

CHAP. they should have given orders for a forward movement of such
XXV. importance, without such co-operation, they hoped perhaps
1809. to deceive the enemy, by reports that Lord Wellington and
November. Alburquerque would advance along the valley of the Tagus. The French were never able to obtain good intelligence of the English plans; they could, however, to a certain point, foresee them, as a skilful chess-player apprehends the scheme of an opponent who is not less expert than himself at the game; they had learnt to respect the British army in the field, but they thought the British Commander was more likely from caution to let pass an opportunity of success, than to afford the enemy one by rashness. This opinion they had formed from the events of the late campaign, being fully aware of the danger to which they had been exposed, and unacquainted with the difficulties which had frustrated Sir Arthur's plans, . . . difficulties indeed which they who were accustomed always to take whatever was needful for their armies either from friend or foe, without any other consideration than that of supplying their own immediate wants, would have regarded with astonishment, if not contempt. When Marshal Soult therefore prepared at this time to act against the Spaniards, the English force hardly entered into his calculations. He had 70,000 men available for immediate service in one direction. One corps of these, under Laborde, watched the Tagus, with an eye to Alburquerque's movements. Victor observed the roads from Andalusia to Toledo and Aranjuez, having his cavalry in advance at Madridejos and Consuegra; Sebastiani, with the fourth corps, was in the rear of Victor, securing the capital, from which neighbourhood a division had been sent to support Marchand after his defeat at Tamames. The reserve, under Mortier, was at Talavera; Gazan occupied Toledo with two weak regiments; and Joseph was with his guards at Aranjuez, relying upon the fortune of Napo-

leon, and now, when the Continent was effectually subdued, and reinforcements had already begun to enter the Peninsula, believing himself in secure possession of the crown of Spain.

On the 3d of November, Areizaga's army, consisting of 43,000 foot, 6600 cavalry, and sixty pieces of cannon, began their march from the foot of the Sierra Morena into the plains, taking with them eight days' provision. The advanced guard, of 2000 cavalry under Freire, were one day's march in front; the infantry followed in seven divisions, then the rest of the cavalry in reserve, and the head-quarters last, marching from twenty to thirty miles a day; they had no tents, and took up their quarters at night in the towns upon the road. They advanced forces by Daymiel on the left, others along the high road to Madrid, by Valdepeñas and Manzanares. The French retired before them, and in several skirmishes of cavalry the Spaniards were successful. Latour Maubourg escaped with a considerable body of horse from Madrilejos by the treachery of a deserter, who apprised him of his danger just in time for him to get out of the town as the Spaniards entered it. They continued their way through Tembleque to Dos Barrios; then, by a flank march, reached S. Cruz de la Zarza; threw bridges across the Tagus, and passed a division over. Here they took a position; the French pushed their patrols of cavalry near the town, and Areizaga drew out his army in order of battle. An action upon that ground did not suit the enemy, and the Spanish general was frantic enough to determine upon leaving the mountains, and giving them battle in the plain.

Baron Crossand, who was employed in Spain on a mission from Austria, was with the army, and, dreading the unavoidable consequences of such a determination, presented a memorial to Areizaga, reminding him, that only the preceding day he had admitted how dangerous it would be thus to hazard the welfare

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*Areizaga
advances
from the
Sierra Mo-
rena.*

*The Aus-
trian com-
missioner
remonstrates
against his
purpose.*

Nov. 16.

CHAP. of his country. None of the motives, he said, which should induce
 XXV. a prudent general to risk a battle were applicable in the present
 1809. case ; he had nothing to urge him forward, and the most fertile
 November. provinces of Spain were in his rear : by meeting the enemy upon
 their own ground, the advantage of position was voluntarily
 given them, and the superiority of numbers which the Spaniards
 possessed was not to be considered as an advantage, in their
 state of discipline ; so far indeed was it otherwise that the French
 founded part of their hopes upon the disorder into which the
 Spaniards would fall in consequence of their own multitude. A
 victory might procure the evacuation of Madrid and of the
 two Castilles, but these results were light in the balance when
 weighed against the consequences of defeat. The wisest plan of
 operations was to entrench himself upon the strong ground which
 the left bank of the Tagus afforded ; from thence he might send
 out detachments toward Madrid and in all directions, and act in
 concert with the Dukes of Parque and Alburquerque, patience
 and caution rendering certain their ultimate success.

*Battle of
 Ocaña.*

These representations were lost upon Areizaga ; he marched
 back to Dos Barrios, and then advanced upon Ocaña into the open
 country. About 800 French and Polish cavalry were in the town ;
 they were driven out by the Spanish horse ; a skirmish ensued, in
 which four or five hundred men fell on both sides. In this affair
 the French general Paris was borne out of the saddle by a
 lancer, and laid dead on the field. He was an old officer, whom
 the Spaniards represent as a humane and honourable man, re-
 gretting that he should have perished in such a cause. Areizaga
 bivouacque that night ; and the French, who had now collected
 the corps of Sebastiani and Mortier, under command of the
 latter, crossed the Tagus before morning. At daybreak Arei-
 zaga ascended the church tower of Ocaña, and seeing the array
 and number of the enemy, it is said that he perceived, when too

late, what would be the result of his blind temerity. He arrayed his army in two equal parts, one on each side the town ; and his second line was placed so near the first, that, if the first were thrown into disorder, there was not room for it to rally. Most of the cavalry were stationed in four lines upon the right flank, a disposition neither imposing in appearance nor strong in reality. The artillery was upon the two flanks.

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About seven in the morning, Zayas, who had often distinguished himself, attacked the French cavalry with the advanced guard, and drove them back. Between eight and nine the cannonade began. The Spanish artillery was well served ; it dismounted two of the French guns, and blew up some of their ammunition-carts. Mortier having reconnoitred the ground, determined to make his chief attack upon the right, and, after having cannonaded it for a while from a battery in his centre, he ordered Leval, with the Polish and German troops, to advance, and turn a ravine which extended from the town nearly to the end of this wing of the Spanish army. Leval formed his line in compact columns ; the Spaniards met them along the whole of their right wing, and their first line wavered. It was speedily reinforced ; the right wing was broken, and a charge of cavalry completed the confusion on this side. The left stood firm, and cheered Areizaga as he passed ; an able general might yet have secured a retreat, but he was confounded, and quitted the field, ordering this part of the army to follow him. Lord Macduff, who was with the Spaniards, then requested the second in command to assume the direction ; but while he was exerting himself to the utmost, the French cavalry broke through the centre, and the rout was complete. The Spaniards were upon an immense plain, every where open to the cavalry, by whom they were followed and cut down on all sides. Victor, who crossed the Tagus at Villa Mensiger, pursued all night. All

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their baggage was taken, almost all their artillery; according to the French account, 4000 were killed, and 26,000 made prisoners: on no occasion have the French had so little temptation to exaggerate. Their own loss was about 1700.

This miserable defeat was the more mournful, because the troops that day gave proof enough both of capacity and courage to show how surely, under good discipline and good command, they might have retrieved the military character of their country. No artillery could have been better served. The first battalion of guards, which was 900 strong, left upon the field fourteen officers, and half its men. Four hundred and fifty of a Seville regiment, which had distinguished itself with Wilson at Puerto de Baños, entered the action, and only eighty of them were accounted for when the day was over. Miserably commanded as the Spaniards were, there was a moment when the French, in attempting to deploy, were thrown into disorder, by their well-supported fire, and success was at that moment doubtful. The error of exposing the army in such a situation must not be ascribed wholly to incapacity in Areizaga, who had distinguished himself not less for conduct than courage at Alcañiz; it was another manifestation of the national character, of that obstinacy which no experience could correct, of that spirit which no disasters could subdue.

*Treatment
of the pri-
soners.*

There was none of that butchery in the pursuit by which the French had disgraced themselves at Medellin. The intrusive government had at that time acted with the cruelty which fear inspires; feeling itself secure now, its object was to take prisoners, and force them into its own service; and for this purpose a different sort of cruelty was employed. While the Madrid Gazette proclaimed that the French soldiers behaved with more than humanity to the captured Spaniards, that they might gratify their Emperor's brother by treating his misled subjects with this

kindness, the treatment which those prisoners received was in reality so brutal, that if the people of Madrid had had no other provocation, it would have sufficed for making them hate and execrate the Intruder, and those by whom his councils were directed. They were plundered without shame or mercy by the French troops, and any who were recognised as having been taken before, or as having belonged to Joseph's levies, were hurried before a military tribunal, and shot in presence of their fellows. Even an attempt to escape was punished with death by these tribunals, whose sentence was without appeal! They were imprisoned in the Retiro, and in the buildings attached to the Museum, where they were ill fed and worse used; and they who had friends, relations, or even parents, in Madrid, were neither allowed to communicate with, nor to receive the slightest assistance from them. By such usage about 8000 were forced into a service, from which they took the first opportunity to desert, most of them in the course of a few months having joined the guerillas.

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406.

The defeat of Areizaga drew after it that of the Duke del Parque. Too confident in his troops, he remained in his advanced situation, amid the open country of Castille, till the army which he had defeated was reinforced by Kellermann's division from Valladolid. The Duke knew there were 8000 French infantry and 2000 horse in Medina del Campo, and, thinking that this was all their force, took a position at Carpio, upon the only rising ground in those extensive plains, and there waited for their attack. The enemy advanced slowly, as if waiting for other troops to come up. Seeing this, the Duke gave orders to march against them, and the French retreated, fighting as they fell back, from about three in the afternoon till the close of day, when they entered Medina del Campo. The Duke then discovered that a far greater force than he had expected was at

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Tormes.*

hand, and fell back to his position at Carpio, there to give his troops rest, for they had been thirty hours without any. At midnight the French also retired upon their reinforcements. During the following day the Duke obtained full intelligence; it now became too evident that he could no longer continue in his advanced situation, and he began his retreat from Carpio in the night. In the evening of the next day he halted a few hours at Vittoria and Cordovilla, and at ten that night continued his march, being pursued by Kellermann, who did not yet come near enough to annoy him. On the morning of the 28th he reached Alba de Tormes, and there drew up his troops to resist the enemy, who were now close upon him. He posted them upon the heights which command the town on both sides of the Tormes, in order to cover his rear guard, the bridges, and the fords; the whole cavalry was on the left bank. General Lorcet began the attack, and was repulsed by the infantry and artillery: two brigades of French horse then charged the right wing of the Spaniards; their cavalry were ordered to meet the charge; whether from some accidental disorder, or sudden panic, they took to flight without discharging a shot, or exchanging a single sword stroke; part of them were rallied and brought back, but the same disgraceful feeling recurred; they fled a second time, and left the right flank of the army uncovered: the French then charged the exposed wing with an overpowering force, and, in spite of a brave resistance, succeeded in breaking through. The victorious cavalry then charged the left of the Spaniards; but here it was three times repulsed. Mendizabal and Carrera formed their troops into an oblong square, and every farther attempt of the enemy was baffled: night now came on; this body, taking advantage of the darkness, retreated along the heights on the left bank of the town, and the Duke then gave orders to fall back in the direction of Tamames. They marched

in good order till morning, when, as they were within eight miles of that town, and of the scene of their former victory, a small party of the enemy's horse came in sight, and a rumour ran through the ranks that the French were about to charge them in great force. The very men who had fought so nobly only twelve hours before now threw away firelocks, knapsacks, and whatever else encumbered them: the enemy were not near enough to avail themselves of this panic; and the Duke, with the better part of his troops, reached the Peña de Francia, and in that secure position halted to collect again the fugitives and stragglers. Kellermann spoke of 3000 men killed and 2000 prisoners; and all the artillery of the right wing was taken.

By this victory the French were enabled without farther obstacle to direct their views against Ciudad Rodrigo, and to threaten Portugal: and Lord Wellington removed in consequence from his position in the vicinity of Badajos to the north of the Tagus, there to take measures against the operations which he had long foreseen. Alburquerque's little army was now the only one which remained unbroken; but what was this against the numerous armies of the French? even if it were sufficient to cover Extremadura, what was there on the side of La Mancha to secure Andalusia, and Seville itself? Every effort was made to collect a new army under Areizaga at the passes of the Sierra, and to reinforce the Duke del Parque also; . . . but the danger was close at hand.

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CHAPTER XXVI.

SIEGE OF GERONA.

1809. WHILE the Central Junta directed its whole attention toward Madrid, and expended all its efforts in operations, so ill concerted and ill directed, that the disastrous termination was foreseen with equal certainty both by their friends and foes, Catalonia was left to defend itself; and a sacrifice of heroic duty, not less memorable than that which Zaragoza had exhibited, was displayed at Gerona.

Gerona.

Gerona (the Gerunda of the Romans, a place of such unknown antiquity that fabulous historians have ascribed its foundation to Geryon) is situated upon the side and at the foot of a hill where the little river Onar, which divides the city from the suburbs, falls into the Ter. Two centuries ago it was second only to Barcelona in size and importance; other places in the principality, more favourably situated for commerce, and less overlaid with monks and friars, had now outgrown it, for of about 14,000 inhabitants not less than a fourth were clergy and religioners. In the thirteenth century it was distinguished by the defence* which Ramon Folch of Cardona made there against Philip III. of France; a memorable siege, not only for the resolution with

* *Non est memoriæ . . . quod in castro vel civitate aliquâ tales fuerint defensores.*
Gesta Comitum Barcinonensium, Marca Hispanica, 568.

which Ramon held out, and for the ability with which he obtained honourable terms at last, concealing from Philip the extremity of famine to which the place was reduced, but also for the singular destruction which was brought upon the besiegers by a plague of * flies. Their bite is said to have been fatal to the

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* This would naturally be deemed miraculous, and the miracle was ascribed to St. Narcissus and other saints, whose graves the French had disturbed, and scattered their remains about. One statement is, that the flies proceeded from St. Narcissus's tomb. *Muscæ istæ partim erant lividæ, partim virides, in quâdam sui parte colorem rubeum denotantes.* (Gesta Com. Barcin. 569, ut supra.) *Ceterum, qui locorum periti sunt quæ circum Gerundam visuntur,* says the Archbishop Pierre de Marca, *ii testantur haud procul eâ urbe videri rupes ex quibus vulgò oriuntur etiamnum muscæ quales e sepulchro Sancti Narcissi prodiisse fabulantur. Quod si ita est, non ultra inquirendum est in earum originem quæ Gallico tum exercitui insultarunt, quas manifestum est ortas esse ex rupibus illis.* Marca Hispanica, 468.

The flies are described differently in the *Acta Sanctorum* (Mart. t. ii. 624), where the miracles of St. Narcissus are given *ex hispanico Ant. Vincentii Domenecci.* *Ex ipso sancti præsulis sepulchro exierunt innumera examina muscarum, cæruleo partim, partim viridi colore tinctarum, rubrisque striis dispunctarum; quæ virorum equorumque subingressæ nares, non priùs deserebant occupatos, quàm spiritum vitamque abstulissent, concidentibus humi mortuis. Tanti enim erat veneni efficacia, ut seu virum seu equum momordissent, morsum continuò mors sequeretur.* These authorities are given because they relate to a curious fact in natural history, . . . if there be any truth in the story; and that there was a plague of insects can hardly be doubted. That their bite was so deadly, and that they proceeded from the tomb, I should have hesitated as little as the reader to disbelieve, if some other accounts had not seemed to show that both these apparent improbabilities may be possible. It is said that one part of Louisiana is infested by a fly whose bite is fatal to horses. And about twenty years ago, at Lewes, when a leaden coffin, which had been interred about threescore years, was opened, the legs and thigh-bones of the skeleton were found to be "covered with myriads of flies, of a species, perhaps, totally unknown to the naturalist. The wings were white, and the spectators gave it the name of the coffin fly. The lead was perfectly sound, and presented not the least chink or crevice for the admission of air:" and the flies which were thus released are described as being active and strong on the wing.

If, however, some long lost species had re-appeared from the tomb, and multi-

CHAP. horses, of which such numbers died, that their carcasses pro-
 XXVI. duced pestilence; two-thirds of the army perished, and the re-
 1809. mainder found it necessary to retreat into their own country,
 carrying home in their coffins the chiefs who had led them into
 Spain. In the succession-war, Gerona was signalized by the
 desperate resistance which it made against Philip V. After it
 had fallen, the Catalans blockaded it during eight months; M.
 Berwick raised the blockade, and the French minister proposed
 to him to demolish the works; his plea was, that the expense of
 keeping a garrison there might be spared; but his intent, that
 the Spaniards might have one strong-hold the less upon their
 frontier. But Berwick required an order from Louis XIV. to
 warrant him in a proceeding which must necessarily offend the
 King of Spain; and Louis was then withheld by a sense of
 decency from directly ordering what he wished to have had done.
 The fortifications after that time had been so neglected, that
 when Arthur Young was there in 1787, he thought they were
 not strong enough to stop an army for half an hour: the old walls,
 however, had now been well repaired; and the city was also
 protected by four forts upon the high ground above it. But its
 principal defence was the citadel, called here, as at Barcelona,
 Monjuic, which commanded it from an eminence about sixty
 fathoms distant. This was a square fort, 240 yards in length
 on each side, with four bastions, and for outworks the four towers
 of Saints Luis, Narcis, Daniel, and Juan.

*Force of the
 garrison.*

*Vol. i. p.
 362, 646.*

The garrison amounted only to 3400 men, but they were
 commanded by Mariano Alvares, and the inhabitants were en-
 couraged by having twice driven the enemy from their walls.

plied so as to become a plague, it would have continued in the country. But if
 Pierre de Marca was rightly informed that a fly which corresponds in appearance to
 the description is still found there, it certainly possesses none of the tremendous
 powers which the legend ascribes to it.