

arrived from Vendrell. Reding meantime, as soon as he heard that his line had been broken, concluded that nothing now was to be done but to collect as many of the troops as he could, and withdraw them again under the protection of Tarragona; and feeling that this service was of too much importance to be entrusted to any one in whom he had not the most entire confidence, he set out himself on the morning in which St. Cyr marched from his unsuccessful attempt upon the Convent. He took with him only a battalion of Swiss, 300 horse, and six pieces of flying artillery; and as he marched from Pla saw the enemy on his right, where they were employed in sacking and burning Villarrodona and La Puebla. Reding was not aware that the French Commander-in-chief was with this body of the invaders, nor did St. Cyr know that the Spanish General was passing within sight with such a handful of troops. His force, however, was soon increased with the detachment which had retired from Col de S. Cristina, and with the 1200 men under Iranzo, whom he now recalled. He then proceeded to S. Coloma de Queralt, and there effected his junction with Castro, with the detachment stationed at that place, and with the force which Castro had collected after his defeat. But here he was alarmed by learning that the enemy had entered Valls.

St. Cyr on his part was not without some anxiety concerning Reding's intention. The movement which that General had made from his right upon his centre, led him to apprehend a purpose of re-establishing the line of communication with his left beyond the Noya, in which case the French detachment at Igualada would be in danger. That thought had passed across Reding's mind. He had supposed that the object of the French, by occupying Valls, was to cut off his retreat to Tarragona, and intercept his communications with that fortress; and his first

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*He is advised to retreat.*

CHAP. impulse was to move upon Igualada, and then upon Montbuy,  
 XXIII. to cut off the enemy at both places. But it was his fate never  
 1809. to decide resolutely and act with promptitude: a council of war  
 February. was held; the Deputy Veri was for retreating, with the view of  
 covering the plain of Tarragona. Accordingly they set out  
 from S. Coloma, with the intent of leaving Valls on the right.  
 That day they reached Montblanch. A party of French ap-  
 peared in their rear, reconnoitred them, and then turned by the  
 Col de Cabra toward Pla and Valls. As it was thus made cer-  
 tain that the enemy was observing them, a second council was  
 held on the following morning, at which Marti was present, who  
 had been summoned from Tarragona, where he had been left  
 with the command. The force which Reding had with him con-  
 sisted at this time of 10,000 men, who were in a better state  
 than any body of troops which the Spaniards had yet brought  
 into the field in that quarter. The question was asked, Where the  
 French were posted, and in what numbers? The General could  
 only answer that they were supposed to be in Valls, and that he  
 estimated them at from 5000 to 6000, without artillery. Marti's  
 opinion was, that as the object was to save the army and protect  
 the plain of Tarragona, where Reus and the other towns would  
 otherwise be at the mercy of the enemy, it was not advisable to  
 risk an action with a foe whom they knew to be superior in  
 cavalry, and who, they had reason to conclude, had other troops  
 near enough at hand to be brought together and overpower  
 them if a battle should be ventured. He advised, therefore,  
 that a few light troops and Miquelets should make a demonstra-  
 tion by the Col de Lilla against Valls in the morning, and make  
 their way afterwards as they could, either to join the corps on the  
 Llobregat, or to Lerida; that their guns should be sent to that  
 fortress, and that the troops should defile during the night by

Prades and a mountain path impracticable for artillery to Constanti, where the whole army might be collected safely in a position that would cover the plain.

General Doyle, who, after the most anxious endeavours to effect something for the relief of Zaragoza, had joined the Catalan army that day on its march, was for hope and enterprise. The troops were in good condition and in good heart, and the opportunity favourable, when they were within reach of a force inferior in number. Reding, perplexed by these jarring opinions, and never venturing to decide at once upon his own responsibility, took a middle course. He thought it derogatory to steal as it were away through a mountain path like a guerilla chief; and moreover Marti was one of the persons on whom his suspicions had fixed. The course on which he determined had neither the prospect of advantage, nor the certainty of safety. It was to retreat with his artillery and baggage by the Col de Riba and the banks of the Francoli; to begin the march that evening; not to seek the enemy, but not to refuse battle if a favourable opportunity should be offered. Marti represented that to take this line was not only seeking the enemy, but putting it in their power to bring on an action upon ground advantageous to themselves. But Reding certainly had not come to this determination in the view of bringing on a battle, without incurring the responsibility of such a measure. He suffered some provision carts to be cut off by a reconnoitring party almost under his eyes, without permitting his troops to resent the insult; . . . they were tired, he said, and he would not weaken the main body by sending out any detachments. Nor could Doyle prevail upon him to make his retreat by day. It was commenced at seven in the evening, in good order and with all possible silence.

St. Cyr, who was at this time with Pino's division at Pla, had ordered Souham never to lose sight of Reding's movements.

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*Cabañes,*  
c. 15.

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Battle of  
Valls.

Feb. 25.

That General occupied Valls ; he had entered it on a market day, and supplied his hungry troops with the corn brought thither from Aragon and the plain of Urgel, as if there had been no enemy to fear ! His advanced guard was to the north of that town, having its left upon the Francoli ; his right was in the direction of Pla, and he had a post at Picamoxons, the point at which Reding must debouche upon the plain of Valls, if he went either by the valley of Montblanch or the Col de Lilla. At this point Souham's orders were to give him battle ; though some apprehension was entertained that he might pass by the Col de Cabra, with the view of cutting off the French from Barcelona. No such thought had ever entered Reding's mind\*. The narrowness of the passes and the badness of the road made the night march slower than had been calculated ; at five in the morning, however the vanguard under Castro and half the centre had passed Valls, leaving the enemy's camp-fires on the left. They were proceeding silently and in the best order, and no advanced post of the enemy had yet been discovered, when, as the General was passing a little bridge, a volley of musketry opened upon him within pistol shot. This unexpected attack occasioned a momentary disorder : measures, however, were immediately

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\* M. St. Cyr (p. 118) represents Reding as seeking this action by General Doyle's advice ; but it is certain that his intention was not to risk one. The French Commander renders justice to this brave and unfortunate General in all respects, except that he always imputes to him a presumptuous confidence, which Reding never felt. The constitution of his mind disposed him to the very opposite error. This is not asserted speculatively, but upon his own statements and other equally incontestable documents. M. St. Cyr says that Reding escaped in the ensuing action from the hands of a young officer only because that officer had the generosity not to kill him, as he might easily have done, when a pistol shot put an end to his own life. The condition in which Reding escaped does not seem to show that there was much desire of sparing him.

taken to prevent the enemy from cutting off that half of the army which had not yet come up ; the troops took their station with alacrity and precision ; the artillery on both sides began to play : the French descended from the heights of Valls in several columns ; they were met by the Spaniards, and attacked so vigorously, that notwithstanding the advantage of the ground, they were driven back.

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All the information which Reding had previously obtained concerning the enemy agreed in affirming that they had no artillery. It was therefore not without surprise that he had found two batteries open upon him. They had been silenced, however ; the Spaniards had behaved even to his wish, and a manifest advantage had been gained. But when the French had been driven to the heights, reinforcements arrived which enabled them to make a stand, and Reding perceived by their smoke-signals and their rockets, that they were communicating with a fresh body of troops. It was now noon ; his own men had been marching all night, and having been several hours in action, they began to feel exhausted. He therefore concentrated them, sent off the whole of the baggage, and determined to continue his retreat, as soon as they should have taken food or rest. The position which he had chosen was a good one, behind the bridge of Goy, on the right bank of the Francoli, and covered by that river. But time for rest was not allowed them. Pino's division had now come up, and St. Cyr himself had arrived. That General, who was desirous of gaining such a victory as should give the French the utmost confidence in what was called their moral superiority, forbade his artillery to fire ; though the opportunity for firing with advantage was such, that the commandant feigned not to understand the order, and when after a third discharge it was repeated to him in the most formal manner, expressed the unwillingness with which he obeyed. That of the

CHAP. Spaniards was well served; and, when having crossed the  
 XXIII. river and ascended the height, the French proceeded with the  
 bayonet to the attack, they advanced under a fire of musketry  
 1809. which could not have been more regular at a review. The right  
 February. wing of the Spaniards was threatened, but the main attack was  
 St. Cyr, made upon the left, and this the enemy succeeded in breaking  
 125. between four and five in the evening, about an hour after the  
 action had been renewed. The Spaniards then began to retreat  
 in good order for the next half hour, . . . but then as usual fear and  
 insubordination prevailed as soon as hope was lost. Reding him-  
 self, when it was no longer possible to perform the part of a  
 general, was distinguished for his personal bravery. A body of  
 French dragoons surrounded him and some of his staff: two of  
 his aide-de-camps were killed, and he himself received five sabre  
 wounds from a French Colonel, with whom he was personally  
 engaged. The cavalry rendered little service in covering the  
 retreat; but the infantry of the right and centre, and part of  
 the left, retired through the vineyards, where the horse could  
 not pursue them. The other part of the broken wing took to  
 the mountains, and made their way to Tortosa.

*Cabañes,*  
*c. 15.*  
*St. Cyr,*  
*117, 126.*

*The French*  
*received at*  
*Reus.*

The French estimated their own loss in this action at about a thousand men, that of the Spaniards at four; . . . the Spaniards supposed it to be about two thousand on either side. In fact the evening was so far advanced, that they suffered comparatively little in their flight. Reding reached Tarragona that night; . . . that city was only three leagues from the scene of action, and thither the greater part of the dispersed troops found their way before morning, some corps in good order, others in small parties. Some made for Reus, and from thence to Cambrils and Col de Balaguer. The artillery and baggage fell into the enemy's hands. On the following day Souham entered Reus, a rich commercial city, second only in size and importance to

Barcelona. The inhabitants had not, as had every where till now been done, forsaken it; on the contrary the municipality went out to receive the conquerors, and agreed to raise a contribution for the use of the army. Their wealth may explain a conduct which, in the then state of public feeling, surprised the French\* themselves. This supply came at a time when the paymaster had not a single *sous* in the chest. Resources of every kind were also found here, and here were some thousand of sick or wounded Spaniards in the hospital, whom St. Cyr sent to Tarragona. This measure led to a negotiation with Reding, by which it was agreed that in future whatever patients might be found in the hospitals should not be regarded as prisoners, but allowed to remain where they were, and to rejoin their respective armies upon their recovery.

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*Arrange-  
ment con-  
cerning the  
wounded.*

*St. Cyr,  
127-8.*

*Alarm at  
Tortosa.*

The enemy now occupied Villaseca and the port of Salon, and thus cut off Tarragona from all communication by land with the rest of Spain. They profited by their success with their wonted alacrity; and yet they might have improved it farther, and gained a far more important advantage than the victory itself, had they been aware of the alarm which prevailed at Tortosa, and of the condition in which that fortress had been left. The Governor and the Junta sent for General Doyle, who, as far as personal influence and example could go, possessed in an extraordinary degree the talent of exciting activity and creating confidence. He found the fortifications in such a state that they could not have resisted a coup-de-main; and the city so ill provided, that if the works could have resisted an enemy, it must

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\* It is said by M. St. Cyr that they acted by Reding's advice, and that by so advising them he saved the city from inevitable destruction. But this does not accord with Reding's own language, for in a part of his dispatch to the Central Junta which was not published, he mentions this conduct of the Cabildo with indignation.

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1809.

*February.*

*Lazan separates his army from Reding's command.*

presently have been reduced by famine. Provisions were now collected by requisition from the neighbourhood, receipts being given for the amount (for the public money had been constantly ordered to Tarragona), and the citizens were called out to work upon the ramparts; so that the place was put in a state for resisting any sudden attack. There were but two roads by which artillery could be brought against it: one was defended by the fort at Col de Balaguer; but from that post the troops at this important crisis were deserting for want of provisions. By General Doyle's exertions it was immediately stored, and the other road, through Falcat, which there had been no attempt to guard, was occupied according to his directions by 600 Somatenes. This was a position which could well be maintained by a small force, and this timely occupation prevented the advance of a French detachment which had been ordered thither. The Tortosans were soon encouraged by the arrival of the Marques de Lazan, who brought his army there when they might better have kept the field. The want of cordiality between this General and Reding had been sufficiently manifested to be known even by the enemy; and Lazan now formally announced, that having previously been appointed second in the Aragonese army by the Cortes of that kingdom, he had upon the loss of his brother succeeded to the command in chief; and considering himself as independent of the commander in Catalonia, should thenceforth look upon the protection of Aragon as his proper business: but he would do whatever he could consistently with this object, for covering Catalonia on that side. Reding represented this to the war-minister as an act by which Lazan crippled the Catalan army, and exposed his own troops to certain destruction, without the possibility of effecting any service; and instructions were accordingly dispatched from Seville that he should obey Reding's orders. The same spirit of provincialism was prevailing in Va-



lencia ; a corps of 6000 men from that kingdom was stationed at Morela, with orders to remain there, though neither this place nor that part of the country were threatened, but because that position covers Valencia on the side of Aragon. There was neither unity in counsel nor in command ; . . each of these three provinces had its own army, acting upon its own views, and of course all acting without effect.

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1809.  
*May.*

And yet St. Cyr had mistaken the character of the Spaniards when he supposed that the battle of Valls would convince them of their moral inferiority to the conquerors. Far from it ; it had even raised the spirit of the Catalans ; and the Central Junta spake of it in their proclamations as one of those defeats in which ill fortune brought with it no dishonour, but rather hope and confidence. It proved to the Spanish army far more disastrous in its consequences than in itself ; they were crowded into Tarragona, and the French commander, by sending thither several thousand sick and wounded from the hospitals at Reus, increased or perhaps occasioned an infectious disease which broke out among them, and was aggravated by the uncleanness arising from want of linen, the neglect of those precautions, and the destitution of all those means without which armies cannot be kept in health. We reconcile ourselves to the slaughter of a battle or a siege, because such destruction is the business of war, and the men engaged in it take their chance bravely for the evils which they are inflicting upon others ; . . but there is somewhat at which the heart revolts in making a league with pestilence or famine, however much the system of war may require and justify it. St. Cyr knew that disease was doing his work in Tarragona ; officers as well as men were dying in such numbers, that if he could have kept them thus shut up within the seat of the contagion, more would perish in a month than he could have hoped to destroy in four pitched battles. He deter-

*Mortality  
in Tarragona.*

*St. Cyr,  
193.*

CHAP. mined therefore to remain in the plain of Tarragona as long as  
 XXIII. his army could be supplied with a quarter of a ration.

1809.

*March.*

*St. Cyr re-  
 moves to the  
 plain of  
 Vicq.*

But the Spaniards were not idle. The Somatenes were once more in force and in activity ; and the left of the Catalan army, which had not been engaged in the defeat, harassed the enemy on their right and in the rear. When Reding had formed his unfortunate plan of operation, 10,000 Miquelets and Somatenes, under Wimpffen, had been sent beyond the Llobregat to take advantage of any insurrection that might be attempted in Barcelona. These irregular troops, when they had no longer to depend upon the combinations of the Commander-in-chief, but were left to themselves to carry on their own kind of warfare in their own way, began again to acquire that superiority which such warfare assured them ; Chabran's division, harassed by repeated assaults, fell back successively from Igualada upon Llacuna, S. Quinto, and Villa Franca ; and the Spaniards in that quarter, full of hope as ever, resumed the blockade of Barcelona. For a time they cut off St. Cyr's communication with that city, and their position excited no trifling uneasiness in Duhesme and Lechi, who well knew the disposition of the inhabitants. But the English squadron, the sight of which always afforded hope to the Barcelonans, was compelled by a heavy gale to stand out to sea : and Chabran's division, recovering the ground and the reputation which it had lost, once more broke up the irregular blockade. St. Cyr meantime maintained his position as long as it was possible to feed his army there ; he then determined upon moving it into the little plain of Vicq, where he expected to find corn, and to remain till the harvest should be ripe in the environs of Gerona, where he foresaw that in the course of the siege his army must be established. The battle of Valls had not given that army the confidence which their General was so desirous they should possess ; there was in fact an

impression upon them which they had never felt in any other service; they knew that they were not the objects of mere military hostility, in which there is neither enmity nor ill will between man and man, but that they had the hatred and the curses of the whole country. Their removal now they looked upon as a retreat, and they knew what were the dangers of a retrograde movement in Catalonia. St. Cyr better understood how little able Reding was to take advantage of such a movement at that time; and for the purpose of showing his men that he could defy the Spaniards, while at the same time he was careful not to wound the feelings of a General whom he respected, he sent an officer to Tarragona with a flag of truce, and a letter stating that, as circumstances rendered it necessary for him to draw nearer the French frontier, he should depart from Valls the following day at noon, and if General Reding would send a detachment thither at that time, the hospital which had been formed in that town, and which it was of such consequence for him to preserve, considering the number of his sick, should be consigned to him as it stood. It was well furnished from the houses which the inhabitants of Valls had abandoned on the entrance of the enemy. The French commander left only a very few wounded men, who were not in a state to bear removal; because he doubted whether Reding would be able to make the Spaniards observe the agreement which had been concluded upon that subject. As far, however, as opportunity was given, it was properly performed.

This done, after having remained something more than three weeks in the plain of Tarragona, the French retreated toward the Llobregat. Chabot's division occupied at this time Monblanch, for the double purpose of rendering it more difficult for Reding to communicate with Wimpffen, and of preventing the latter from holding any communication with Lerida. A brisk firing in a quarter where no alarm was looked for, occasioned

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1809.  
March.

St. Cyr,  
134, 145-7.