

either sex should be reduced to one-third of their present amount. All novices were ordered to quit their respective convents within a fortnight; and those who, having professed, wished to change their mode of life, and to live as secular ecclesiastics, were permitted so to do, and a pension secured to them, to be regulated by their age, but neither exceeding 4000 reales, nor falling short of 3000. From the possessions of the suppressed convents, a sum was to be set apart sufficient for increasing the proportion of the parish priests, so that the lowest salary should amount to 2400 reales; the surplus of this property should be united to the national domains; half of it appropriated to guarantee the public debt, the other to reimburse the provinces and cities the expenses occasioned by supplying the armies, and to indemnify the losses caused by the war. Provincial custom-houses were abolished, and all seignorial courts of justice; no other jurisdiction being permitted to exist than the royal courts; and another decree, premising that one of the greatest abuses in the finances of Spain arose from the alienation of different branches of the imposts, which were, in their nature, unalienable, enacted, that every individual in possession, either by grant, sale, or any other means, of any portion of the civil or ecclesiastical imposts, should cease to receive them.

Buonaparte now addressed a proclamation to the Spaniards. What possible result, he asked them, could attend even the success of some campaigns? Nothing but an endless war upon their own soil. It had cost him only a few marches to defeat their armies, and he would soon drive the English from the peninsula. Thus, to the rights which had been ceded him by the princes of the last dynasty, he had added the right of conquest: that, however, should not make any alteration in his intentions. His wish was to be their regenerator. All that obstructed their prosperity and their greatness, he had destroyed;

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Proclamation to the Spaniards.

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he had broken the chains which bore the people down; and, instead of an absolute monarchy, had given them a limited one, with a free constitution. The conclusion of this proclamation was in a spirit of blasphemy, hitherto confined to the barbarous countries of Africa or the East. "Should all my efforts," said he, "prove fruitless, and should you not merit my confidence, nothing will remain for me but to treat you as conquered provinces, and to place my brother upon another throne. I shall then set the crown of Spain upon my own head, and cause it to be respected by the guilty; for God has given me power and inclination to surmount all obstacles."

Change in
Buona-
parte's views
concerning
Spain.

De Pradt,
180.

Rocca, 24.
55.

But though Buonaparte had thus easily dispersed the Spanish armies, and made himself master of Madrid, his triumph was not without alloy. He now perceived with what utter ignorance of the national character he had formed the scheme of this usurpation, and he complained of having been deceived, when, in reality, he had turned a deaf ear to all who would have dissuaded him from his purpose. Till he arrived at Madrid, the people, as well as the armies, had disappeared before him; the towns and cities were abandoned as his troops approached. Twelve months before there was no other country wherein his exploits were regarded with such unmingled admiration; they had a character of exaggerated greatness which suited the Spanish mind, and as he had always been the ally of Spain, no feeling of hostility or humiliation existed to abate this sentiment: now, it was not to be disguised from himself that he was universally detested there as a perfidious tyrant. But policy, as well as pride, withheld him from receding; unless he went through with what he had begun, he must confess himself fallible, and let the world see that his power was not equal to his will; and then the talisman of his fortune would have been broken. He had committed the crime and incurred the odium; wherefore then should he not reap the

benefit, and secure the prize, not for a brother, whom he began to regard with contempt as the mere puppet of his pleasure, but for himself? This was a feeling which he did not conceal from those who possessed his confidence; and Joseph, and the unworthy ministers who had abased themselves to serve him, were made to perceive it, by the manner in which Napoleon, regardless even of appearances, issued edicts in his own name, as in a kingdom of his own. The obstinacy of the Spaniards in refusing to acknowledge his brother, he thought, would give him ere long a pretext for treating the country as his own by right of conquest. Meantime no interval was to be allowed them for collecting the wreck of their forces to make another stand.

Three days before the battle of Somosierra, Castaños, with his broken army, recommenced their retreat from Calatayud. Some ten miles west of that city, near the village of Buvierca, the high road to Madrid passes through a narrow gorge, where the river Xalon has forced or found its way between two great mountain ridges. When D. Francisco Xavier Venegas, with the rear-guard, consisting of 5000 men, reached this place, he found instructions from the Commander-in-chief, requesting him to suspend his march, and take measures for defending the pass, on which, he said, the safety of the other divisions depended; and he desired him to place the troops whom he selected for this purpose under such officers as would volunteer their services, promising to reward them in proportion to the importance and danger of the duty. Venegas was too well aware of its importance to trust the command to any but himself, and he replied, that he would halt there till the rest of the army was beyond the reach of pursuit. Early on the 29th the French came up, 8000 in number, under Mathieu. They commenced an attack at eight o'clock, which continued for eight hours: the Spaniards suffered severely; but they maintained the pass, and they ef-

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*December.**De Pradt,*
222, 225.*Retreat of
the central
army.*

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succeeds to
the com-
mand.*

fectually disabled this part of the French army from pursuing. On the evening of the following day the army reached Siguenza with all the artillery which they took with them from Tarazona, notwithstanding the bad state of the roads and the fatigue of the men, who had been allowed no rest upon this last march. Here Castaños received a summons from the Central Junta, and resigned the command to Don Manuel de Lapeña.

The situation to which this general succeeded was deplorable. The artillery had indeed been saved, and the pass of Buvierca most gallantly maintained; nevertheless the army had suffered during its retreat from all the accumulated evils of disorder, insubordination, nakedness, and cold, and hunger, and fatigue. Sometimes when the rear-guard had been on the point of taking food, the enemy came in sight, and the ready meal was abandoned to the pursuers; this, though it was the effect as much of panic in the soldiers as of any want of conduct in their commanders, gave new cause for dissatisfaction and distrust. The men themselves were ready to fly at sight of the French, because they suspected their leaders, yet they accused their leaders of treachery for not always turning and making head against the enemy, . . . not reflecting, that the officers in like manner, though from a different motive, could place no confidence in their men. Many dropped on the way, over-marched, or foundered for want of shoes; others turned aside because they considered the army as entirely broken up: they were ready to die for their country, but it was folly, they thought, to squander their lives, and, under the present circumstances, their duty was to preserve themselves, and recover strength for future service. The loss at Buvierca, too, had been considerable. Before they reached Siguenza the four divisions had thus been wasted down to 8000 men.

*They arrive
at Guada-
lavara.*

It was on the evening of the last day of November that they

reached this point. Here message after message arrived, requiring them to hasten with all possible speed to Somosierra. They set forward again the following day, the infantry by Atienza and Jadraque, the horse and artillery by Guadalaxara, in order to avoid the bad roads, leaving the river Henares on their right. This plan was soon changed; advices reached them in the middle of the night at Jadraque, that the pass of Somosierra had been lost. It was now determined that the whole army should march for Guadalaxara, for the defence of Madrid; information of this movement was dispatched to the Marques de Castelar, in that city; and persons were sent, some to ascertain the position of the enemy, others to learn whither San-Juan had retreated, in order that some operations might be concerted with him. The next day, when the foremost troops entered Guadalaxara, they found some detached parties of the enemy in the town, whom they drove out: the first and fourth divisions, the horse and the artillery, arrived there that night; here the news was, that Madrid was attacked, and the continual firing which was heard confirmed it. Poor as the numbers were which they could carry to the capital, they were eager to be there; and if Madrid had been protected, as it might have been, by a British army, or defended as the inhabitants, had it not been for treachery, would have defended it, 8000 men, who stood by their colours under so many hopeless circumstances, would have brought an important succour. The inhabitants relied with great confidence upon this reinforcement; . . . they expected hourly that these brave men would appear, and take post beside them at their gates, and in their streets; and one of the most successful artifices by which the traitors who made the capitulation depressed their zeal, was by reporting that a second battle had been fought, in which the army of the centre had been entirely defeated by Marshal Ney, so that no possible succour could be

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Dec. 2.

CHAP. expected from it. At the very time when this falsehood was
 XIV. reported, a part of this brave army was only nine leagues from
 1808. Madrid, impatient to proceed to its assistance. They were,
 December. however, compelled to remain inactive the whole of the next
 day, waiting for the second and third divisions and the van,
 which did not come up till the day following.

*The Duque
 del Infantado joins
 them.*

On that day the Duque del Infantado joined them, having passed safely through the advanced posts of the French by favour of a thick fog. A council of war was held; the urgent danger of the capital was represented by the Duke, and low as his hopes had fallen when he saw the deplorable state to which the remains of the army were reduced by fatigue and hunger, it was nevertheless determined that an effort should be made, not to attack the besiegers, for this would have been madness, but to collect as large a convoy of provisions as they could, and endeavour to enter with it under cover of the night by the Atocha gate. The Duke, however, knew but too well the situation of the metropolis; and at his suggestion a letter was sent to the French General who commanded before the walls, reminding him that a great number of French were in the hands of the Spaniards, and would be held responsible with their lives for any ill treatment which might be offered to the inhabitants of Madrid. Both the officer and the trumpet were detained prisoners by Buonaparte's orders.

*Condition
 of the
 troops.
 Dec. 4.*

The troops were now mustered, and it was then perceived what they had lost in number, and how severely they had suffered during this fearful retreat. From 6000 to 7000 infantry, and about 1500 cavalry, were all that could be brought together; men and horses alike exhausted by fatigue and hunger; many indeed had fallen and perished by the way. Here for the first time they found something like relief, great numbers not having tasted bread for eight days: they had now sufficient food, and

there was cloth enough in the manufactory there to supply every man with a *poncho*, the rude garment of the Indians about Buenos Ayres, which the Spaniards have adopted for its simplicity and convenience. Meantime the French were collecting in their neighbourhood; they occupied Alcala and the adjoining villages, and some skirmishes took place at Meca. Buonaparte had been informed of their movements, and as soon as Madrid capitulated, Bessieres was dispatched to Guadalaxara with a considerable force of horse, and Victor followed with infantry. The first business of Lapeña was to disencumber himself of his superfluous artillery, for they had brought off no fewer than sixty pieces of cannon. Forty of these, to preserve them from the enemy, were sent across the Tagus at Sacedon, and these were safely forwarded to Carthagená. The van, under Venegas, which had saved the army at Buvierca, arrived on the night of the 4th. Its losses had been replaced by drafts; the post of honour and of danger had been assigned it during the whole of this retreat, and it continued to cover the movements of the other divisions. Two of them were leaving Guadalaxara when it arrived, the second and third followed the next noon, in two columns, proceeding by two roads to Santorcaz: this division began to follow them, but before it was out of one gate, the advanced guard of the enemy entered at another.

Venegas perceived the importance of a position to the south of the city, lying directly between the two roads to Santorcaz, and he immediately occupied it. The battalions (*tercios*) of Ledesma and Salamanca, which formed the rear of the third division, perceived his intention, and turned back and joined him; their commanding officers, D. Luis de Lacy and D. Alexandre de Hore, being ambitious of bearing part in the action which they expected. The French were in great force opposite on the right bank of the Henares; some of their detachments

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*They retire
towards the
Tagus.*

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forded both on the right and left of the Spaniards' position ; but light troops had been stationed on both the flanks, who skirmished with them, and repelled them till night. The position was judged too formidable in front to be attacked, and the main body of the French halted during the whole evening, not choosing to cross the river. Having thus obtained time for the army to perform its march, which was all he hoped or wanted, Venegas broke up three hours after the darkness had closed, and continued his retreat in good order without the loss of a single man. The Commander now took up a position at Santorcaz, a little village about two leagues east of Alcala, between the rivers Henares and Tajuna. There he learnt the fate of Madrid. The French now evacuated Alcala, and extended themselves along the heights at the back of Meca, and along the banks of the Jarama, pushing their advanced parties to Arganda, Morata, and other places in that neighbourhood. The plan of Lapeña and his officers under these circumstances was, to cross the Tagus at Aranjuez, and take shelter, if necessary, among the mountains of Toledo. With this intent they marched to Villarejo de Salvanes. A few poor soldiers, who dropped behind at Nuevo-Bastan, were sabred by the French with that cruelty which at this time so frequently characterised and disgraced their armies.

*Passage of
the Tagus.*

On the 6th, when they were about to proceed to Aranjuez, tidings came that the French were in possession of that place, and this was confirmed by an express from General Llamas, who had vainly attempted to resist the enemy there with a few armed peasantry, and a few soldiers who had escaped from Madrid. New difficulties now presented themselves to the remnant of this harassed army. To look towards Toledo was become hopeless ; it was equally hopeless to make for Andalusia, for the French General, Ruffin, as soon as he had obtained possession of Aranjuez, crossed the Tagus, and, pushing on as far as Ocaña, cut

off their retreat in that direction. Nothing remained but to cross the Tagus by boats at Villamanrique, Fuenteduenas, Estramera, and other places where there were ferries, and make for the Sierras of Cuenca. There it was hoped they might be able to rest, rally the stragglers, and again unite in numbers sufficient to take vengeance for all their sufferings. Hazardous as it was to cross the river in this manner, with an enemy so near at hand, it was effected with rare good fortune; the French had not foreseen the attempt, and not a man nor a gun was lost. Having gained the left bank of the river, they hastened on their retreat, and head-quarters were established on the 7th at Belinchon. The second division, under General Grimanest, which crossed at Villamanrique, was the only one which was endangered. This having effected the passage, took up a position at Santa Cruz, between Aranjuez and Ucles, where it was attacked on the night of the 8th by a corps of Bessieres' division, under General Montbrun. Finding themselves unable to maintain the position against a force which was superior to their own, they abandoned it before they sustained any loss.

The first and fourth divisions mutinied on their march to Yedra, where they were to be stationed. This was ascribed to the intrigues of some traitorous agents, as well as to the unprincipled ambition of a few officers, desirous, in these times of insubordination, to exalt themselves by flattering the soldiers and slandering their commanders. It was easy to inflame the men, who imputed all their misfortunes to treason, and were already in a state of great insubordination. They insisted upon marching to Madrid, that they might attack the enemy there; an artillery officer was at their head; and the guns were planted to prevent the troops from proceeding in the direction where they had been ordered. A difference of opinion among themselves prevented the execution of this mad purpose; some were for

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December.*Some of the
troops mu-
tiny.*