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1811.

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his division in the village of Esquirol, and when they were drawn up, addressing them, says the Spanish relator, like another Gideon, he desired that every man who was willing to accompany him in an expedition of great peril, but of the highest importance and greatest honour, should step out of the line; 500 men immediately volunteered, all of the second Catalan legion. The same appeal was made to another detachment at S. Privat, and ninety-two of the battalion of Almogavares, and 462 of the Ex-patriates, as those Catalans were called who came from parts of the country which the French possessed, offered themselves. The two parties formed a junction that night at Ridaura, and marched the next day, by roads which were almost impracticable, to Oix, a village close upon the French border. From thence they proceeded on the 8th by Sadernes, Gitarriu, and Cofi, to Llorena, taking this direction in order that the enemy and the men themselves might be induced to believe it was their intention to make an incursion into France. The alarm spread along the border as they wished; the somaten was rung; the French peasantry, and about 300 troops of the line, collected at S. Laurent de Sardas, and remained under arms for thirty hours. At noon on the 9th, the Catalans left Llorena, and proceeded in a direction toward Figueras as far as the wood of Villarit, where they concealed themselves in a glen till night came: it had rained heavily all day, and a strong north wind was blowing, nevertheless orders were given that no man should kindle a fire on pain of death.

*Rovira
takes it by
surprise.*

One scanty meal a day was all that could be allowed to these hardy and patient men; but a good allowance of generous wine had been provided for them when it should be most needed: this was distributed now after they had been formed into six companies, and when night set in they advanced to Palau-Sur-roca, a short hour's distance from the fortress. The officers of

each division were men who were well acquainted with the works; and each was now informed what point he was to attempt, at what time, and in what manner. At half past two the first party leaped into the ditch; three soldiers, who had served in the garrison more than a year, for the purpose of performing this service when the hour should come, opened the gate which leads into the ditch to receive them. The first sentinel whom they met was killed by one thrust before he could give the alarm; the different parties went each in its allotted direction; and so well had every part of this enterprise been planned, and so perfectly was it executed in all its parts, that before men, officers, or governor, could get out of their quarters, . . . almost before they were awakened, . . . Figueras was in the hands of the Spaniards, and its garrison, amounting to about 1000 men, were prisoners. The gate by which they had entered was immediately walled up to guard against any counter-surprise; and as Rovira, being a native of the country, and conspicuous in it since the commencement of the war, was better known than Martinez, orders were sent out in his name, and signed by his hand, calling upon the men of the adjoining country to come and strengthen the garrison. His signature left no doubt of an event which they could else hardly have been persuaded to believe, so much was it beyond their hopes, and in a few hours men enough were assembled there to man the works.

There were about 700 of the enemy in the town, who supposed at first that the stir which they perceived in the castle was merely some quarrel between the French and the Italians of whom the garrison was composed. One of them went to ascertain this; he was asked *quien vive* as he approached, and upon his replying "France," was fired at and shot. Upon this the French commandant sent a trumpeter, who was ordered to return and tell his master on the part of General Martinez and Colonel Rovira, that no Frenchman must again present himself

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 XXXVIII. mouth. Martinez immediately sent off a dispatch in brief, but
 1811. characteristic language: "Glory to the God of armies, and
 April. honour to the brave Catalans, St. Fernando de Figueras is
 taken; Rovira had the happiness of directing the enterprise,
 and I of having been the commander." The Doctor-Colonel, in a
 private letter which found its way to the press, alluded to the
 ridicule which had been cast upon his project: "The *Rovirada*
 is made," said he, "and the great fortress is ours!"

*Rovira re-
 awarded
 with church
 preferment.*

Rovira needed no other reward than the place in history
 which the success of this *Rovirada* secured for him; but it was
 not the less becoming that the government should express their
 sense of his services. Some little time after, the dignity of
 Maestre-Escuela, which is equivalent to that of prebend in the
 English church, fell vacant in the cathedral of Vich. A decree
 had past in the preceding year for leaving unfilled such eccle-
 siastical offices as could, without indecency, be dispensed with,
 and applying their revenues to the public use as long as the
 necessities of the country should require. The Regency applied
 to the Cortes to dispense with this law for the present occasion
 only, that they might confer the vacant dignity upon Rovira, as
 the most appropriate testimony of national gratitude; that when
 the bloody struggle in which they were engaged against the
 tyrant of Europe should have terminated happily, as was to be
 expected, they said, he might have a decorous retirement suit-
 able to his profession, and an establishment for that time in
 which, indispensably, he ought to renounce the military honours
 and dignities with which he was now decorated, but which, in
 any other than the actual circumstances, were incompatible with
 his ministerial character. Arguelles declared, that the Doctor
 Brigadier (for to this rank he had then been promoted) was worthy
 in the highest degree of national gratitude; but he wished that any
 mode of remuneration should be devised rather than one which

involved the suspension of a law, . . . too perilous an example not to be carefully avoided. But Creus observed, that Rovira, who was a priest as much in heart as in profession, would value this prebend more than any military rank which could be conferred upon him; and more even than the archdeanery of Toledo, because it was in his own country. And he argued, that no injury could accrue to the state, as the income might be reserved for the treasury while the existing circumstances continued. Garcia Herreros was of opinion that the reward ought to be of the nature of the service; the soldier should have a military recompence, the priest a clerical one; he proposed, therefore, that as the order of St. Fernando had just been instituted, Dr. Rovira should be the first person who should be invested with it; and that when the war was ended one of the best prebends should then be given him. The proposal of the Regency, however, was adopted, and Rovira was made Maestre-Escuela of the cathedral of Vich, for having recovered Figueras.

Had the Catalans been equally successful at Barcelona, all their losses would have been more than compensated; the success which they had gained excited the greatest exultation, not only in Catalonia, but throughout the whole of Spain. Te Deum was sung at Tarragona, and the town was illuminated three successive nights. In Madrid the Spaniards could scarcely dissemble their joy. In the Cortes the news was welcomed as the happiest which had been received since the battle of Baylen; and the Regency called upon the people for fresh contributions and fresh efforts to improve this unexpected success, the first of its kind which had been obtained during the war. The army which had achieved it, they said, was in want of every thing; and the two Regents who were in Cadiz (Blake being absent) set the example themselves by contributing each a month's salary. It was, indeed, a success which if the Spa-

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niards had been able, or their allies alert enough to have improved it, might have been a far more momentous advantage than the victories of Barrossa and Albuhera. The first report appeared incredible to the French generals; when it was confirmed, Macdonald called upon Suchet to send him by forced marches that part of the army of Catalonia which he had placed under his command; unless this were done, he said, Upper Catalonia was lost; for neither Rosas, Gerona, nor Hostalrich, were provisioned, and the consequences of this cruel event were incalculable; and Maurice Mathieu, who commanded in Barcelona, instructed the governor of Lerida to be ready with provisions for these troops upon their way, not doubting but that Suchet would see the necessity of the measure in which he was called upon to concur. But when that general had recovered from the first grief and astonishment which the news excited, he considered that part of these troops being employed in an expedition among the mountains, and the others along the Ebro to protect its navigation, from twenty to five and twenty days must elapse before they could receive orders from Zaragoza, assemble at Lerida, and march from thence by Barcelona to Figueras; during which interval the Spaniards would have done all they could do for storing and garrisoning the place. All the French could do was to blockade it with the troops which were nearest at hand: those from a distance would arrive too late, and there would then be the difficulty of supporting them in a part of the country stripped of its resources. If the Spaniards should fail in endeavouring to throw sufficient supplies into the fortress which they had surprised, the unexpected success with which they were now so greatly elated would in the end be little to their advantage: it would even facilitate his operations against Tarragona, for Campoverde would doubtless move his army towards the Ampurdan, instead of endeavouring

to interrupt the investment of that city ; to hasten that investment, therefore, and press the siege would be the best service which he could render to the French in Upper Catalonia : this opinion he thought Buonaparte would form, whom the intelligence would reach at Paris five or six days before he had received it at Zaragoza : upon that opinion, therefore, he resolved to act, on his own responsibility ; and he had soon the satisfaction of knowing that his conduct in so doing was approved and * applauded.

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His judgement was not less accurate as to what was, in this instance, to be expected from the Spaniards, who were still destined to suffer for the weakness of their government, the want of union in their leaders, and the want of system which was felt in every department. Eroles, indeed, acted on this emergency as he always did, with promptitude, and vigour, and ability. Collecting all the force he could, he hastened from Martorell to reinforce the garrison of Figueras, and on his way took the forts which the French had erected in Castelfollit and Olot, and made above 500 prisoners there. Though a considerable force had already been collected to blockade the place, he entered it on the sixth day after its capture, with 1500 infantry, 150 horse, and about 50 artillery-men, losing on the way some forty killed and sixty wounded ; but the French battalion, which endeavoured to prevent his entrance, suffered more than a threefold loss. General Baraguay d'Hilliers had by that time brought together about 8000 troops for the blockade, nearly half of which had been called off from blockading the Seu d'Urgel, and had made a circuitous march within

Memoires,
1. 13—18.*Eroles introduces
troops into
Figueras.*

April 16.

*The French
blockade it.*

* *Voilà qui est militaire* was the phrase in which Buonaparte expressed his approbation.

CHAP. the French border. All posts of minor importance they immediately abandoned, retaining only Rosas, Gerona, and Hostalrich, in that part of Catalonia, and even weakening the garrison of Gerona so much, that that place might have been recovered by a second *Rovirade*, had there been another Rovira to conduct one. But there was little concert among the Catalan leaders; it was deemed fortunate that Eroles had not been obliged to require the cooperation of another body, which from its position he might have looked to for aid, because there was ill blood between that body and the corps which he commanded. His arrival was well-timed, for the garrison was disorderly as well as weak, . . . more enterprising than wary, . . . not to be restrained from making rash sallies against the blockading force; and they had also 1500 prisoners to guard, whom, for their own security, they were compelled to confine so closely, that they were in reasonable apprehension lest disease and infection should be the consequences. But supplies were as needful as reinforcements; wine and oil were especially wanted. The Spaniards, with more alertness than they often exerted, sent off a convoy of stores with one of their frigates from Tarragona: it came into the bay of Rosas three days after Eroles had entered the fortress, but it had to wait off shore, vainly expecting that a sufficient force for escorting it might be collected. The British squadron off that coast was too weak to afford any effectual assistance. Captain Buller, taking immediate advantage of the enemy's departure from those places, had landed at Palamos, St. Feliu, Cadeques, and Selva, embarked their guns and destroyed their batteries; a useful service for the time, but one which could not affect the operations on the land, and the commander-in-chief in the Mediterranean, who was applied to for some ships of the line, could spare none from his own anxious station, where all his vigilance was required for watching those ports in France from

whence the enemy might look for reinforcements or supplies. In Valencia, where there were most means, there was least energy; and in Tarragona, where alacrity was not wanting, it was necessary to wait for the new levies before they could venture to send from thence any considerable body of old soldiers with which Campoverde might undertake the relief of the blockaded fortress, lest Suchet, if his preparations for besieging that city were any thing more than a feint, should find it in a state of insecurity and weakness.

That general had been never more in earnest. He perceived that he could no longer look for any cooperation from the side of Catalonia in his intended siege; from thence, however, he expected little interruption, but he apprehended serious annoyance from Mina; for if that enterprising chief could connect himself with the Catalans of the upper valleys, it would be possible for him, he thought, to draw after him so large a part of the Aragonese, that he might cut off the communication with France, and thus endanger the subsistence of the besieging army. None of the Guerrilla leaders were placed in so dangerous a position as Espoz y Mina. Every fortress in Navarre was occupied by the French, and they were in possession of all the country which surrounded it. There was no point from which he could receive succour; none upon which he could retire: the mountains were his only fastnesses; and he had no resources but what were to be found in his own genius, and in the courage of his comrades, and in the love of his countrymen. But this man was the Scanderbeg of his age. Reille, the French governor of Navarre, had received special instructions to hunt him down; and toward the close of the preceding year, the enemy had succeeded in surprising his troop. He and the commanders of the second and third battalions, Cruchaga and Gorriz, immediately began to collect their scattered force, and

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2. 20.*Attempts
to destroy
Mina.*

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 XXXVIII. jurious but for want of order, they abstained awhile from
 1811. offensive operations, for the purpose of disciplining the men.
 Reille hoped again to surprise them while they were thus employed, and detached Colonel Gaudin from Pamplona with 1500 foot and 200 horse, who was to form a junction with an equal number, drawn from Tudela, Caparroso, and Tafalla by Colonel Brescat, surround Mina, and occupy all the points by which he might endeavour to escape. Mina was informed of their movements: before the two detachments could join, he drew Gaudin into an ambuscade, in which forty of his cavalry were killed, and about 100 infantry made prisoners; he then attacked them in their position at Monreal, drove them from it, and was about to renew the attack upon a second position which they had taken, when intelligence that Reille with a force from Pamplona was hastening to Gaudin's succour, induced him to retire. The Guerrilla chief let his men rest one day, and on the second attacked Brescat, who, with 1300 men and 170 horse, occupied Aybar, part of the line within which it was intended to surround this heroic Navarrese. The enemy were driven successively from every position where they attempted to make a stand, till having fallen back two leagues, they reached the river Aragon: the infantry crossed it by the bridge at Caseca, the cavalry swam the stream, and thus interposed a barrier between themselves and their pursuers, which Mina was not able to force, being without artillery. In this action the French left 162 men and sixty-three horses upon the field: their commander and about 220 men were wounded.

Jan. 12.

Reille next sent his brother, at the head of 5000 foot and 200 horse, against this harassing enemy. For the last month Mina had been manufacturing arms, ammunition, and clothing for his men, at Lumbier, and there two thousand of the French found