

this from the rest of the line. The engineers relied also upon their command of the river, meaning to cover the approaches by inundations, and to fill the fosses of their camp, which might easily be done, the ground being a low plain intersected by numerous canals.

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Suchet summoned the city the day after his victory, saying, that he had taken 8000 prisoners, many generals, and the greater part of Blake's artillery, and calling upon the governor to save Valencia from the calamities and outrages which a vain resistance must inevitably draw upon it, and of which all the fortresses besieged and taken by the French presented terrible examples. He promised an amnesty for the past, offered the people his special protection, and assured them that the French would endeavour, by generous proceedings, to make them forget the evils of war, and the horrible anarchy in which they had so long been plunged. Blake published this summons, and did not think proper to reply to it; at the same time he appealed to the people as witnesses of the valour with which the troops had fought, and the good order in which they had effected their retreat, for the purpose of occupying their former position.

Suchet summons Valencia.

The enemy soon closed upon the city, and established themselves in the suburb called Serrano, on the left bank of the river, not, however, without considerable opposition. They won their way foot by foot, and carried the last house by sapping and mining. Had the spirit of which the people here gave proof been properly fostered and directed, Valencia would have been safe. Having gained the suburb, they formed a contravallation of three strong redoubts, having seven feet water in their ditches, with two fortified convents and some houses, to confine the besieged within their *têtes-de-pont*. The fire of the Spaniards was well-directed to annoy them during these operations; but the loss inflicted

He establishes himself in the suburb, and in the port.

CHAP. upon the enemy by no means counterbalanced the advantage
 XXXIX. which they had gained, in possessing themselves of the fortified
 1811. convents in the suburb. Next they occupied the Grao, which
 is the port of Valencia.

December.

Suchet's left was now at the Grao, his right at Liria, and his centre in the suburbs. Using every possible exertion to ensure success, he brought up in the course of December 100 four-and-twenty pounders, thirty mortars and howitzers; and when this formidable train was ready, and his reinforcements had arrived, he put the army in motion for decisive operations. On the night between the 25th and 26th of December, two bridges were rapidly constructed by the engineers, a league from Manisses, above all the sources of the different waters, in order that the troops might not be engaged in a labyrinth of canals. Blake had posted his infantry from the sea to Manisses, and his cavalry on more elevated ground above that village, to cover his left. He had fortified the villages of Mislata, Quarte, and Manisses, on the banks of the river, and connected them by lines with artillery. His great object was to keep possession of Quarte and S. Onofre; as long as that was done, and the cavalry retained its position, it would be in his power either to risk a general action, drawing from Valencia all the troops for that purpose; or to evacuate the city, and leaving only a small garrison for the purpose of capitulating, draw off and save the great body of the army. And even if the enemy should succeed in turning the left wing, and thus cut off his retreat by the great road, it was scarcely possible, he thought, that the two Cullera roads should be intercepted on both sides of the lake of Albufera.

The general's hopes were, as usual, frustrated by the misconduct of those in whom he trusted, and by the rapidity of Suchet's movements. At daybreak the two bridges were com-

Dec. 26

pleted, three divisions of infantry and the whole of the horse passed, and drove back the Spanish cavalry; and the French getting possession of the sluices, turned the waters of the canals into the river, and thus deprived Valencia of one means of defence on which she had relied. Another division crossed the river between Quarte and Mislata to occupy the Spaniards in front. Here Zayas again displayed that resolution, and that military skill, which made him more, perhaps, than any other man at this time the hope of the Spanish armies; but the troops on the left, where Mahy commanded, gave way, as they had done in the former action; they abandoned the intrenchments at S. Onofre, . . the vital points of the line, . . without even waiting for an attack, and retired from Manisses almost upon the first fire. Mahy, with about 5000 men, reached Alcira, abandoning the artillery; the rest of the division was unaccounted for; the loss in killed could have been little or none, and the French made no boast of the numbers which they had taken; they who were missing then must mostly have dispersed in their flight, the unavoidable consequence when men have lost all confidence in their leaders.

The investment of Valencia was completed before the close of the day; and Suchet, again turning against the Spaniards those advantages of which they had so little availed themselves, secured himself every where by the canals and fosses with which the ground was intersected. Still the lines remained which the Valencians had for three years been employed in constructing; but after the labour, and the cost which had been expended upon them, when the hour of need came they were found, or thought to be, untenable. Blake, with the troops who were without the city, might still have effected a retreat; but he wished to save as much of the army as possible, and to prepare the people for a catastrophe which they had never looked on to, and to which

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he perceived they would not be induced to submit, till they felt the uttermost necessity. Such, indeed, was their disposition, that men like Santiago Sass, and D. Pedro Maria Ric, and such women as the Countess Burita, would have protected them better than Blake with his army and all his lines and defences.

*The army
endeavours
to escape.*

A council of war was held, and it was agreed unanimously that the army should endeavour to effect its escape on the night of the 28th. They went through the gate of S. Jose; but before they had gone far, the advanced posts discovered them; about 300 men made their way to the mountains under favour of the darkness, about as many more were killed or drowned in the canals, and the rest withdrew within their intrenchments, having no confidence in the works, nor in their general; and their general having none in them, nor in himself, nor any hope from without or from within. An event more discouraging than the surrender of Murviedro occurred the day after this attempt, for the town of St. Philippe, half way on the road to Alicante, was given up without opposition to Suchet's advanced guard. This place had distinguished itself in the War of the Succession for its inflexible fidelity to the Austrian party. The inhabitants defended themselves, as Marshal Berwick relates, with unheard-of firmness, maintaining street by street and house by house, for eight days after his troops were within the walls; in revenge for which he razed the town; all the surviving inhabitants were removed to Castile, and forbidden on pain of death ever to return; and Philip, when a new town was erected on the ruins, abolished its old name of Xativa, and imposed upon it that of St. Philippe. . . Even the new race of inhabitants felt this name as a reproach; and but a few months before this cowardly surrender, the Cortes, at their petition, had passed an edict restoring the old appellation. It was just restored in time to be disgraced. The French found a great quantity of provisions

*Xativa sur-
rendered.*

and a million of cartridges, . . . hoarded there for this shameful end!

While the enemy succeeded thus, almost without opposition, in every thing they attempted, Blake resolved to make a second trial at escape; but the people compelled him to give up this project, and remain in patient expectation of a fate which he no longer made an effort to avert. This he calls an inconsiderate popular movement; but the people, who saw their works as yet untouched, above 16,000 regular troops to defend them, including the best officers and artillerymen in the service, with artillery and military stores in abundance, and the population of the city ready and eager to bear their part in the defence, might have encouraged a general to hope, and ought to have inspired him with a more heroic despair. Suchet opened his trenches on the first night of the new year; on the fourth they were advanced within fifty toises of the ditch. Blake then called another council, the result of which was, that the lines were abandoned, and the troops retired into the city, taking with them their field artillery, but leaving eighty pieces behind.

The French general says, that the astonishing desertion from the Spanish army induced Blake to abandon these vast and important works. Blake himself assigned no such cause, but the desertion must undoubtedly have been very great, . . . a commander who feels no hope can excite none. The suburb of Quarte was immediately seized by the enemy, and Suchet bombarded the city during the whole of the fifth. The next morning he sent in a summons, "thinking," he says, "that an army which had just abandoned works of such strength, mounted with eighty-one pieces of cannon, would call loudly for capitulation, now that they saw the effects of a bombardment upon a city which at that time contained no fewer than 200,000 souls." The summons was in these words: . . . "General, the

CHAP.
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Blake abandons the lines and retires into the city.

1812.

The city a second time summoned.

CHAP. laws of war assign a period to the sufferings of the people ; this
 XXXIX. period has arrived. The imperial army is now within ten toises
 1812. of the body of your fortress ; in some hours several breaches
 January. may be effected ; and then a general assault must precipitate
 the French columns into Valencia. If you wait for this terrible
 moment, it will no longer be in my power to control the fury of
 the soldiers, and you alone will have to answer to God and man
 for the evils which must overwhelm Valencia. The desire to
 spare the total ruin of a great city determines me to offer you
 an honourable capitulation : I engage to preserve to the officers
 their equipages, and to respect the property of the inhabitants.
 It is unnecessary for me to add, that the religion we profess
 shall be revered. I expect your reply in two hours, and salute
 you with very high consideration."

Blake replied, " Yesterday, perhaps before noon, I might
 have consented to change the position of the army, and evacuate
 the city, for the sake of saving its inhabitants from the horrors of
 a bombardment ; but the first twenty-four hours which your ex-
 cellency has employed in setting it on fire have taught me how
 much I may depend upon the constancy of the people, and their
 resignation to every sacrifice which may be necessary, in order
 that the army may maintain the honour of the Spanish name.
 Your excellency may consequently continue your operations ;
 and as to the responsibility before God and man, for all the mis-
 fortunes which the defence of the place occasions, and all those
 which war brings with it, it cannot attach to me." This reply
 led Suchet to apprehend he should have to encounter a Zara-
 gozan resistance. " The general," said he in his dispatches,
 " is no longer the master ; he is obliged to obey the decisions of
 a fanatical Junta, composed of seven persons, five of whom are
 Franciscan monks, and the other two butchers of Valencia ; the
 same who, about three years ago, directed the massacre of 400

*Suchet ex-
 pects a des-
 perate
 resistance.*

French families that were ordered out of the country. I therefore continue my operations with vigour against the place, which at this present moment counts a population of 200,000 souls. Five of the principal chiefs of the insurgents are now within its walls, with all their property, and whatever fanatics or madmen are yet left in Spain. The engineers will open their works under the walls. The artillery raises formidable batteries; and, notwithstanding the rains, it will in a few days be able to make a breach in the last enclosure. The army is waiting with impatience for the attack, and if we should have to make a war of houses, as at Zaragoza, it will be rendered of short continuance, by the ability and rapidity of our miners."

Had the Valencians resorted to this mode of defence, Suchet's miners would have found themselves engaged in an extraordinary subterranean war, among the Roman sewers; but after relying so long upon the army, and a military defence, it was too late to organize the people for that better system, which, if it had been determined upon from the first, might have proved successful, and which, even in its most disastrous termination, would have added as much to the strength of Spain as to the honour of Valencia. But Blake had nothing of the heroic character which had been displayed so eminently in Zaragoza and Gerona. He was a soldier, skilful enough in his profession, to have held a respectable, perhaps a high rank, if he had commanded well-disciplined troops; and now at the last he performed all that the code of military duty requires. Three days and nights Suchet bombarded the city, which was so utterly unprovided for such an attack, that the people had not even cellars in which to take shelter: the enemy continued their approaches, till they had effected a lodgment in the last houses of the suburbs, and placed mines under two of the principal gates. Blake then offered to give up the city, on condition that

CHAP.
XXXIX.

1812.

January.

He bombards the city.

CHAP.
XXXIX.

1812.

January.

he might march out with the army. Such terms were of course rejected; a council of war was therefore held, and terms of capitulation proposed, to which Suchet agreed the more readily, because, according to the system of Buonaparte, he meant to be bound by them no farther than suited his interest, or his inclination. The troops were to be made prisoners of war, the inhabitants and their property protected, and no inquiry made into the conduct of those who had taken an active part in the war. In one point the Spanish general exceeded his powers; forgetting that he was no longer in a situation to act as one of the Regents, and that even his free and voluntary act would have required the consent and approbation of the other members of the executive, he agreed that the French prisoners in Majorca, Alicant, and Carthagena, should be exchanged.

*Jan. 9.
Blake sur-
renders the
city to the
army.*

This capitulation delivered into the hands of the enemy 16,131 effective troops of the line, besides about 2000 in the hospitals, 1800 cavalry and artillery horses, twenty-two generals, Zayas and Lardizabal among them, 893 officers, and 374 pieces of cannon. The most irreparable loss was that of fifty good artillery officers, formed in the school of Segovia, nearly 400 sappers and miners, and 1400 old artillerymen. The battle of Ocaña drew after it more disastrous consequences, but the loss in itself had been far less severe. Thus terminated General Blake's unfortunate career; his failure at Niebla was the only one of his many misfortunes which was disreputable, but all experience was lost upon him: often and severely as he had felt the want of discipline in his troops, his obstinacy was not to be overcome, and he never would consent that the Spanish army should be brought into an efficient state of discipline by the English, though he had seen that a similar measure had delivered Portugal, and must have known that it would as certainly deliver Spain. But though the loss of a general, thus incorrigible in error, and whose continual ill

fortune was such as almost to deprive the army under him of all hope, could not be regretted for the sake of Spain, Blake himself, amid all his errors and misfortunes, maintained the character of a brave man, and it was not possible to read his last dispatch without some degree of respect as well as compassion. "I hope," said he, "your highness will be pleased to ratify the exchange which has been agreed upon, and to transmit orders in consequence to Majorca. As to what concerns myself, the exchange of officers of my rank is so distant, that I consider the lot of my whole life as determined; and therefore, in the moment of my expatriation, which is equivalent to death, I earnestly entreat your highness, that if my services have been acceptable to my country, and I have never yet done any thing to forfeit the claim, it will be pleased to take under its protection my numerous family."

Suchet observed the capitulation like a Frenchman of the new system. He had promised that no man should be molested for the part which he had taken; but no sooner was he master of the city, than he sent 1500 monks and friars prisoners into France, and executed in the public square some of those who were most distinguished for their zeal in the national cause.

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XXXIX.

1812.

January.

CHAPTER XL.

ATTEMPT ON ALICANTE. PENISCOLA BETRAYED. NEW REGENCY. TARIFA UNSUCCESSFULLY BESIEGED BY THE FRENCH. RECAPTURE OF CIUDAD RODRIGO AND BADAJOZ.

CHAP. XL. M. SUCHET was rewarded for his services with the title of Duc d'Albufera, and with a grant of the revenues arising from the lake of that name near Valencia, and from the domains adjoining. 1812. He was told that he had now to obtain possession of Alicante and Carthagena, and then the only remaining points from which the war could be kept up on that side of Spain would be closed. It was, indeed, considered at Cadiz, that Alicante might soon be expected to fall in consequence of the loss of Valencia; and Carthagena was regarded as so insecure, that the Conde de la Bisbal suggested the propriety of occupying the heights which command it by a British force. Before this precaution was taken, a premature demonstration against Alicante had the effect of putting the inhabitants upon their guard. To secure the success of Suchet's operations against Valencia, Marshal Marmont, pursuant to Buonaparte's instructions, had sent General Montbrun, with two divisions of infantry and one of horse, to cooperate with him, by manœuvring against the corps of Mahy and Freyre, which he was either to cut off or compel to return into Alicante; but his orders were, at all events, to rejoin the army of Portugal from which he had been detached by the twentieth of the month at latest. Montbrun

January.

*Attempt on
Alicante.*