

the road to Merida runs at right angles with that to Alcuéscar, and that to Medellín between the Truxillo and Merida roads. The ground between Alcuéscar and Arroyo Molinos is a plain, thinly scattered with cork trees and evergreen oaks; and General Hill's object was to place a body of troops so as to cut off the retreat of the enemy by any of these roads. At two in the morning, the allies moved from their comfortless bivouac; it was dark, the rain was unabated and the wind high, but in their backs: but this weather, severe as it was, was in their favour, for it confirmed the French in their incautious security. When Girard had first advanced into Extremadura, he felt some uneasiness at the neighbourhood of General Hill, and demanded succour, saying, that unless he was reinforced, he should not be able to resist in case the English should attack him. But the little enterprise which the British and Portuguese army had hitherto displayed, seems to have lulled him into a contemptuous confidence; and there was no distinguished Guerilla leader to disturb the enemy in this part of the country, since D. Ventura Ximenes fell in a rencontre near Toledo.

The allies moved in one column right in front upon Arroyo Molinos, till they were within half a mile of it: the column then closed in a bottom under cover of a low ridge, and divided into three, the enemy not having the slightest intimation of their approach. The left column, under Lieutenant-Colonel Stuart, marched direct upon the town; the right, under Major-General Howard, broke off to the right so as to turn the enemy's flank, and having marched about the distance of a cannon-shot toward that flank, moved then in a circular direction upon the farther point of the mountain crescent. Penne Villemur, with the Spanish horse, advanced between these two columns, ready to act in front, or to move round either of them, as occasion might require; he had found a good road, but the English horse, owing

CHAP.
XXXIX.

1811.

*October.**The French surprised and routed there.*

CHAP.
XXXIX.

1811.

October.

to an error, which, in so dark and tempestuous a night, might easily have been more general, had gone astray, and were not yet come up. The French had had a piquet about a mile from the town, which would have given the alarm, if it had not retired just before the head of our column came to the spot; for Girard had ordered the troops to be in motion at an early hour. One brigade of his infantry had marched for Medellin an hour before day-light: and when the allies were close at hand, Girard was filing out upon the Merida road; the rear of his column, some of his cavalry and his baggage, being still in the town. A thick mist had come on, the storm was at its height, and the French general marched with as little precaution as if he had been in a friendly country. When he heard that an enemy was approaching in the mist, he laughed, and said, "the English were too fond of comfort to get out of their beds in such a morning; . . . it could only be an advanced party of the Spaniards;" . . . but while he was ordering his men to chastise these insurgents, the Highland bagpipes played, "*Hey, Johnny Coup, are ye waukin yet?*" and the 71st and 92d charged into the town with three cheers. Their orders were not to load, nor to halt for prisoners; but to force through every obstacle between them and the enemy, without turning to the right or left.

A few of their men were cut down by the French cavalry, but they soon drove the enemy every where before them at the point of the bayonet. The enemy's infantry, which had got out of the town, formed into two squares, with their cavalry on their left, between the Merida and Medellin roads, by the time our two regiments had forced their way to the end of the town. Their right square being within half musket-shot, the 71st promptly lined the garden walls, while the 92d filed out and formed in line on the right, perpendicularly to the enemy's right flank, which was much annoyed by the well-directed fire of the

71st. Meantime, one wing of the 50th occupied the town and secured the prisoners, some of whom were surprised over their coffee; and the other wing, with a three-pounder, which was all the artillery the allies had brought, skirted the outside of the town, and fired with great effect upon the squares. General Howard's column was moving round their left. Penne Villemur meantime engaged the enemy's cavalry, till Sir W. Erskine came up and joined him; they then presently dispersed the French horse, and charged their infantry repeatedly, "passing through their lines," said a serjeant, "just like herrings through a net." The French were now in full retreat, when, to their utter dismay, General Howard's column appeared, and cut off the road. There was no resource, but to surrender or disperse; all order was at an end. . . the cavalry fled in all directions, the infantry threw down their arms, and clambered up the mountain, . . . where, inaccessible as the way appeared, they were pursued by General Howard, till the British became so exhausted, and so few in number, that he was obliged to halt and secure his prisoners. Morillo, with the Spanish infantry, one English and one Portugueze battalion, having ascended by the Puerto de las Quebradas, in a more favourable direction, continued the pursuit farther, and met with more resistance; but they drove the enemy from every position which they attempted to take, and pursued them many leagues, till within sight of the village of St. Anna, when, being completely exhausted with their exertions, they returned, having counted in the woods and mountains upwards of 600 dead.

In this brilliant affair, General Brun, the Prince de Aremberg, two lieutenant-colonels, thirty other officers, and 1400 men, were made prisoners. The British and Portugueze loss amounted only to seventy-one, that of the Spaniards was very trifling. The whole of the enemy's artillery, baggage, and com-

CHAP.
XXXIX.

1811.

October.

CHAP. missariat was taken, the magazines of corn which they had
 XXXIX. collected at Caceres and Merida, and the contribution of money
 1811. which he had levied upon the former town. A panic was struck
 October. into the enemy, to such a degree, that Badajoz was shut for two
 days and nights, all the fords of the Guadiana were watched,
 and every detachment ordered to rendezvous at Seville.

This expedition was less important in itself, than as it was the first indication of a spirit of hopeful enterprise in the British army ; it seemed as if that army had now become conscious of its superiority, and would henceforth seek opportunities of putting it to the proof. For the Spaniards it was a well-timed success, when all their own efforts tended only to evince more mournfully the inefficiency of their troops and the incompetence of their generals.

*Marques
 del Palacio
 appointed to
 the com-
 mand in
 Valencia.*

The Marques del Palacio had been appointed captain general of the kingdoms of Aragon, Valencia, and Murcia. He announced his coming in a proclamation from Alicante, of a very different character from those which had so greatly contributed to support the cause of Spain. "From the moment," said he, "that I set foot in this country, and knew the fall of Tarragona, my spirit, far from being cast down, seemed as if it had taken fresh courage to run to danger as well as to victory. Do not hold me arrogant and vain, for my hopes are not rested upon the arm of flesh. From afar I see the walls of Valencia of burnished and impenetrable brass ; and the more secure, inasmuch as the enemy cannot perceive them. I see also a cloud of protection over the whole kingdom, whereof that which for forty years protected the people of God was but a type and a figure. The brazen walls are the Valencian breasts, which have loyalty for their stamp and shield of arms ; and the cloud which protects us is the Queen of Angels, . . she who is the general of the best appointed army, our adorable and generous Madre de

Desamparados, *Mother of the helpless*, with her omnipotent Son. Heaven itself has given the greatest proof of this truth, and of its predilection for the city and kingdom of Valencia. Is there any other capital in all Spain which has not been entered by some army of this Corsican robber, this impious tyrant? Is there any other province which has twice repelled the enemy from its centre, without walls and without armies? Heaven and this invincible Deborah, or Judith, have saved us, and will save us, if our conduct is not unworthy of her protection. Wonder not at this language from a soldier! I am a Christian; I am an old Spaniard; and I am persuaded that they are not earthly victories, but bolts from heaven which reach the wicked, such as the Corsican and his generals, whose principles are bad, and whose conduct is worse. I resign, therefore, my staff to this Sovereign Queen; she has been the general who has delivered the kingdom thus long: she it is who will deliver all that is placed under this staff, no longer mine but hers, and the Lord's, who is the God of battles."

CHAP.
XXXIX.

1811.

October.

It would be wronging the Marques to break off here, for in other parts of his address he spoke in the proper language of a Spaniard and a general. "This is a holy war," said he, "in which we must fight like the Maccabees. Let him who feels for the public cause join us, and take arms, and offer himself as a sacrifice, and put forth his hand, and advance, and attack, and triumph. Confide in the Government, and it will confide in you. If there is conduct in the chiefs, there will be conduct in the people; moderation in the expenditure, and there will be plenty in the army; order in private families, and it will display itself in public actions; activity in individuals, and the army will be invincible. Let there be obedience, union, fidelity, justice, and truth, and God will fight with us."

Unfortunately, there were many in Valencia upon whom

CHAP. the first part of this address was likely to have more effect than
 XXXIX. the second. A friar, preaching in the Plaza Catalina, said to
 1811. his auditors, "If the Cortes think of abolishing our holy order,
 and that of our sisters the nuns, obey them not, ye armed
 Valencians, but oppose such mandates like lions. We are the
 servants of God, whom you must obey rather than man. The
 English themselves, though they have an excellent constitution,
 must eventually fall for want of the blessing of the Catholic
 faith. Ask not for cannon and gunpowder, but rather fly to
 your altars; and instead of any vain attempt to resist the vic-
 torious French by force of arms, implore the aid of heaven,
 which alone can avert the heavy calamities that threaten you."
 Zaragoza is as Catholic a city as Valencia, but it was not by
 such sermons as this that the heroism of the Zaragozans was
 excited and sustained!

*Blake takes
 the com-
 mand.*

Zaragoza had defended itself without any other reliance than
 what the inhabitants placed in themselves. Valencia prepared
 for its defence under very different circumstances. The Regent,
 General Blake, embarking with all the force he could collect,
 had landed at Almeria to take the command in those provinces,
 which, since the fall of Tarragona, were so seriously menaced.
 From thence he proceeded to Valencia, with full powers, civil
 as well as military, and the whole strength of the executive au-
 thority, to carry into effect whatever measures he might think
 needful. The collected force under his command was more
 than equal in number to that of the invaders; one division
 of 6000 men, taking its name from the field of Albuhera,
 had attained discipline upon which the officers could rely, and
 reputation which every effort would be made to support. Some
 of the generals also stood high in public opinion; Lardizabal
 had distinguished himself in Lapeña's expedition; and Zayas
 was thought by the English, as well as by his own countrymen,

one of the best officers in the Spanish service. But Blake himself inspired no confidence wherever he went; he had the reputation of being an unfortunate general; and what credit he acquired in the battle of Albuhera had been lost by his subsequent movements in the Condado de Niebla. The Valencians, therefore, were unwilling to receive him, and would fain have persuaded the Marques del Palacio to retain the command, to which, in these times of insubordination, a popular election would have been considered as conferring a legitimate right; but the Marques had been bred in a better school, and though he had some reason to complain of the manner in which he was thus suddenly superseded, demeaned himself toward his successor with a frankness and cordiality deserving a better return than they obtained. In the course of more than thirty years' service, it had been his good fortune never to incur the slightest disaster in any command which he had held; twice during the present war, having been appointed to armies which he found incomplete and ill-equipped, he had placed them upon a respectable footing; and being then removed from the command, they had presently under his successors been dispersed or destroyed; he was popular, therefore, because no miscarriage could be laid to his charge. Embarking from Cadiz for Alicante on the day that Tarragona was taken, he brought with him no supplies either in men, arms, or money, nor was any thing sent after him; it seemed as if the eastern provinces were left to their own resources; and Alicante and Orihuela, from whence he might have drawn supplies, were separated from his government. The Murcian army consisted nominally at this time of 20,000 foot and 5000 horse; he asked for 3000 of these men and 600 cavalry, and they were refused. The effect of this was, that feeling he had no external support to look for, he formed his plans for defence upon the nature of the country, and that moral resist-

CHAP.
XXXIX.

1811.

October.

CHAP.
XXXIX.

1811.

October.

ance, in which the strength of the Spanish cause consisted: but Blake coming with the entire confidence of the executive Government, of which he was a member, had the Murcian forces at his command, and seemed to think his military means so fully sufficient, that he disregarded all other resources. The Marques would have defended the strong ground through which the enemy must pass before they could attack Murviedro. Between that town and Valencia is a labyrinth of water-courses, gardens, plantations, and deep narrow roads, through which no force could penetrate against the resistance of a determined people; . . . and if that resistance had been overcome, he would have cut the dikes and inundated the country. These plans he communicated to Blake, who never bestowed a thought upon them, contemplating no measures which were not in the ordinary course of tactics, and thinking, that if the punctilios of his profession were correctly observed, nothing farther could be required on the score of honour or of duty.

Murviedro.

Murviedro is an open town twelve miles east of Valencia, but its fortress, called the Castle of San Fernando de Sagunto, was, both for its natural strength and artificial defences, a most formidable post. D. Luis Maria Andriani commanded there with a garrison of 3500 men, who had volunteered for its defence. The name which that fortress bore, and the knowledge of the resistance which upon that spot had been made against Hannibal, as it might well have given confidence to its defenders, induced Suchet to expect greater difficulty in its conquest than any which he had yet overcome. The Roman theatre here, which was one of the most perfect remains of the ancients, and the other antiquities of this sacred spot, were held in such proper estimation by the Spanish Government, that in 1785, under the ministry of the Conde d'Aranda, an officer was appointed to preserve them. When it was deemed necessary to fortify the

place, the engineers condemned the theatre; the conservator appealed to the Cortes, and the Cortes unanimously agreeing that it would be a reproach to the nation if this precious monument should be destroyed, addressed the Regents, requiring them to give orders for its careful preservation: but such considerations could no longer be allowed, when the paramount interests of the nation were at stake, and instructions were given to make any demolition which might be required for the security of the place. Andriani entered upon his command there in the middle of September, and a few days afterwards the French from Tortosa and from Aragon began their march toward Valencia. Suchet had with him all the disposable troops from Aragon and Catalonia, .. withdrawing many of the less important garrisons, and smaller detachments, in full confidence that there was neither energy enough in the general Government of Spain, nor union enough among the provincial authorities, to take advantage of the opportunity which was thus afforded them. He arrived before Murviedro on the 21st, and took possession of the town. Blake, who had advanced thither to see that the garrison was complete, and the place provided for defence, offered no resistance when the enemy approached, but retired within an intrenched camp, on the right of the Guadalaviar; it rested with its right upon the sea, and covered the city of Valencia; he had the Murcian army behind him in reserve. The divisions of Obispo and Villacampa, under Carlos O'Donnel, had been recalled from the frontiers of Castille and Aragon: these remained in the field and formed his left; 4000 men occupied Segorbe and Liria, and Bassecourt, with about 2000, was in Requeña and Utril; besides these forces the commander-in-chief had 1600 cavalry, part of them veteran troops.

CHAP.
XXXIX.
1811.
September.

Suchet takes possession of the town.

Against such means of resistance Suchet would never have