

CHAP.
XVIII.

1809.

January.*Rogniat,
25, 28,
Cavallero,
105.**Convents of
S. Augustin
and S. Mo-
nica won.
Feb. 1.*

twice also to regain the Trinidad, and once succeeded so far as to force open the church door: the enemy had formed an epaulement within of bags of earth, and fought to advantage behind that protection. A friar was at the head of the assailants, with a sword in one hand and the crucifix in the other; one of his brethren was killed in the act of administering extreme unction to a Spaniard who was mortally wounded; another took the holy oil from the slain, and continued to perform the same office to his dying countrymen. Women also mingled with the combatants, distributing cartridges to them, and bearing refreshments to their sons, their husbands, and fathers, and sometimes rushing upon the enemy when these dear relatives fell, to revenge their deaths, and to die with them.

The French had in vain attempted to get possession of the convents of S. Augustin and S. Monica. Having been repelled in assaulting the breaches, they sprung a mine under the partition wall, and by that means effected an entrance, turning all the works which the Spaniards had constructed for their defence. They forced their way into the church. Every column, every chapel, every altar, became a point of defence, which was repeatedly attacked, taken, and retaken, and attacked again; the pavement was covered with blood, and the aisles and nave of the church strewed with the dead, who were trampled under foot by the combatants. In the midst of this conflict the roof, which had been shattered by bombs, fell in; the few who were not crushed, after a short pause which this tremendous shock and the sense of their own escape occasioned, renewed the fight with increased desperation: fresh parties of the enemy poured in: monks, and citizens, and soldiers came to the defence, and the contest was continued upon the ruins and the bodies of the dead and the dying. It ended in favour of the invaders, who succeeded in keeping the disputed position. Taking ad-

vantage of the opportunity afforded while the attention of the Spaniards was directed to this point, they entered the Rua Quemada, where no attack was at that time apprehended, and got possession of one side of the street to the angle which it makes with the Cozo: their sappers were beginning to pierce the walls of the houses, barricade the doors and windows, and establish traverses in the street, when the Zaragozans charged them with redoubled spirit, drove them out with considerable loss, and recovered four houses which had been taken on a preceding day. At the same time an attack was made on the side of S. Engracia, when, after exploding two mines, the Poles got possession of some ruined houses; but in obtaining this success, General Lacoste, the French commandant of engineers, was killed. His opponent, Colonel San Genis, had fallen the preceding day: he was succeeded by Colonel Zappino, Lacoste by Colonel Rogniat.

Now that the city was open to the invaders, the contest was to be carried on once more in the streets and houses. But the French had been taught by experience that in such domestic warfare the Zaragozans derived a superiority from the feeling and principle which inspired them, and the cause wherein they were engaged. They had learned that the only means of conquering it was to destroy it house by house, and street by street; and upon this system of destruction they proceeded. Three companies of miners and eight of sappers carried on this subterranean war. The Spaniards had officers who could have opposed them with not inferior skill; but men were wanting, and the art of sapping and mining is not one which can be learned on the spot where it is wanted; their attempts therefore were frequently discovered, and the men suffocated in their own works. Nor indeed had they been more expert could powder have been supplied for their consumption. The stock with which the Zaragozans began had been exhausted; they had none but what

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Rogniat,
27, 30.
Cavallero,
106.

*The enemy
proceed by
mining.*

CHAP. XVIII. they manufactured day by day, and no other cannon-balls than those which had been fired against them, and which they collected and fired back upon the enemy.

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February.

*Progress of
the pesti-
lence.*

*Miralles,
Elogio de
Zaragoza,
p. 42.*

*Cavallero,
71.*

The Zaragozans expected miracles for their deliverance; and they exerted themselves so excellently well, that the French, with all their advantages, would have found themselves unequal to the enterprise in which they were engaged, and other armies must have been brought up to supply more thousands for the slaughter, if the defenders had not been suffering under an evil which in their circumstances it was equally impossible to prevent or to alleviate. The consequences of that evil, when it had once appeared, were but too surely to be apprehended; and in bitter anticipation, yet while a hope remained, an Aragonese exclaimed, Zaragoza surrenders not, if God is neutral! If the seasons had only held their ordinary course, this heroic people might a second time have delivered themselves. In that part of Spain January is commonly a wet month. Had the rains fallen as usual, the enemy would hardly have been able to complete their approaches; had the weather, on the contrary, been severe, it might have stopped the contagion, and then the city would have had hands as well as hearts for its defence. But the season proved at once dry enough for the ground to be in the most favourable state for the besiegers' operations, and mild enough to increase the progress of the disease, which was now more destructive than the enemy, though no enemy ever employed the means of destruction with less remorse. When once the pestilence had begun it was impossible to check its progress, or confine it to one quarter of the city. It was not long before more than thirty hospitals were established; . . . as soon as one was destroyed by the bombardment the patients were removed to some other building which was in a state to afford them temporary shelter, and thus the infection was carried to every part of Za-

ragoza. The average of daily deaths from this cause was at this time not less than three hundred and fifty; men stretched upon straw, in helpless misery lay breathing their last, and with their dying breath spreading the mortal taint of their own disease, who, if they had fallen in action, would have died with the exultation of martyrs. Their sole comfort was the sense of having performed their duty religiously to the uttermost. . . all other alleviations were wanting; neither medicines nor necessary food were to be procured, nor needful attendance. . . for the ministers of charity themselves became victims of the disease. All that the most compassionate had now to bestow was a little water in which rice had been boiled, and a winding-sheet. The nuns, driven from their convents, knew not where to take refuge, nor where to find shelter for their dying sisters. The Church of the Pillar was crowded with poor creatures, who, despairing of life, hoped now for nothing more than to die in the presence of the tutelary saint. The clergy were employed night and day in administering the sacraments to the dying, till they themselves sunk under the common calamity. The slightest wound produced gangrene and death in bodies so prepared for dissolution by distress of mind, agitation, want of proper aliment and of sleep. For there was now no respite neither by day nor night for this devoted city; even the natural order of light and darkness was destroyed in Zaragoza: by day it was involved in a red sulphureous atmosphere of smoke and dust, which hid the face of heaven; by night the fire of cannon and mortars, and the flames of burning houses, kept it in a state of horrible illumination. The cemeteries could no longer afford room for the dead; huge pits were dug to receive them in the streets and in the courts of the public buildings, till hands were wanting for the labour; they were laid before the churches, heaped upon one another, and covered with sheets; and that no spectacle of horror might be wanting, it

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Sebastian
Hernandez,
p. 17.
Cavallero,
p. 108.

CHAP. XVIII. happened not unfrequently that these piles of mortality were struck by a shell, and the shattered bodies scattered in all directions.

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February.

*First talk
of surrender
in the city.*

On the 1st of February the situation of the city appeared so desperate, that persons of approved and unquestionable patriotism came to the Regent of the Royal Audience of Aragon, D. Pedro Maria Ric, and besought him to represent to Palafox the necessity of capitulating; but Ric, with a spirit like that of Palafox himself, could not submit to this while there was any possibility of prolonging the defence. He knew that of all examples there is none which makes so sure and so powerful an impression as that of heroic suffering; and that if Zaragoza were defended to the last gasp, the influence of its fall under such circumstances would be not less honourable and hardly less salutary than a happier termination. Nor indeed would the people have consented to a surrender; their spirit was unsubdued, and the principle which supported it retained all its force. The worst effect of their sense of increasing danger was, that it increased their suspicions, always too easily excited; and to those suspicions several persons were sacrificed, being with or without proof hung during the night in the Cozo and in the market-place. The character indeed of the struggle was such as to excite the most implacable indignation and hatred against an enemy, who having begun the war with such unexampled treachery, prosecuted it with a ferocity equally unexampled in later ages.

*D. P. M.
Ric, Sema-
nario Pa-
triotico,
No. 28, p.
214.
Cavallero,
p. 110.*

*The contest
carried on
by fire.*

Four days the French were employed in forming three galleries to cross the Rua Quemada. They failed in two; the third opened into the cellar of an undefended house; thence they made way along great part of the street from house to house, and crossing another street by means of a double epaulement of bags of earth, established themselves in the ruins of a house which formed an angle of the Cozo and of the Rua del Medio. Their

next object was to get possession of the Escuelas Pias, a building which commanded some traverses made for defending the Cozo. The French often attacked it, and were as often repulsed; they then attempted the adjoining houses. The system of blowing up the houses exposed them to an evil which had not been foreseen, for when they attempted to establish themselves upon the ruins, the Spaniards from the dwellings near fired upon them with sure effect. They endeavoured therefore so to proportion the charge in their mines as to breach the house without destroying it; but to deprive them of the cover which they would thus have obtained, the Zaragozans with characteristic desperation set fire now to every house before they abandoned it. They began this mode of defence here, maintaining the entrance till they had prepared the building for burning; for so little wood was used in the construction, that it was necessary to smear the floors and beams with melted resin, to make them more combustible. When all was ready they then set fire to the place, and retired into the Escuelas Pias, interposing thus a barrier of flames between them and the assailants. The enemy endeavoured in vain to extinguish the fire under a shower of balls; and the time thus gained was employed by the Zaragozans in forming new works of defence. Unable to win the Schools by any other means, the enemy at length prepared a mine, which was discovered too late for the Spaniards to frustrate their purpose, but in time to disappoint them of their expected advantage by setting fire to the disputed edifice.

On the same day operations were renewed against the suburbs, where the enemy, at the commencement of the siege, had received so severe a repulse. General Gazan, availing himself of an ambiguity in his orders, had, after that lesson, contented himself with keeping up the blockade; nor could any representation induce him to engage in more active operations, till M. Lasnes

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*Rogniat,
30, 1.
Cavallero,
121.*

Feb. 7.

*Convent of
Jesus taken
in the sub-
urbs.*

CHAP. arrived with authority to enforce his orders. The Convent of
 XVIII. Jesus, situated on the road to Barcelona, formed part of the
 1809. defence on that side ; the engineers, not having time to raise it,
 February. deeming it better that it should be occupied than abandoned for
 the enemy. Trenches were now opened against this building,
 and twenty battering pieces soon effected a breach, which was
 carried almost as easily as it had been made ; but when the
 enemy, flushed with success, entered the suburbs in pursuit of
 the retreating garrison, they were driven out with great slaughter,
 as on their former attempt. They entrenched themselves, how-
 ever, on the ruins of the convent, established a communication
 with it, and lodgements on the right and left.

Rogniat,
 34, 35.

S. Francisco
taken.

The attack in the centre was pursued with the same vigour,
 and resisted with the same desperate determination. Every
 door, every staircase, every chamber was disputed ; the French
 abandoned all attacks to the left for the sake of concentrating
 their efforts here, that they might the sooner reach the Cozo,
 extend themselves along it to the right as far as the quay,
 and thus connect their operations with those of Gazan on the
 other side the Ebro : and these increased efforts were met with
 proportionate exertions by the Zaragozans. Grenades were
 thrown from one floor to another, and bombs were rolled among
 the enemy, when they were so near that the Spaniards who
 rolled them expected themselves also to perish by the explosion.
 Their resolution seemed, if it were possible, to increase with
 their danger ; every spot was defended with more obstinacy
 than the last ; and this temper would have been, as it deserved
 to be, invincible, if pestilence the while had not been consuming
 them faster than fire and sword. The sense of honour as well as
 of duty was carried to its highest point ; the officers preferred
 dying upon the stations which they had been appointed to de-
 fend, rather than to live after having lost them, though every

possible resistance had been made. On this side, after having occupied and been driven from the vaults of the Hospital, which had been reduced to ruins in the former siege, the enemy succeeded at length in carrying a gallery to the great convent of S. Francisco; . . . a countermine was prepared, which compelled them to stop before they could get under the walls of the convent. The engineer, Major Breuille, immediately charged the mine with three thousand weight of powder, and fired it, having drawn by feigned preparations for an assault as many Spaniards as he could within the sphere of destruction. The explosion was terrible, and brought down part of the building: the enemy rushed through the breach, and making way into the church, formed an epaulement there to establish themselves. Some Zaragozans who were acquainted with the building got, by passages connected with the tower, upon the cornices of the church; others mounted the roof, and broke holes in it, and from thence they poured down grenades upon the invaders, and drove them from their post. The ruins of this convent, which had been burnt during the first siege, and now shattered by the mine, were disputed two whole days, till the defenders at length were driven from the last chapel by the bayonet. For the advantage now both in numbers and in physical power was on the side of the enemy, the pestilence having so wasted the Spaniards, that men enough could not be provided to man the points which were attacked without calling up from the hospitals those who had yet strength enough to use a weapon.

From the tower of this building the French commanded the Cozo for a musket-shot distance on either side. After many desperate attempts their miners succeeded in crossing that street; but they were baffled in their attacks upon the University, and so many of their officers and best soldiers had fallen in this murderous struggle, that the disgust which ought to have been excited

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Rogniat,
36.
Cavallero,
126.

The French
begin to
murmur.

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by their abominable cause was produced by the difficulty which they found in pursuing it. Not the men alone, but the officers also, began to complain that they were worn out, though they had as yet only taken a fourth part of the town; it was necessary, they said, to wait for reinforcements, otherwise they should all be buried in these cursed ruins, before they could drive the fanatics from their last retreat. Marshal Lasnes represented to them, that destructive as the mode of war was, it was more so to the besieged than to them, whose operations were directed by more skill, and carried on by men trained to such service; that pestilence was doing their work; and that if these desperate madmen chose to renew the example of Numantia, and bury themselves under the ruins of their city, bombs and mines would not now be long in destroying the last of them. Marshal Lasnes was a man after the Emperor Napoleon's own heart; with so little honourable feeling, that he regarded the Zaragozans merely as madmen; and with so little human feeling, that he would have completed the destruction of the city and its last inhabitants with the same insensibility that he declared his intention of doing so.

Rogniat,
38.

Not even an attempt is made to relieve the city.

S. Genis had repeatedly said, "Let me never be appealed to if there is any question of capitulating, for I shall never be of opinion that we can no longer defend ourselves." In the same spirit Palafox wrote to his friend General Doyle: "Within the last forty-eight hours," said he, "6000 shells have been thrown in; two-thirds of the city are in ruins; but we will perish under the ruins of the remaining part, rather than surrender." It was not by any promises or hopes of external succour that this spirit was supported. Palafox well knew that no efforts would be wanting on the part of his brothers, or of his friends; but he knew also what divided counsels and jarring interests were opposed to them, and that willing lives were all they could have