

CHAP.

VIII.

1808.

*June.**Defeat of  
the Spaniards.**June 21.**June 24.**He approaches the  
city.*

when the Spaniards had no armies on foot, and every province was left to its own resources. Valencia was the point of most importance; the people were more willing to meet the danger than to wait for it; and with such a force as could be raised of peasantry, new levies, and a few regular troops, they occupied the entrance of a defile near Contreras, and the bridge over the river Cabriel. They were forced from thence with the loss of four pieces of cannon, the whole of their artillery; but they were not pursued like a routed enemy: the French deemed it expedient to proceed with caution in a country where the whole population was decidedly hostile, and the Spaniards took up a second and stronger position at Las Cabrillas, and in front of Las Siete Aguas. There also they were unable to withstand the attack of disciplined troops, well commanded, and well supplied with all the means of war; yet they made a brave resistance, retreating from one position to another; and when they fell back upon Valencia, as they had no cause for shame, they brought with them no feeling of despondency, and communicated no dismay, with which the arrival of a beaten army might under other circumstances have infected the people.

Moncey, on the other hand, had found a more determined resistance than he expected, and was disappointed of the succours which should have joined him from Catalonia. He has been censured for not advancing against the city with the utmost expedition, before the people had time to make preparations for resisting him; but knowing the anarchy which prevailed there, he might not unreasonably think that an interval of delay would either abate their ardour, or increase their confusion; if he failed to intimidate them into submission, he had reason to believe that the gates would be betrayed to him; and if the traitors who had engaged to perform this service should be detected, or fail in the execution, even in that case a successful

resistance could hardly have been contemplated by him as a possibility. In a military view Valencia indeed must then have appeared incapable of defence. Suburbs nearly as large as the city itself had grown up round the whole circle of its old brick walls, and the citadel was small, ill fortified, and altogether useless. In so large a city, for the population exceeded 80,000, a besieger might reckon upon the wealth, the fears, and the helplessness of a great portion of its inhabitants; and perhaps he might undervalue a people whom travellers had represented as relaxed by the effects of a delicious climate, by which, according to the proverbial reproach of their Castillian neighbours, all things were so debilitated, that in Valencia the men were grass, the grass water, the men women, and the women nothing.

On the day after his second victory Moncey wrote from his head-quarters at La Venta de Bunol, six leagues from the city, to the Captain-general, saying, that he was ordered by the Junta of government at Madrid to enter and restore tranquillity there, and promising to pardon the atrocious massacre which had been committed if he were received without opposition. The Junta appealed to the people with a spirit that inspired confidence: the very women exclaimed that death was better than submission; and Padre Rico, with a sword in one hand and a crucifix in the other, went through the streets exhorting his fellow citizens to exert themselves to the utmost, and die, if they were so called, like martyrs, in the cause of their country. The public opinion having been decidedly expressed, all persons capable of bearing arms without exception were ordered to repair to the citadel, and there provide themselves with weapons. The quantity of muskets was insufficient for the number who applied, and all the swords, of which there was a large stock, were delivered out, though many were without hilts. A few twelve and sixteen-pounders, with one twenty-pounder, were planted

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*Preparations for defence.*

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*The Spaniards defeated at Quarte.*

at the Puerta del Quarte, where the principal attack was expected; a great quantity of timber, which had just been floated down the river, was used in part to form a breastwork at this important point, and part in blocking up the entrance of the streets within the walls. The other gates were fortified, though less formidably; and the ensuing day was employed in filling the ditches with water, and cutting trenches across the road to impede the enemy's approach.

So little were the Valencians disheartened by their preceding defeats, that even now they would not wait for the French within their vantage ground. On the evening of the 27th Moncey found some 3000 of them under D. Joseph Caro, brother of the Marquis de Romana, posted about six miles from the city, behind the canal at the village of Quarte, where they had broken down the bridge. A severe action ensued: the mulberry trees, with which that delightful country is thickly planted, afforded cover to the Valencian marksmen, and before they were dislodged and defeated, the number of slain on both sides amounted to 1500. At eleven on the following morning the advanced guard of the city came in with the expected intelligence that the enemy were close at hand; and shortly afterwards a flag of truce arrived with a summons, saying, that if the French were permitted to enter peaceably, persons and property should be respected; but otherwise they would force their way with fire and sword. A short time for farther preparations was gained by assembling the parochial authorities, under the plea of consulting them; and then, in the name of the people, it was replied, that they preferred death to any capitulation. Moncey immediately gave orders for the attack. A smuggler, who, for the purpose of better concealing his intentions, affected to put himself foremost among the patriots, had undertaken to deliver up the battery upon which the Valencians depended in great part

for their defence, and which they had placed under the patronage of St. Catharine. He had engaged a sufficient number of accomplices; but the treason had been discovered on the preceding night: he and his associates were put to death; and when the French approached the battery, instead of finding it manned by traitors, they were received with a brisk and well-sustained fire.

The approach to the Puerta del Quarte was by a broad street leading straight for the gate. The Spanish commander, by a bold stratagem, ordered the gate to be opened; and when the French hastened forward, thinking either that their agents had done this, or that it was a mark of submission, a fire of grape was opened upon them, with effect equal to the most sanguine hopes of the defenders. The enemy drew back, leaving the ground covered with their dead. They then directed their efforts against the weakest point of the whole weak circuit of the walls, . . . so well were they always acquainted with whatever local circumstances might contribute to the success of their military operations. It was where the old gate of S. Lucia had been built up; but the battery which they erected against it had scarcely begun to play, before a well-directed fire from the Puerta de S. Vicente dismounted the guns, and killed the men who were employed there. It was now manifest from the determined spirit of the Valencians, that if Moncey could have forced his way within the walls, his army was not numerous enough for the civic war which it would have been compelled to wage from house to house, and from street to street. After persevering in vain attempts from one till eight in the evening, he became convinced of this unwelcome truth, and withdrew for the night to his head-quarters between Mislata and Quarte, about a league from the city. To maintain his position there was impossible: he retreated, leaving part of his artillery, and suffering from

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*They re-  
pulse the  
French  
from Va-  
lencia.*

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*Moncey re-  
treats into  
Castille.**Movements  
of the  
French in  
Andalusia.*

the peasantry, and the parties who harassed his retreat, that vengeance which Murat had provoked, and which the conduct of the French wherever they were successful had exasperated. An attempt was made to intercept him on his way, and inclose him between the Valencian and Murcian forces: the plan was well conceived, and he had twice to attack and defeat the enemy, who had taken post in his rear, before he could reach Almanza. He had now effected his retreat out of the kingdom of Valencia, but his position was still so insecure, that it was deemed necessary to fall back from Almanza to S. Clemente, nearer the main force of the French in the two Castilles; there while the Valencians were exulting in the deliverance which they had obtained, he collected artillery and stores, and waited for reinforcements which would enable him to renew the attack with means that might ensure success.

The failure of the French in Valencia would have been amply compensated if they could have reduced Andalusia to obedience, and for this more important object greater and more commensurate efforts were made. One of the first acts of Murat after he reached Madrid had been to prepare for securing Cadiz. General Dupont was appointed governor of that city soon after the abdications at Bayonne had been effected; and he had commenced his march towards the south, when he was diverted to Toledo, to repress some tumults by which the people there had manifested their temper, before the insurrection in the capital kindled the whole kingdom. The apprehension of that insurrection, or the determined intention of provoking some such crisis, made Murat deem it expedient to keep the whole of his force within call. Dupont, therefore, was detained at Toledo; but when the disposition of the Andalusians was known, and fears were entertained for the French squadron at Cadiz, he was dispatched thither with a force esteemed fully equal

to a service which, momentous as it was, was not thought difficult to be performed. He began his march at the end of May, and crossing the Sierra Morena without opposition, arrived on the third of June at Andujar. There he obtained the unwelcome intelligence that a Junta had been formed at Seville, and that not that province alone, but Granada, Cordoba, and Jaen also had declared against the French. Proceeding, therefore, now, as in an enemy's country, he occupied Montoro, El Carpio, and Bujalance, and throwing a bridge over the Guadalquivir at El Carpio, passed some of his corps to the right bank, and proceeded with the main body along the left to the bridge of Alcolea, where the Spaniards had taken a strong position. The bridge is very long, consisting of twenty arches, constructed of black marble; and the Spaniards had erected a redoubt to command the approach. They had planted some batteries upon an eminence, and confiding in these defences, had not thought it necessary to destroy the bridge. Want of skill, rather than of courage, rendered these preparations ineffectual: the *tête-du-pont* and the village were carried after a brave resistance. The way was now open; but when the French began to pass, a fire was opened which swept the bridge, and made the bravest of the assailants for a moment hesitate. A lieutenant of grenadiers, by name Ratelot, whose courage was worthy of a better cause, advanced to the middle of the bridge alone, and placing his hat upon his sword, waved it over his head, crying *Vive l'Empereur!* and calling his comrades to follow him. His example roused a brave spirit, which was only the more excited by the sight of his death. They crossed, and attacked the Spaniards with all the advantages which discipline gives to courage; and at the same time the division which had passed the river at El Carpio came up, and falling upon their left, completed their defeat. The French without delay advanced against Cordoba. A camp

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*G. Dupont  
defeats the  
Spaniards  
at the  
bridge of  
Alcolea.*

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*June.*

*Cordoba entered and pillaged by the French.*

had been formed before that city with the intention of defending it; but the routed troops brought dismay with them; and the Cordobans, at the approach of danger, chose rather to rely upon their walls than their lines. Among the arms which they abandoned there were many of English manufacture, and others which, for their antiquity and unusual form, became objects of curiosity to the conquerors. Resolute men might have defended weaker walls than those of Cordoba, which were partly the work of the Romans, partly of the Moors; but stronger fortifications would not have afforded security unless they had been better defended. In two hours the gates were forced, the troops and the new levies retreated or fled towards Ecija, and the city was at Dupont's mercy.

*Dupont unable to advance.*

Though by this easy conquest the French were enabled to enrich themselves with pillage, they were far from feeling themselves at ease. The news from Cadiz was of the worst kind; their squadron had been captured there, and the Spaniards were in communication with the English. The only considerable body of Spanish troops in the peninsula, under D. Francisco Xavier Castaños, which had been stationed in the camp of S. Roque, had heartily entered into the national cause; and the English from Gibraltar (which in the hands of England was now more serviceable to Spain than it had ever been made injurious to her) had assisted him with money, and with arms for the new levies. The alliance with England enabled the Spaniards also to bring over troops from Ceuta, who had been sent to garrison that place early in the year, because of a rumour that the English were intending to attack it. On all sides the insurrection was spreading; and the armed peasantry had occupied the passes of the Sierra, to cut him off from retreat and from reinforcements. He had looked for co-operation from the side of Portugal. A detachment of Junot's army was to have proceeded

along the coast of Algarve, and have crossed the Guadiana; a body of English troops from Gibraltar, sent under General Spencer to Ayamonte, had defeated this intention. Junot, therefore, was fain to send them by the circuitous way of Elvas; but his own situation was now becoming perilous. The Spaniards under his command contributed to his danger at this time rather than to his strength. An English squadron off the Tagus kept him upon the alarm, while it encouraged the hopes of the Portuguese; and when General Kellerman was ordered to Elvas, the insurrection at Badajoz made it doubtful whether he would be able to proceed and effect his march to Cadiz with so small a force as could be spared from Portugal, and a detachment from Madrid was sent to join with him, and quell the people of Extremadura. Dupont could not be placed in a condition to effect the object for which he entered Andalusia, unless he received strong reinforcements; and Savary, therefore, ordered two divisions under Generals Vedel and Gobert, a force which was deemed more than sufficient to secure him against all danger, even if it should not be equal to the subjugation of the whole province.

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*He is disappointed of succours from Portugal.*

These troops did not effect their junction without experiencing proofs of the national feeling, which might have taught them in how severe as well as hateful a contest the insatiable ambition of Buonaparte had wantonly engaged them. In passing through La Mancha they found that the sick, whom Dupont had left at Manzanares, had been killed; and they did not enter the little town of Valdepeñas without a severe contest: the inhabitants embarrassed the invader's cavalry by chains, which they stretched across the streets, and kept up a brisk fire from the houses, from which they were not dislodged till the French set the town in flames. When the advanced guard attempted to pass the Sierra Morena, they found an irregular force well posted and

*Reinforcements from Madrid join him.*



CHAP. entrenched in the tremendous defiles of that great line of moun-  
 VIII. tains, and they were compelled to fall back upon the main body.  
 1808. Notwithstanding this warning the French entered upon the pass  
June. without precaution, in full confidence that even the strength of  
 the situation would not enable the Spaniards to withstand them;  
 and this presumption cost them many lives which might well  
 have been spared. The first brigade and the cavalry were  
 allowed to pass an ambush, which was laid among the trees and  
 rocks, in advance of the entrenchment; a fire was then opened  
 upon the second, and the French suffered three discharges before  
 they were ready to act in return. Their *Voltigeurs* then dis-  
 lodged the enemy from their vantage ground; the works were  
 forced with a loss, according to the French account, of 900 on  
 the part of the defendants; and the invaders leaving a detach-  
 ment to secure the defiles, crossed the mountains, and entered  
 Andalusia. Vedel, with his division, was stationed at Carolina;  
 Gobert occupied the large and ancient village of Baylen, about  
 four leagues farther on, nearly half way between Vedel and  
 Dupont, who had his head-quarters at Andujar. A *tête-du-pont*  
 was constructed to command the passage of the river there, and  
 another at the village of Manjibar, between Baylen and Jaen.

*Cuesta and  
 Blake ad-  
 vance  
 against the  
 French.*

While the intrusive government believed that by this junction  
 its army in Andalusia was so strengthened, that the defeat of  
 the Spaniards was certain if they could be brought to action, an  
 opportunity was afforded it of striking a great blow in Castille,  
 by which the way to the capital was laid open. A force con-  
 siderable in numbers had been raised in Galicia, and arms and  
 stores in abundance had now been supplied by Great Britain.  
 Filangieri exerted himself in training these new levies, and gave  
 orders for forming entrenchments at Manzanal; a position of  
 extraordinary strength on the heights above Astorga. Whether  
 this preparation for defensive war, when the people were too