice of his artillery and baggage he succeeded in evading his pursuers.

CHAPTER VI.

OPERATIONS IN GALLICIA AND CATALONIA.

THE expulsion of the enemy from Portugal CHAP. VI. was followed up by successes almost of equal 1809.

March.

Soult had no sooner entered Portugal, than Romana, who had succeeded in recruiting a considerable force, put himself in motion against the corps of Ney. Towards the end of March a force, under Murillo, with a body of Portuguese, invested Vigo; and with the assistance of a British frigate, succeeded in forcing the garrison to surrender. It amounted to thirteen hundred men. On the day following, a French battalion, that approached the town in ignorance of its surrender, was attacked, and nearly the whole of its number perished. Roma-

Mar. 27.

Mar. 28.



CHAP. VI. na likewise, by a successful movement, surprised

1809. April. Apr. 17. a body of the enemy in Villa Franca; and two battalions, which attempted to maintain the palace of the Duke of Alva, were made prisoners. He then crossed into Asturias; and, leaving his army under the command of Don Nicholas Mahy, he proceeded in person to Oviedo, for the purpose of dissolving the Junta, whose imbecility had become apparent, and appointing a council more competent to the administration of affairs.

On learning this movement, a scheme of combined operations was concerted by Marshal Ney and the French commanders in Leon, for the purpose of surrounding him. The former had assembled about twelve thousand men at Lugo, and entered Asturias by routes almost impassable, in expectation of surprising the Spanish army. General Bonnet, at the same time, advanced along the coast from the East; and Kellerman, with about six thousand men, entered by Pajares.

The scheme, however well concerted, did not succeed. Mahy, fortunately apprised in time of the enemy's approach, retired into Gallicia. The French then advanced on Oviedo, occupying all

the avenues to that city, with the view of securing CHAP. VI. the person of Romana. That leader, however, succeeded in effecting his escape, and reached Gijon, where he embarked for Gallicia.

1809. May.

Some skirmishes took place between the Asturian troops, under Ballasteros, and the French, in the course of which the city of St. Andero was taken, and almost immediately retaken. with considerable loss on both sides.

In the meanwhile, Mahy, with the Gallician army, had made a rapid march on Lugo. Some skirmishes took place between the garrison and the besiegers, which terminated in favour of the latter; and the place would probably have fallen, had not Soult unexpectedly appeared with his army, and compelled the Spaniards to retire.

May 22.

Alarmed by these indications of nascent vigour in his opponents, Nev resolved to attempt the re-capture of Vigo, and then forming a junction with Soult's force at Orense, to endeavour by a combined attack to effect the destruction of Romana's army. With this intention, he moved on Santiago, with eight thousand infantry and two thousand five hundred horse. On his approach, a corps of Romana's army, under General Noronha, fell back on Caldas and PonteCHAP. VI. vrada, where they passed the river Sotomayor, and formed on the other side, having previously 1809.

destroyed the bridge at St. Payo. During the June. whole of the seventh of June, the French made vigorous efforts to effect the passage of the river, but their attempts uniformly encountered repulse. The attack on the bridge was renewed on the day following, but with similar June 8. success; and Ney, at length, found himself com-

pelled to retreat, under circumstances which not only precluded his proposed junction with Soult, but rendered it necessary to take measures for the evacuation of Gallicia.

Accordingly, on the twenty-first, Ney gave June 21. up Corunna and Ferrol, and retired from the province through Lugo, Villa Franca, and Astorga.

Soult had not been more successful. Though almost daily within sight of Romana's army, the superior activity of his opponent, and his more accurate knowledge of the country, defeated all his efforts to bring him to battle. With an army harassed and exhausted by three weeks of incessant marching, Soult at length gave up his June 24. abortive pursuit, and retreated to Sanabria, where having recruited the worn strength of to co-operate with the other armies.

We shall now give a brief sketch of the occurrences in Catalonia.

1809. February.

General Reding, who commanded in that province, had wisely determined to confine his efforts to the maintenance of a desultory warfare, without risking his army by a general engagement. Vigorous measures were adopted for the embodying of new levies, and every fifth man in the province was called on to bear arms. The French army having exhausted the resources of the country, was obliged to quit its position at Martorel and Villa Franca, and draw nearer to Tarragona.

Had Reding adhered to the prudent line of policy which his judgment dictated, there is little reason to doubt its being eventually crowned with success. But the popular voice was against it. The people were anxious for more immediate and striking results than could be expected to follow the more sure and cautious policy of their leader.

Against his better judgment, therefore, Reding consented to embark the army in a scheme for surprising Barcelona. A line of posts was

Chap. vi. taken up, extending from Martorel through the 1809.

February.

Col de St. Christina to Tarragona; the head-quarters of the whole, under Don Juan de Castro, being established at Igualada.

The project, however, was soon frustrated. The intention of the Spanish leader was anticifeb. 16. pated by St. Cyr, who, on the sixteenth of February, when a general movement was about to be commenced, attacked the left of their line, which had been too much extended, and drove it back on Igualada, where large magazines had been most imprudently collected. These were taken by the enemy. The Spanish army, having neglected to occupy the road Llaccuna in sufficient strength, were attacked in rear, and fell back, dispirited and in confusion, in the direction of Cervera, Cardona, and Manresa.

In consequence of this disaster, Castro was removed from the command, and subsequently disgraced his character by entering the service of the intruder.

No sooner did Reding receive intelligence of the defeat of Castro, than he determined to collect the scattered troops, and conduct them to Tarragona. Accordingly, with a Swiss battalion, three hundred horse, and six pieces of light artillery, he set out, on the twentieth of CHAP. VI. February, to execute his important mission. He was speedily joined by the troops which February. were retreating from the Col de St. Christina, and by a body of twelve hundred men, who, after bravely defending themselves in the Monastery of Santa Cruz, had succeeded in cutting their way through the enemy. He then proceeded to St. Colonna de Queralt, where he effected a junction with Castro, by which his army was augmented to about ten thousand men.

At this moment, however, Reding received intelligence that Valls was already occupied by the enemy, with a view of intercepting his retreat. Had Reding then moved on Igualada, and subsequently on Montbuy, as St. Cyr was apprehensive he might, the French detachment at the former place, would probably have been cut off. But measures of promptitude and vigour were alien to the character of Reding. A council of war was held, by which it was decided that the army should proceed to Montblanch, where they arrived on the twenty-third. During the day, a reconnoitring party of the enemy had been observed in their rear; and thus certain

Feb. 23.



1809. February.

Feb. 25.

CHAP. VI. that their motions were known to the enemy, a second council of war was held, at which it was determined to pass the Col de Riba, and thence retreat as they best could to Tarragona.

> The movement thus about to be attempted, was one of great danger. It was to be made in a very difficult country, and in face of an enemy very superior both in numbers and in the quality of his troops. In passing near to Valls the army of Reding was attacked by the division of Souham, by whom that town was occupied. That General allowed the advanced-guard and part of the centre to pass unmolested, in the hope of cutting off the rear. In this manœuvre, however, he was foiled by the able dispositions of Reding, who rallying his troops which had been thrown into temporary confusion by the unexpectedness of the attack, succeeded in repelling the enemy with considerable loss.

Feb. 26.

On the following day, the retreat to Tarragona was continued. The French, however, again came up with augmented force, and an engagement followed. The Spanish position was forced, yet the troops retreated from the field in good order for a considerable distance. Panic then seized them, and subordination was at an end.