

escaping from a storm by which several vessels were wrecked on the coast, he landed at Passages, and hastened to S. Jean de Luz.

CHAP.
XLVI.

1814.

When the Duc heard his report of the state of feeling in La Vendée, of the general opinion which prevailed in France, and of the disposition which there was to receive him in Bourdeaux, he declared that nothing should now make him forsake that country in which he had found subjects who were still so faithful. Without delay, accompanied by the Duc de Guiche, Rochejaquelein proceeded to Lord Wellington, who was then at Garitz; he assured him that Bourdeaux would declare for the Bourbons, as soon as a British force should approach it; and, as the means of effecting a powerful diversion in aid of that loyal city, he proposed that the British General should send one or two vessels and a few hundred men to land him by night upon the coast of Poitou, escort him some two leagues into the interior, and then leave him there: while they re-embarked and drew the attention of the troops, he would pursue his way alone, and raise once more that loyal race who had exerted themselves so dutifully, and suffered so severely, in the most frantic and ferocious times of the revolution. Lord Wellington listened with great interest to these representations; but he doubted whether the feelings of the people towards the royal family were what Rochejaquelein believed them to be; and he did not think himself authorized to detach even a small force upon an expedition such as was proposed, when he had no instructions from his own government, and moreover when he was on the eve of great operations, . . . for he was now preparing to pass the Adour.

January.
Lord Wellington
refuses to
send an ex-
pedition to
the coast of
Poitou.

*Memoires de
la Marquise
de la Roche-
jaquelein,
pp. 513-28.*

On the side of Catalonia, meantime, all went on favourably for the allies; for if they were too weak to obtain any advantages for themselves, the enemy was weakened to a greater degree,

*Suchet fails
in an attempt
to surprize
a British
corps.*

CHAP.
XLVI.

1813.

December.

in consequence of the progress of the war in other quarters. Marshal Suchet made one vigorous attempt in the beginning of December to surprize the corps at Villafranca, where the British head-quarters were established. He made a forced night march in this hope with about 15,000 men ; but timely information had been obtained. Sarsfield's division, which was stationed there, retired across the country to the left ; the British cavalry and artillery fell back about eight miles along the main road to Arbos, where there was a strong position, and whither General Mackenzie moved his division to their support ; and Suchet, having failed in his intention, retired from Villafranca on the afternoon of the same day, and returned to the Llobregat as rapidly as he had advanced. The wants of the Spanish army had now become so pressing, that it was necessary to send Sarsfield's cavalry to the rear, where it might be possible for them to subsist, his infantry being sometimes upon the shortest allowance, and without any sure prospect of even that insufficient dole for more than two or three days. His troops must from sheer destitution have quitted the field, had it not been for the merchants of Villa-nueva, who at his earnest persuasion, but on their own credit, and at their own risk, supplied them with provisions from the imports which arrived at that port. Not a murmur meantime was heard from the men ; nor did they evince the slightest feeling of discontent or jealousy, when they saw the Anglo-Sicilian troops, forming part of the same army, duly supplied, while they themselves were hungered. Only if the greater strength of the British soldiers appeared, when they were engaged together in the public works, a Spaniard would sometimes quietly say, " Give us your rations, and you shall see us work as well as you do."

After the Nassau battalions had passed over to Lord Wellington's camp, immediate advice had been dispatched to Sir

William Clinton; and the information was with due secrecy communicated to the officer who commanded the Nassau troops in Catalonia; but this person preferring what he considered his military obligations to his national duty, delivered the papers into General Habert's hands, who had succeeded Maurice Mathieu in the command at Barcelona. The French would, perhaps, have been better pleased if he had followed the example of his better-minded countrymen; for that German feeling which the officer had renounced existed among the men, and it was deemed necessary to disarm them all, 2400 in number, thus weakening the army of Catalonia, and bringing upon it this additional inconvenience, that the men of whose services it was deprived were to be supported as prisoners, and guarded also. This officer was mortally wounded a few weeks afterwards in a sally from Barcelona.

Suchet's force was still farther weakened by the withdrawal of 2000 of his Italian troops; he then proposed to the French government, as a measure of expediency, that they should dismantle the city of Barcelona, and content themselves with occupying the citadel and Fort Monjuic, whereby 5000 of the garrison would be disposable for service; but his advice was rejected, the possession of Barcelona being deemed necessary for the support of the army in Catalonia. About the same time, two strong battalions of Spaniards were detached from the Anglo-Sicilian army, at the pressing request of General Roche, to assist him in blockading Murviedro. Tarragona had now been so far repaired as to be in a defensible state; but such was the exhausted condition of the province that no stores of any kind could be obtained from it for the Spanish authorities. While both armies were withheld from undertaking any important operation by the diminution of strength on both sides, and by the increasing difficulties of obtaining supplies on the

CHAP.
XLVI.

1813.

*December.
The German troops in Barcelona disarmed.*

Troops withdrawn from Suchet's army.

Failure of an attempt against the enemy at Molins del Rey.

CHAP. part of the Anglo-Sicilians, a plan was concerted between Sir
 XLVI. William Clinton and Manso for attacking the enemy's canton-
 1814. ments at Molins del Rey and the adjoining villages on the
 January. Llobregat: Sir William was to move with 8000 men upon the
 Barcelona road and attack them in front, while Manso should
 post himself upon the strong ground in the rear of Molins del
 Rey, close to the only road by which they could retire. Copons
 had assented to this project, and agreed to lend Manso and his
 brigade for this service, both the men and their commander
 being worthy of all confidence. The enterprize failed, because
 Copons, without making any communication to the English
 General, instead of sending Manso, chose to go himself with a
 larger force, set off two hours later than the time which had
 been agreed upon, and finally appeared on the right flank of
 the enemy instead of in the rear; meantime the force from
 Villafranca having arrived at the hour appointed, the French,
 who, if there had been the same punctuality on the other side,
 must have been taken by surprize, were able to effect their
 retreat over the Llobregat by the stone bridge near Molins,
 which was well fortified. Upon the first alarm, Suchet dis-
 patched troops to support General Pannetier who was in
 command there, and manœuvred in the hope of decoying the
 allies to a dangerous advance; but Sir William was too wary
 to incur any unwise risk, when the object of his movement had
 been disappointed. Had Manso been left to execute what had
 been concerted with him, Pannetier's division must in all like-
 lihood have been captured.

*Farther
 drafts from
 Suchet's
 army.*

A few days afterwards Marshal Suchet received positive orders from Paris to dispatch for Lyons with the least possible delay two-thirds of his cavalry, from 8000 to 10,000 foot, and fourscore field-pieces. He renewed his representations concerning Barcelona, saying, he should delay till the latest

minute his departure from the vicinity of that city, in the hope of farther instructions; and he advised that, as the mission of the Duque de S. Carlos had produced no good effect, Ferdinand should be sent to Barcelona, with an understanding that France put him in possession of the fortified places, in reliance upon his honour for sending the garrison home. Meantime he appointed Habert to the command of Lower Catalonia, the division of the Lower Ebro being under General Robert, who commanded in Tortosa; that General was assured that he should soon be delivered, either by succour, or by the conclusion of peace; but at the worst he was instructed, when his provisions should fail, which would be before the end of April, to make for Lerida, collect his troops there, and by a rapid march through the mountains proceed to Benasque, and so into France. No farther advices having reached him by the first of February, Marshal Suchet moved with the remains of his army to the neighbourhood of Gerona; and when, in the course of another fortnight, instructions came to act as he had advised with regard to Barcelona, it was too late, the allies having immediately upon his removal blockaded that city.

A greater mortification awaited him. Eroles, in the month of November, when confined by a dangerous illness at Manresa, received information from one in whom he had reason to place entire confidence, that a Spanish officer, by name D. Juan de Halen, who was then one of Suchet's aides-de-camp, was desirous of being restored to the service of his country, under his protection. Eroles replied that this was not to be hoped for, unless the officer could make some signal reparation for the injury which he had done to the Spanish name; but that in waiting till this could be effected, he might give proof of his sincerity and earnest of his intentions by communicating such

CHAP.

XLVI.

1814.

*January.**He retires to Gerona.**One of his aides-de-camp opens a correspondence with Eroles.*

CHAP. useful information as his situation about Suchet's person enabled
 XLVI. him to obtain. Van Halen replied as if he felt himself wounded
 1814. by being expected to act the part of a spy: there was not
 much difficulty in overcoming this objection; and he found
 means of transmitting intelligence from time to time, and,
 among other papers, a copy of Suchet's cipher. The more
 important communications were not intrusted to writing, but
 made orally, through the person by whom this correspondence
 was opened.

January.

Van Halen. Juan Van Halen, as may be inferred from his name, was a Spaniard of Flemish or Brabantine descent. He was a native of the Isle of Leon, and born in 1789. After some years of active service in the navy, he was employed in the engineers; and as an officer in that corps bore a part at Madrid in the tragedy of the 2d of May. Escaping from the capital, he joined Blake's army after the battle of Rio-seco, and was sent by him to Ferrol; when that place was surrendered, he took the oath of fidelity to the Intruder, and afterwards held a commission in his body guards. He had the good fortune subsequently to be employed in other parts of Europe, and was at Paris when Buonaparte's reverses in Germany rendered it no longer doubtful that the part in which he had engaged must finally be the unsuccessful one. A friend and countryman, who had come to the same unpleasant conviction, advised him to forsake the sinking cause; but Van Halen, in his own words, "could not think of prostrating himself at the feet of the throne and of his country, unless he could bear with him the testimony of some such service as might make him worthy of being received in the arms of Spanish generosity and gratitude, not in those of indulgence, or of strict justice." So getting leave from the then expelled Intruder to solicit employment in Spain, he obtained from the

Restauracion de las Plazas, &c. p. 12.

Duc de Feltre an appointment upon Suchet's staff, and provided himself with credentials to Eroles, and also with a letter of recommendation to Sir Rowland Hill.

CHAP.
XLVI.

1814.

January.

After carrying on a correspondence with Eroles for about two months, and arranging with him a plan for attacking some of the places which the French held on the left of the Llobregat, it was agreed that he should come over to the Spaniards and put the design in execution; and hoping both to render service to the cause in which he now embarked, and to conceal the fact of his own desertion, leaving Barcelona in the night, he led away with him from the neighbourhood of that city two squadrons of cuirassiers, to whom he produced a forged order of the Marshal's that they should follow him on a secret expedition. His intention was that Eroles should intercept them, and make them and himself prisoners: but the messenger, whom he had dispatched two days before to apprise the Baron of his movements, fell in with a party of hussars belonging to the Anglo-Sicilian army, who were scouring the road to Moncada, and was detained by them; and when Van Halen came to the place appointed, and found that the scheme had failed, nothing remained for him but to provide for his own safety by escaping as soon as he could. Thus his desertion became notorious, and all the plans which had been formed upon the supposition of keeping it secret were frustrated.

He deserts
from the
French
army.

Jan. 17.

But Van Halen's disposition was turned to perilous intrigues and enterprises: he now conceived a design of recovering some strong places by stratagem; and Eroles remembering the *Rovirada* by which Figueras had been surprized, and being himself of an adventurous spirit, entered readily into his views, and went with him to General Copons, whose head-quarters were then at Vich. Copons was not without difficulty induced to give his consent, and they then proceeded to Xerta, where

His scheme
for recover-
ing certain
places.

CHAP.

XLVI.

1814.

January.

Don Josef Sans, who commanded the force before Tortosa, had his head-quarters. This place was so strictly blockaded that it was certain no tidings of Van Halen's desertion could have reached it: and to induce a belief in other quarters that he had left Catalonia, bills upon Madrid and other places at a distance had been taken up for him. He had possessed himself not only of Suchet's cipher, but of the handwritings which it was necessary to counterfeit; and letters were now written as from the Marshal, informing General Robert the commander, that the exigencies of the Emperor's affairs compelled him to withdraw all his garrisons from that side of the Llobregat; that Colonel D'Eschalard of his staff was gone to Tarrasa, there to conclude the treaty for evacuating them; and that he must be prepared to depart with his equipage and field-artillery as soon as orders to that effect should reach him. It was added, that the Emperor had been pleased to honour him with the grand-cross of the Imperial Order of the Reunion, and upon this the Marshal offered him his congratulations. An unlucky peasant was found, who undertook, in the character of a spy of Suchet's, to carry this forged dispatch into the town. So few communications, without a strong escort, escaped the vigilance of the Catalans, that whenever a single messenger was sent, the letter.. written in the smallest compass and in the fewest words.. used to be inclosed in lead, and swallowed by the bearer. Van Halen was well acquainted with all the details of such transactions. If the enemy sent a spy out from one of their fortresses, they usually made a sally, and thus brought him out unobserved, and set him on his way; but the messenger who was to make his way in, approached in the darkness, and made a certain signal with a flint and steel. The peasant, though carefully instructed upon this as upon all other points, forgot this important part of his instructions, and in consequence was wounded by the sentinel:

the first part of his errand, however, was not the less performed; the dispatch was delivered to General Robert, and no suspicion being entertained of the stratagem, the man was sent to the hospital, and there carefully attended. But the answer which he should have delivered into the hands of his employers was sent by another person, and consequently not received by those who were expecting it.

Having learnt what had befallen their messenger, Eroles and Van Halen proceeded with their device. A Spanish officer was sent with a letter from Sans, saying he had just received a copy of a treaty signed at Tarrasa by the Spanish and French commanders-in-chief in Catalonia, agreeing upon an armistice of fifteen days for the evacuation of the places named in the treaty, Tortosa being one; he inclosed a letter with D'Eschalard's signature, which it was pretended had accompanied it, and in which it was stated that the chef d'Escadron, Van Halen, one of the Marshal's aides-de-camp, would speedily arrive with full instructions. The garrison were on the point of making a sally when the officer arrived: the news of the armistice spread; a free communication in consequence took place with the advanced posts of the Spaniards, and on the next morning General Robert sent out Colonel Plique to make arrangements for evacuating the place; at the same time he liberated some soldiers who had lately been surprized and made prisoners. The Colonel accordingly came at the hour appointed; Van Halen presented himself in his aide-de-camp's uniform, and the Spanish Captain Daura, as having accompanied him from the Llobregat, delivered a letter from Copons. Plique desired to be left alone with Van Halen, whose instructions he was authorized to receive, in case the Spanish commander should not permit him to enter the town. He inquired of him concerning the state of affairs which had reduced the Emperor to sacrifice these places, and Van Halen

CHAP.
XLVI.

1814.

January.

*The deceit
tried at
Tortosa.*