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order as the nature of the ground would permit. A few guns were spiked and abandoned; not from necessity, but because it was more advantageous to fire them to the last than bring them off. The two armies were near, and in sight of each other, when night closed. Blake expected to be attacked the next day; but as the enemy manifested no such intention, he rightly concluded that they were manœuvring either with a view to surround him, or to threaten his rear. Accordingly he ascertained that 3000 French were posted at Torrecilla. About two hours before nightfall a brisk fire was opened upon his left, with the intent of making him change his position, in which case his rear would have been exposed to this detachment. But the attack was repulsed, as was a second which the enemy made upon the centre a little before midnight. The Spanish general then retreated to Belchite in perfect order, which he did without being molested. The next day the enemy came again in sight, and Blake, who had hitherto had no reason to distrust his troops, took a position in full expectation of being attacked on the morrow, and in good hope of repelling the enemy as completely as he had done before Alcañiz.

*Flight of
the Spaniards.*

Belchite, once the capital of a petty Moorish sovereignty, stands upon the slope of some bending hills, which almost surround it: toward Zaragoza the country is level, covered with gardens and olive-yards. The position which Blake had taken was singularly advantageous; his right was completely safe from the enemy's cavalry, and protected by a chapel, with a number of outbuildings and two large sheep-folds, which were all pierced for musketry: to attack the centre, the enemy's horse must be exposed to a tremendous cross fire, and the left had their retreat upon the strong post which was occupied by the other wing. Blake's arrangement was so made, that if the enemy, as he expected, should make a great effort on his

left, three columns might be brought to attack them on that side; and if unsuccessful, they could have fallen back upon the centre and the right flank, being meantime assailable only in front, and protected the while by their artillery, which also had its retreat secure to the same strong post. He had harangued his troops, and they made a thousand protestations that they would do their duty. The attack was made, as he had expected, on the left; four or five shot were fired on both sides, and the French threw a few shells, which wounded four or five men. But upon one shell falling into the middle of a regiment, the men were seized with a sudden panic and fled; the panic instantly spread, . . . a second and a third regiment ran away without firing a gun, and in a few minutes the generals were left with none but a few officers in the midst of the position. With all their efforts they could not rally more than two hundred men, and nothing was left for them but to make for the nearest strong place, leaving artillery, baggage, and every thing to the enemy.

The defeat was in all its circumstances so thoroughly disgraceful, . . . so disheartening and hopeless in its consequences, that Blake almost sunk under it. He told the government that he was incapable of entering into details, but considered it due to the nation that a judicial inquiry should be instituted into the conduct of a general under whose command an army of from 13,000 to 14,000 effective men had been utterly routed and dispersed. "He knew that he had not been culpable," he said, "but after so many proofs of his unhappy fortune, he wished not to be employed any longer in command. As a Spaniard and a soldier he was still ready to serve his country in an inferior station, and he requested only that some portion of his present pay might be continued for the support of his family, or a part of the *Encomienda* which had recently been conferred upon him, but which it was not fitting that so useless

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Blake offers his resignation, which is not accepted.

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 XXIII. accepted his proffered resignation, nor instituted any inquiry.
 1809. The former would have been unjust towards a brave and ho-
 June. nourable officer whose conduct was unimpeachable, and his
 character above suspicion; the latter must have been altogether
 nugatory. The panic had been instantaneous and general, and
 it was impossible to punish a whole army. All that could be
 done was to publish the whole details, in no degree attempting
 to disguise or palliate the injury and disgrace which had been
 brought on the nation: to declare that the commander-in-
 chief and the generals had done their duty, and retained the
 full confidence of the country, and to brand the fugitives in a
 body, as men who were the opprobrium of the Spanish name,
 and had rendered themselves objects of execration to their
 countrymen.

The men who in their panic had thus lost all use of reason, as well as all sense of honour and of duty, were not likely, when they found themselves in safety, and recovered their senses, to be affected by this denunciation. A religion which is contented to accept the slightest degree of attrition, and keeps short reckonings with conscience, had taught them to be upon easy terms with themselves; . . . moreover the moral disease was so endemic, that it had ceased to be disgraceful: the greater part of these men had behaved well at Alcañiz and in the subsequent operations; and no doubt expected to be more fortunate on a better occasion, for a report was raised that the French had received so great a reinforcement at the moment of commencing the action as to render resistance hopeless; and though this was indignantly contradicted by Blake, the men found an excuse for themselves in believing it. The disgrace was deeply felt by the government, and by the general whose hopes were blasted by it in the blossom; but the Spaniards

were in no degree disheartened, not even those upon whom it brought immediate danger; and when the French, in the course of a few days, attempted to carry Mequinenza by a *coup de main*, they were beaten off with considerable loss.

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Commence-
ment of the
guerillas.

At this time also that system of warfare began which soon extended throughout Spain, and occasioned greater losses to the French than they suffered in all their pitched battles. The first adventurers who attracted notice by collecting stragglers from their own dispersed armies, deserters from the enemy, and men who, made desperate by the ruin of their private affairs in the general wreck, were ready for any service in which they could at the same time gratify their just vengeance and find subsistence, were Juan Diaz Porlier in Asturias, and Juan Martin Diaz in Old Castille, the latter better known by his appellation of the * Empecinado. A lawyer, by name Gil, commenced the same course in the Pyrenean valleys of Navarre and Aragon. After a short career of some two months he disappeared, and Egoaguerra, who renewed the attempt, withdrew from that wilder way of life to engage in Doyle's battalion. The third adventurer who at this time raised the spirits of the Pyrenean provinces, and for a while gave employment to the French in Navarre, was that D. Mariano de Renovales by whom the Convent of S. Joseph had been so gallantly defended at the last siege

Porlier.

The Empe-
cinado.

Renovales
in the val-
ley of Ron-
cal.

* Various explanations have been offered of this name. One account says, that upon finding his family murdered by the French, he smeared his face with pitch, and made a vow of vengeance. Another, that he was so called because of his swarthy complexion. But in the account of his life it is said that all the inhabitants of Castrillo de Duero, where he was born, have this nickname indiscriminately given them by their neighbours, in consequence of a black mud, called *pecina*, deposited by a little stream which runs through the place; and the appellation became peculiar to him from his celebrity.

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of Zaragoza. Having been made prisoner when the city surrendered, he had effected his escape on the way to France, and collected in the valleys of Roncal and Anso a body of men and officers, who, like himself, believed that the scandalous manner in which the terms of capitulation had been violated by the French released them from any obligation of observing it. They had probably agreed to rendezvous in these valleys as many of them as could escape, and his intention was to form them into a body, and rejoin the army. But when it was known that they were collecting there, and that the mountaineers, confiding in their presence, refused obedience to the intrusive government, 600 men were ordered from the garrison of Pamplona to enter the valleys at six points, and reduce them to subjection.

*He defeats a
French detachment.
May 21.*

Men who, like Renoales and his officers, had served at Zaragoza, were neither to be lightly surprised nor easily taken. They were upon the alert, the mountaineers were ready for their assailants, and of the column which advanced against the little town of Anso not a man escaped. The four columns which entered by Navasques, Uztarroz, Salvatierra, and Fago, effected their junction; but the movements of the Spaniards were concerted and executed with as much precision; and after two days' fighting the French were driven to the foot of a high rock called Undari, where all that survived, seventy-eight in number, with their commander, the chef de batallon, Puisalis, were taken prisoners: the sixth column was not engaged, forty men having deserted from it before they entered the valleys; the others thought it imprudent to proceed, and thus they were preserved from suffering a like fate with their companions. Puisalis being severely wounded, was lodged by Renoales in his own quarters, and treated with the utmost care. The other prisoners were sent with a guard of forty men to be delivered to General Blake, but the ruffian, Buruchuri by name, who had charge of the

escort, when he had advanced far enough to be under no control, massacred them all; . . . a crime which he appears to have committed with impunity. Puisalis was more fortunate; as soon as his wounds were healed, he was sent with five other prisoners to Blake, and reaching him a little before the rout at Belchite, recovered his liberty at that time.

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This intelligence cheered the Aragonese and the Catalans after that most disgraceful dispersion, and both Lazan and Blake took measures for assisting and encouraging the mountaineers. Ammunition was sent from Lerida; Renovales himself was indefatigable in his exertions: he collected arms from all the villages within reach, sent for armourers from Eybar and Placencia, and set up an armoury in Roncal. A second force was dispatched to crush the growing insurrection. The valley of Roncal was the part which they attacked; the Spaniards were driven from the point of Yso, where their advance was stationed; but Renovales arrived in time with 200 men of the vale, and as many more from that of Anso; he drove the enemy out, and pursued them as far as Lumbier, with the loss of more than forty killed; and twice that number of wounded were removed on the following day to Pamplona. This second defeat had so weakened the garrison of that city, that the Spaniards now cut off their communication both with Aragon and with France; they scoured the roads in all directions; not a day passed in which some party of the invaders, who hitherto had travelled in safety in those parts, was not intercepted and cut off, and sometimes the enemy were pursued to the very gates.

A second party defeated.

June 15.

The Duque de Mahon, one of those traitors to their country who had sided with the Intruder, in full confidence that they were taking the safe part, was at that time Viceroy of Navarre: and he addressed a proclamation to the inhabitants of Roncal, affecting to believe that they had taken no share in the insur-

Proclamation of the Duque de Mahon.

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 XXIII. the purpose of apprehending and punishing the disturbers of the
 1809. peace; and assuring them that the present struggle was excited
June. solely by the personal resentment of certain individuals, whose
 interests were opposed to those of the nation, of the clergy, and
 of the nobles. If they should be seduced by these deceivers,
 the result could only be, the loss, if not of their lives, yet cer-
 tainly of their liberty, and of that happiness which they had hi-
 therto enjoyed. But, on the contrary, if they proved themselves
 worthy of the King's favour, by their obedience to his government
 and their cordiality with the allied French troops, it was his in-
 tention and that of the French commandant at Pamplona, Ge-
 neral D'Agoult, to represent their good behaviour to the throne;
 that when the arms of the Emperor, now victorious at Vienna
 and throughout all Italy, should expel the enemies of public order
 from Spain, they might partake in the benefits which were to be
 expected from so wise and humane a prince. This proclamation
 was answered by Renovales with the bitterest scorn. He ad-
 dressed the viceroy as Ex-Duque de Mahon, telling him, if he
 disliked that style, that the person who used it was a Spaniard,
 and one who respected the orders of his sovereign; which sove-
 reign, acting through the Supreme Central Junta, had proscribed
 him as a traitor, and therefore he had now no title. He re-
 proached him with ingratitude towards the house of Bourbon,
 with disgracing his ancestors, with sacrificing his religion, his
 king, his country, and his honour. He told him that the people
 of Roncal, like those of Anso, were attached to their own in-
 stitutions, and true to their lawful king; that they had fought
 for him with a spirit like that of their ancestors; that the magi-
 stracy had encouraged the enthusiasm of the people; and that
 he, unworthy as he was, had enjoyed the honour of leading them
 to victory. They despised his favour, and they despised his

June 28.

threats; and if he would march out at the head of a French division, and fix time and place where the question between them might be put to the decision of the sword, he, Renovales, would meet him there, a true Spaniard in the cause of a rightful though an oppressed king, against a false one in the cause of a potentate whom his followers impiously called almighty; and if the Ex-Duque would appoint this meeting, that almightiness should be tried.

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Five persons who were charged with having joined the insurgents of Roncal were put to death at Pamplona upon the Intruder's law of extermination against all who should take arms against him. The gallows was erected without the gate of S. Nicolas, and the sufferers were executed with their faces toward Roncal, and left hanging there. The proclamation which announced their punishment, declared, that for every person, whether soldier or countryman, who should be murdered by the banditti, a prisoner who had belonged to them should be put to death. This was answered by an act of retaliation. Renovales seized five persons who were acting under the intrusive government, beheaded them, and exposed their bodies on the high road, with an inscription on their shoulders, saying they were agents of the French robbers, who had been thus punished by Spanish justice. He declared, that, for every Spaniard whom the French should put to death, he would behead two French prisoners; and that if the commandant of Jaca continued to plunder the people and the churches, and burn the houses, as he had begun, he would, for every house that should be burnt, set a village on fire on the French side of the Pyrenees, instead of promoting peace and friendly intercourse, as he had hitherto done, between the peasants on the frontier.

*Executions
and reprisals.*

General D'Agoult tried what might be done with Renovales by conciliatory means. He thanked him for his treatment of

*Attempts to
win over
Renovales.*

CHAP. XXIII. Puisalis, and of those prisoners whom Buruchuri had butchered; a crime of which he entirely acquitted the Spanish officer. He applied to him now, he said, by General Suchet's orders; and joined his own intreaties to that General's offers. First he requested him to send back twenty-five artillery-men who had been captured by his people on the road from Tafalla, and who he understood were well treated. Renovales, he observed, owed him this in consideration of the manner in which his prisoners were used, though more than six and thirty officers had broken their parole, beginning with the Camp-Marshal Villava. After experiencing every kindness, he had found means to escape by a bribe of 4000 livres, and was said to be now in Roncal, having thus dishonoured himself. If Renovales also had broken his word by escaping when he was a prisoner of war, there had been something in his conduct which justified it; and if he would now pacificate Roncal and the vallies of Aragon, and restore order there, he would entitle himself to esteem and to the King's favour. "You are supporting a chimera," said the French commander; "your troops are routed on all sides. You reckon upon the English. I know them better than you do; and if you desire the good of your country, take the advice of an old soldier, who went through the Revolution as a royalist, and joined the present government when he saw that the only man capable of supporting it had appeared. You are in a like position. The Bourbons exist no longer upon the throne. The Emperor and his family have superseded them. Let us be his faithful friends and allies, and render our country happy, instead of contributing to its ruin."

Renovales answered, the artillery-men were his prisoners, thought themselves fortunate in being so, and would have entered among the troops if he would have allowed them. Villava was not in Roncal, nor in the district under his command;

wherever he was, he would be able to answer for his own conduct in making his escape. "If I did the same," said he, "on the way to Pamplona, it was because the French had violated a solemn capitulation. I was the first person whom General Morlot, in contempt both of his word and honour, and in breach of the terms, plundered of horse and baggage; and if a French general may be allowed thus to disregard so sacred a right, I know not why a Spanish prisoner should be withheld from attempting to escape. Wonder not at seeing me at the head of the Spaniards, since I have seen General Junot in Zaragoza at the head of the French, after his * capitulation in Portugal." To all the offers which were held out to him, he replied, that he was and would continue true to his legitimate King, whose faithful subjects would freely shed their blood in his cause, and would yet reverse the scene, and re-establish him upon his rightful throne. "I know," said he, "that your Excellency feels the injustice of the cause which France is supporting; . . . that you hear the voice of honour in your heart, and that you know what is the right path." General Plique, commander of the citadel at Zaragoza, endeavoured also to bring over Renovales to the Intruder's service, representing to him that the Austrian army was destroyed, that Russia had given the most public proofs of its connexion with France, and that the French had obtained a most decisive victory † in S. Domingo. No efforts, no combination of events could now prevent the complete establishment

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* Renovales evidently did not know the terms of that capitulation.

† There could be no intention of deceiving Renovales, nor was a victory in S. Domingo likely to have any effect in determining his conduct. But this mention of one may show how little the French officers knew of public events; nothing in fact but what their own government chose to let them know, . . . and that government gave them always as much falsehood as truth.