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1813.

June.

*Suchet approaches  
Col de Balaguer, and  
retires again.*

Murray repaired in the Bristol early on the 13th, and where the whole armament was directed to assemble.

While the allies were thus re-embarking with discreditable precipitance, two other armies thought it necessary in consequence of this movement to retreat also, in equal haste, . . . General Copons from the vicinity of Reus to the mountains, lest he should be exposed to a combined attack from Decaen and the garrison of Tarragona; and Decaen himself to Barcelona, apprehending that the allies had raised the siege for the purpose of bringing him to action. On the evening of the 13th an enemy's detachment was seen advancing by the piquets in front of the fort at Col de Balaguer, and judging that this might be the advance of Suchet's force, Sir John ordered part of the infantry to be relanded as it arrived from Tarragona, in order to cover the embarkation of the cavalry and field-artillery, which had reached that point in the course of the day. He was not mistaken in this judgement, . . . Marshal Suchet having found the way by the mountains impracticable, thought to force his way by the Col, expecting to reduce the fort with as little difficulty as the allies had done; and on the 14th he presented himself there on the road from Tortosa with the main body of his army. He found a battalion in position covering the fort, but to his astonishment he also discovered the British fleet at anchor between the Col and Hospitalet. His light troops and skirmishers extended themselves along the hills, and approached within cannon-shot of the fort. But he found it impossible to advance, so completely was the road on that side commanded by the fort and by the judicious station taken by the ships of war, which could anchor there close to the shore; and it was equally impossible for an army to remain there many hours, there being no water within many miles. He found it necessary, therefore, to



retire the same evening to the village of Perillo, not knowing what had occurred at Tarragona, alarmed as well as surprized at what he had seen, and holding himself prepared to follow the movements of the fleet.

On the following morning he made a second movement on Valdellos, as if intending to attempt the mountain road. As soon as Sir John Murray was informed of this, he apprehended that it was Suchet's intention to turn the position which the allies occupied, and enter the plain of Tarragona in their rear; upon which the farther embarkation of the cavalry was suspended, and nearly the whole of the infantry were put on shore. He also sent a strong division, and all the cavalry, under Major-General Mackenzie, to observe the enemy's motions, and attack them if they should attempt to press farther forward. They remained on the 16th nearly in the same position; but intelligence came that a column was in march from the side of Tarragona, and as this would have rendered General Mackenzie's situation extremely critical, he was ordered to retire to Hospitalet, and accordingly retreated thither in the course of the night. Sir John now determined to take up a position in the plain, between the high ground of the Col and the sea, and this was done on the 17th. The left rested on the hills, which are almost inaccessible on that side; the ground in front, though level, was impracticable for cavalry, because it is intersected from the hills to the sea with gullies and deep ravines caused by the winter rains. The right extended to the shore, and was greatly protected by the gun-boats and the fire of the shipping. In this strong position he had resolved to wait the enemy's attack, but in the forenoon it was ascertained that they had retired on both sides, Suchet toward Tortosa, and Decaen toward Barcelona, after throwing supplies into Tarragona. Sir John then assembled a council of war, in which it was concluded that as nothing farther in the

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*June 15.*

*Sir John  
relands  
the troops.*



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 XLIV. its then state, and as no advantage could be expected from  
 1813. remaining where they were, and acting defensively, the most  
 June. advisable measure was to re-embark and return to Alicante,  
 there to re-equip the army.

*Lord W.  
 Bentinck  
 takes the  
 command.*

In the afternoon of this busy day Lord William Bentinck, who had long been looked for, arrived from Sicily to take the command. The Mediterranean fleet, under Sir Edward Pellew, came with him, having quitted its station off Toulon in the hope of assisting the operations against Tarragona, either by its presence there, or by making a show of landing at and attacking Rosas. Lord William on assuming the command confirmed the opinion of the council of war, and ordered the troops to be immediately re-embarked. The weather being such as to raise a high surf, rendered this very difficult; nevertheless by great exertions on the part of the navy, every thing was got on board by the midnight of the 19th. At the same time the fort at Col de Balaguer, having been dismantled and ruined, was blown up; and on the ensuing day, Admiral Hallowell and the Anglo-Sicilian army made sail for Alicante from their bootless expedition, and Sir Edward Pellew returned with the Mediterranean fleet to his wonted station.

*Fort at Col  
 de Balaguer  
 demolished.*

*Unsuccess-  
 ful move-  
 ments of the  
 Spaniards  
 in Valencia.*

The explosion of the fort announced to the French that the English had abandoned all thought of any further operations in lower Catalonia, . . . much to Marshal Suchet's relief, who while they remained there deemed it necessary to observe their movements, and yet felt that he was wanted upon the Xucar. General Elio's army, joined by that which Ballesteros had formerly commanded, but was now under the Duque del Parque, had endeavoured to take advantage of his absence with so large a part of his force. On the 11th they had attacked General Harispe's rear-guard, under General Mesclon, when on the road from



S. Philippe to its position on the Xucar, but were repulsed at the village of Rogla with some loss, and Elio himself was for a little while in the enemy's hands, but he had the good fortune to escape without being recognized. The French then pursued their march without farther molestation to the bridge over the Xucar. On the 13th the Spaniards presented themselves in force there, and while a cannonade was kept up on that side, the Duque del Parque attacked Alcira by the two roads of Carcagente and of Gandia. General Habert let their principal column approach the suburb, then charged it at the moment when it began to deploy, threw it into confusion, routed it with the loss of 400 killed and more than 600 prisoners; and this in time for repairing to support his left on the Gandia road, and there also to defeat the assailants. Notwithstanding this success, General Harispe was far from feeling secure in his position. He informed Marshal Suchet that there were in his front not less than 28,000 of the least bad Spanish infantry, and from 2 to 3000 cavalry in a good state; this, he said, the prisoners agreed in affirming, and the intelligence was not of a kind to make them feel more secure than they ought to be. The departure of the expedition from Balaguer Roads after the total failure of its object enabled the Marshal to hasten back toward the Xucar, and he did this with the more speed, because there was a report that its intention was to intercept him on his way to Valencia, by landing either at Puerto de los Alfaques, or at Castellon de la Plana. But the fleet had no other object in view than that of returning to Alicante, and in this it suffered much from storms. Eighteen transports were driven on the Alfaques; the troops were taken out, and fifteen of the vessels were got off, but the others were lost.

On landing at Alicante, Lord William received intelligence of the battle of Vittoria. Suchet had apprehended no such

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*The fleet  
suffers on  
its return to  
Alicante.*

*Suchet's  
measures  
after the  
battle of  
Vittoria.*



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tidings. Buonaparte seems to have entertained till the last a blind persuasion that his schemes of ambition in Spain and every where else must finally be successful, and the instructions which he had sent to the Marshal were that he should endeavour to gain time, and lose no ground, till the affairs of the north should be finished, when, if it were then necessary, dispositions would be made in favour of the armies in Spain. The Marshal, however, knew that he must lose no time in retiring from Valencia; that province therefore was delivered by the battle of Vittoria, as Andalusia had been by the battle of Salamanca. He thought to retain upon it a hold which would enable him at any time to return by leaving a garrison of 1200 men in Murviedro, stored for twelve months, the place having been materially strengthened during the eighteen months which had elapsed since the French obtained possession of it: 500 men were also left in Peñiscola, 120 in Denia, and as many in Morella, that little fort commanding a mountain-road, by which a corps of infantry without cannon could at any time re-enter Valencia from Aragon. Looking forward therefore to the probable resumption of their conquests, with the hopefulness which characterizes the French character, and with the confidence which he might justly feel in his own ability of improving all circumstances to the best advantage, he commenced his retreat with the less reluctance because Clausel apprized him that he had arrived at Zaragoza with 14,000 men, and would establish himself upon the Gallego, in readiness either to co-operate with the army of Aragon, or with the Intruder, if the army on that side should resume the offensive.

*Suchet's  
Memoires,  
2, 310—  
324.*

*Lord Wel-  
lington un-  
dertakes the  
siege of S.  
Sebastian.*

A junction between Clausel and Suchet was what Lord Wellington apprehended as soon as he heard that the expedition against Tarragona had failed, and that consideration made him at once give up his intention of laying siege to Pamplona.



Unwelcome as the tidings were, this change of purpose may have compensated for the failure, . . . Pamplona being so much stronger than it was at that time supposed to be by the allies, and the British army still so defective in its engineer's department, that the siege might probably have proved unsuccessful. Resorting therefore to the surer method of blockading a city, which there was reason to believe was not provided for a long siege, he intrusted that service to the Spaniards, and ordered works to be thrown up on every side, to prevent the escape of the garrison, and to cut them off from all supplies; and he determined to besiege St. Sebastian's, where farther means of attack could be obtained by sea. The service was intrusted to Sir Thomas Graham with 10,000 men.

But the failure in Catalonia was soon compensated by the events which took place in Aragon. Clausel, not waiting for Marshal Suchet's movements, nor to consult with him, left his artillery at Zaragoza, and made for France by way of Jaca. The Spaniards supposed that his chief motive was the desire of securing the riches which he had amassed. Mina was marching upon the same point with a far inferior force, in the hope of intercepting some of this booty, when he received orders which suspended his progress. Duran at the same time, as commandant in Lower Aragon, was instructed to take such opportunity as might offer for acting against the enemy in Zaragoza. This veteran, who was then at Ricla, sent Colonel Tabuenca to inform Mina of Clausel's retreat, and to confer with him upon a plan of speedy operations for the recovery of that capital, where there were no other troops remaining than a not numerous garrison, and against which he should immediately move. Tabuenca was then with his regiment at Borja; Mina was supposed to be at Gallud: not finding him there, Tabuenca hastened to Pedrola; but there he found D. Julian San-

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*Clausel retreats into France by way of Jaca.*

*Duran invites Mina to act with him for the deliverance of Zaragoza.*



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chez, who directed him to look for Mina at Alagon; and from Alagon Cruchaga directed him to Las Casetas, and there at one in the morning Tabuena arrived and found him. Upon delivering his dispatches, he stated, that General Duran had selected him to be the bearer, because, being a native of Zaragoza, and having been present during both sieges, he could give him the fullest local information, upon which their combined operations might be concerted. Mina replied, that their forces were not sufficient for such an enterprize. He had approached the city, he said, upon an assurance that the enemy had evacuated it; but an intercepted letter had just been brought him, in which the governor, General Paris, ordered the garrisons on the left of the Ebro to maintain their posts, because succours were on the way to them from Marshal Suchet.

Tabuena had not expected such a reply. He represented, that the united force of the two divisions amounted to from 10,000 to 12,000 infantry, and 1500 horse; that the garrison did not at the utmost exceed 5000, including invalids; that when with that number so wide a circuit was to be covered, various false attacks might distract their attention, and an entrance be effected where they least apprehended it: and that when once the Spaniards should have set foot upon the walls, they might count upon as many brave soldiers as there were men of Zaragoza. The reinforcements which the governor looked for were, he said, far off, and could not, if time were made good use of, arrive till they would be useless. There was more reason to fear that Clausel might march back; but even in that case they could maintain themselves in Zaragoza. Paris could not defend the city, if he were vigorously assailed: and though he might bring off the garrison by the bridge over the Ebro, the French could not carry off their booty. Mina replied, that he had only three regiments of infantry on the right of the



Ebro, and cavalry was of little use; but in the morning he expected information from the place, and would then determine whether to remain or to retire. Tabuenca observed, that the regiments on the left bank would not be useless if they were made to approach, and that the cavalry might be dismounted; and he requested him at least to bring down the regiments which he had at Alagon and Pedrola, that the enemy's attention might thus be drawn toward Las Casetas, when Duran came with his division, as he would do, to Maria or Cadrete. To this Mina consented.

Early in the morning, Tabuenca's regiment, which had followed him, arrived at the Puente de la Claveria, where he joined it, and proceeded on the right of the canal of Tauste toward the Puente de la Muela, meaning to give the men some rest there, while he went in search of Duran. They had scarcely been an hour upon the way, when a fire of musketry was heard on the left toward Las Casetas, and an orderly of Mina's came in all haste to recall them, because the enemy had attacked him. Tabuenca, confiding in his own knowledge of the ground, represented to Mina, that instead of obeying this order, it would be better that he should occupy the Puente de la Muela, whereby he should divert the enemy's attention, if, as might be expected, more troops should issue out, and at the same time secure that point in case Duran should make for it. Mina approved of this suggestion. The alarm had been occasioned by a body of horse, some 150 in number, who had been sent on an exploring party; they were charged by Mina's cavalry, and compelled to retreat with all speed; but other bodies presently sallied to their support, and one of about 1000 foot and 100 horse made for the Puente de la Muela. Tabuenca, who had with him about 1400 men, quickened his pace and anticipated them; and seeing this they halted, hesitated, and then fell back. Their

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*Affair before Zaragoza.*



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 1813. main force advanced against Mina upon the road to Las Casetas; troops also came to his support, and his men behaved with their wonted gallantry. The enemy were superior both in horse and foot, and when the body which had been disappointed in their intention of occupying the bridge of La Muela joined them, the Navarrese could with difficulty keep their ground; but Tabuenca hastening with part of his men, approached the enemy on their left flank, under cover of some olive yards, and opened upon them a fire as opportune as it was unexpected; taking advantage of the movement which this occasioned among them, Mina charged with such effect, that they retreated hastily till they were under the fire of their works. Mina then encamped his troops between the Casetas and the heights of La Bernardona, . . he had now with him 4000 foot and 1500 horse; and Tabuenca regarding this affair as a preliminary to the recovery of Zaragoza, ordered his regiment to march immediately upon the Casa Blanca and the Torrero, while he took the same course with the detachment which had been engaged. These posts, which had been so obstinately disputed in the former sieges, were abandoned by the French at their approach; and the Spaniards entered them, rejoicing in their success, and in being enabled to rest, after a march of four and twenty hours, during which they had had no other refreshment than a hasty meal at Grisen.

*Second  
 sally of the  
 French.*

Between four and five in the afternoon the French sallied a second time and in greater force. They attacked Mina's division, which was supported by D. Julian Sanchez with his Castilian lancers; but while thus engaged, Tabuenca, leaving just troops enough in the works which he had taken to cover his retreat should that be necessary, attacked the enemy on their left and in the rear, and the result was that they were driven into the city, leaving some two hundred killed. Mina's loss in