

CHAP. rewarded with a gratuity by the Government, and an honourable
XXXIII. mention in the Regency Gazette.

1810.

November.

*Expedition
under Lord
Blayney.*

*Mountains
of Ronda.*

*Ortiz de
Zarate.*

This expedition was frustrated by circumstances against which no human prudence could have provided. An enterprise of greater moment, on the south coast, was attempted about the same time, and failed from other causes, but mainly because the information upon which it was undertaken proved to be fallacious. The French had experienced less resistance in Andalusia than in any other part of Spain. They were, however, far from being unmolested there; and in the mountains of Ronda the national character was well displayed, by the incessant hostilities which the people carried on against their invaders. The man who struck the spark there had been Professor of Mathematics at Alicant; Don Andres Ortiz de Zarate was his name. In the early days of this dreadful revolution, he had taken an active part in the national cause, and afterwards was employed in service that required no slight degree of ability, by General Doyle; but perceiving from the mismanagement which prevailed in every department, civil or military, that the south of Spain would be overrun, as the north had been, he removed his family to Gibraltar, where, as a professional teacher, he could have supported them respectably, if he had not regarded the deliverance of his country more than his own concerns. But no sooner had the French taken possession of the kingdoms of Andalusia, than he obtained a supply of arms from the Governor of Gibraltar; and going among the villages, hamlets, and huts in the mountains of Ronda, roused a people who required only some moving spirit to put them in action: in the course of a fortnight 6000 men placed themselves under his orders. For himself he sought neither honours nor emolument; and when General Jacome y Ricardos, who was at that time Commandant at the Camp of St. Roque, would have obtained rank for him from

the Government, he declined it, saying, it would be time enough to receive the reward of his services when the country should be free. He soon became so popular among these mountaineers, that when he entered a town or village he was received with military honours, and the streets were decorated with hangings by day, and illuminated at night, as at the greatest festivals. This popularity might not have been obtained, if it had been necessary for him to levy contributions upon the people; but he commenced his operation in happy time, when the enemy had collected their first harvest of exactions, most or all of which fell into his hands, and was by him delivered over to the public service. The enemy, who had expected no such warfare, suffered severely in it; they lost some thousands, and *El Pastor*, as, for some unexplained reason, Ortiz de Zarate was then called, had become a celebrated name, when his career was impeded by some of those intrigues and jealousies which so frequently injured the national cause. He retired, in consequence, to Gibraltar, leaving General Valdenebro to command a people who were now no longer unanimous in any thing except their unabated hatred of the invaders. A deputation followed him there, accompanied by three hundred persons, and the Commandant of St. Roque's prevailed upon him to return; but he would only go in the capacity of secretary to a military officer. Finding then that things were going ill, and that half the force which he had raised and organized was dispersed, he repaired to Cadiz, to inform the Government of the state of affairs, and require the repayment of what he had expended in the service, which was the whole of his own means, and some allowance for the prizes which he had taken from the enemy. His personal enemies had been embarked with him, and no sooner had he entered that city than he was arrested, put in irons, and thrown into a dungeon. The Spaniards had so long been accustomed, not to an absolute

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*Ld. Blayney
sails from
Gibraltar.*

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*He lands
near the
castle of
Frangerola.*

merely, but to an arbitrary Government, that even those authorities whose intentions were truly equitable were continually committing unjust and arbitrary acts. After twelve months' imprisonment, Ortiz de Zarate, who had thus been treated as a criminal, was acquitted of all the charges which had been preferred against him; his honour, loyalty, and patriotism, were fully acknowledged, and he received payment of his claims in part. It was of importance to encourage the mountaineers whom he had put in action, and a plan therefore was formed for getting possession of Frangerola, a castle on the coast, between Marbella and Malaga, about twenty miles from the latter place. The castle was understood to be a place which might easily be taken by a coup-de-main; its capture would open a communication with the inhabitants of the Sierra, and hopes were entertained that it might lead also to the expulsion of the enemy from Malaga, where they were represented as being in no strength: the guns on the mole there were said to have been removed, and the citadel to be in a defenceless state. In consequence of these representations, an expedition sailed from Gibraltar, under the command of Major-General Lord Blayney; it consisted of four British companies (amounting to 300 men), and 500 German, Polish, and Italian deserters. They proceeded to Ceuta, and there took on board the Spanish regiment of Toledo. This regiment was said to be perfectly equipped; but upon examination it was found that there was a deficiency of 148 firelocks, and that they had been embarked without a single round of ammunition. These deficiencies were supplied; the squadron soon anchored in a small bay, called Cala de Moral, and there the troops landed on a sandy beach, without any to oppose them.

It had been proposed to Lord Blayney that he should disembark near Malaga, and that while he called off the enemy's attention on the land side, the squadron should alarm the city from

the eastward, and the boats push for the mole, and land a party to assist the inhabitants, who, it was confidently expected, would take the opportunity of rising against their oppressors. But Lord Blayney properly distrusted the information upon which this advice was founded, and he had little confidence in the motley assemblage under his command; being not without apprehension that the confusion of their tongues might affect their movements in the hour of action. He chose to begin, therefore, with the castle of Frangerola, which is about two leagues east of the bay in which he landed. Upon arriving before it, he found it to be a large square fort, occupying the whole hillock on which it stands, strongly built, commanding every part of the beach where boats could land, and in a state of defence very unlike what he had been led to expect. When he sent in a summons to surrender, a resolute refusal was returned; the fort opened its fire upon the gun-boats, sunk one, and occasioned some loss in others. Lord Blayney advanced close to the works, for the purpose of drawing the enemy's attention from the water; here he was contending with musquetry against grape-shot and stone walls. Major Grant was mortally wounded in this unequal engagement, and several men killed; but the riflemen did their part well; the enemy's guns were for a time silenced, the boats took their stations, and he withdrew the troops. He now directed the Spaniards to the summit of a hill, with a ravine in front, which would have been a sufficient protection from any sudden attack; but the Spanish Colonel objected that it was Sunday, and that it was not the custom of his countrymen to fight upon that day. These Spaniards were not in good humour with their allies, nor perhaps with the service, for which they had been taken from their comfortable quarters at Ceuta: by a misarrangement arising from mere inattention, they had been served in the transport

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with meat on a meagre day ; and they were discontented also because there was no priest embarked with them. Lord Blayney, however, prevailed upon the Commandant to detach four companies, for the purpose of occupying a pass near Mijas, and preventing the enemy in that town from sending assistance to the fort. An hundred Germans were added to this detachment ; the English officer who conducted this service was persuaded by the Spaniards to attack the town, though his orders were to act on the defensive ; the consequence was, that he was repulsed, and obliged rapidly to fall back on the main body.

*Failure of
the expedi-
tion.*

During the night, the men were exposed, without shelter, to a continual heavy rain, such as is common at that season in those countries, and is never seen in our climate, except sometimes during the short duration of a thunder-storm. It was accompanied with thunder now. But the night was actively employed in landing artillery ; which could not be done by day, because the guns of the castle completely commanded the beach. Soldiers and sailors exerted themselves heartily ; and before day-break a battery for one thirty-two pound carronade was completed on the shore, and another for two twelve-pounders and a howitzer, on a rocky hill, 350 yards from the castle. Though the artillery could not make impression upon the solid old masonry of the walls, it destroyed part of the parapet, and the musquetry did such execution, that Lord Blayney entertained good hope of success ; when, to his surprise, he learnt that the garrison had been reinforced before his arrival, that it was in sufficient strength for him to expect that a sortie would be made, and that Sebastiani was on the way from Malaga with 4700 foot, 800 horse, and sixteen pieces of artillery ; .. his own force amounted only to 1400 men, and the four guns which had been landed. These he could not re-embark under the fire of the castle, and he would not abandon ; and at this time, just as he was about to

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strengthen his position, by occupying a ruined tower, the Rodney, and a Spanish line-of-battle ship, appeared off the coast, with the eighty-second regiment, 1000 strong, to reinforce him. Boats were sent off to assist in landing them, and Lord Blayney was about to station gun-boats so as to rake the beach; but before either object could be effected, some 600 infantry, and sixty horse, sallied from the castle. It was a complete surprise; the British troops were in front, taking provisions; the enemy made their attack on the Spaniards and the foreigners on the left: these men took to flight, and abandoned the battery. At this moment the troops had pushed off from the ships, and Lord Blayney, trusting in them and in the strength of his position, formed the few British soldiers who were with him, and retook the guns by the bayonet, but not before part of the ammunition had been blown up. A doubt was now entertained whether some troops who were moving toward them upon the left were friends or foes; some said they were Spaniards; the German deserters declared them to be French. The hesitation and delay which this doubt occasioned enabled the enemy, for enemies they were, to approach without opposition; and when Lord Blayney, having ascertained the truth too late, charged them, the conflict ended in his being made prisoner, with about 200 men, some forty having been killed. This was the fate of the English soldiers; most of the deserters went over to the enemy. The men who were in the boats had then no course left but to return to the ships, fortunate in having thus seen the termination of an ill-planned expedition, without being farther engaged in it.

It had not been supposed that Sebastiani could bring together so large a body of men as he had put in motion on this occasion. Some movement was expected from the inhabitants of Malaga, but with little reason; for the individuals who had exerted themselves most in resisting the entrance of the enemy

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Lord Blayney and the British troops taken.

Defeat of General Blake.

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into that city were, such of them as escaped from the slaughter, at this time in prison, with their leader, Colonel Avallo, upon some of those vague charges which, in Spain, under any of its Governments, were deemed sufficient grounds for throwing men into a dungeon, and leaving them there. It had been intended also that Sebastiani's attention should have been called off in a different direction, by Blake, with the central army. That army was too slow in its movements to produce any effect in favour of Lord Blayney's attempt; its head-quarters at this time were at Murcia, and its advance at Velez el Rubio. It was not till a fortnight after the failure at Frangerola, that the French thought it necessary to take any measures against this ill-disciplined, ill-appointed, ill-constituted body. The enemy's troops were so distributed, that a considerable force could be assembled, within twenty-four hours, at any point where their presence was required; but before Sebastiani could reach Baza, General Rey, with one regiment of dragoons, a regiment of Polish lancers, and a detachment of infantry, had routed an army which was exposed in a place without protection, and was completely broken at the first charge*. Between 1000 and 2000 were killed, and some 1200 taken; the officers here behaved better than the men, for the latter threw down their arms, and cried for quarter; while, of the former, all who were made prisoners had received sabre wounds. The prisoners were in a miserable condition, appearing half starved and half naked; a large portion of them consisted of old men and boys, and those who could not keep pace with their escort were shot upon the way.

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* No account (as far as I can discover) of this disgraceful action was published by the Spanish Government. There was no longer the same magnanimity in relating its misfortunes as in the days of the Central Junta.

Not discouraged by these repeated losses and multiplied disgraces, the Spaniards continued to pursue that system of hostility which was carried on wherever the French were nominally masters of the country; a mode of war destructive to the invaders against whom it was directed, but dreadful also in its effect upon the people by whom it was waged. The Junta of Seville had, from the beginning of the struggle, perceived that the strength of Spain lay in her people, and not in her armies. The Central Junta also had early acknowledged the importance of that irregular and universal warfare for which the temper of the Spaniards and the character of the country were equally adapted; and they attempted to regulate it by a long edict, giving directions for forming *Partidas* of volunteers, and *Quadrillas*, which were to consist of smugglers, appointing them pay, enacting rules for them, and subjecting them to military law; but it is manifest that these restrictions would only be observed where the Government had sufficient authority to enforce them, which was only where they had armies on foot, and that, when thus restricted, little was to be done by it. They spoke with a clear understanding of the circumstances in which Spain was placed when they proclaimed a Moorish war*, and bade the Spaniards remember in what manner their fathers had exterminated a former race of invaders. The country, they said, was to be saved by killing the enemies daily, just as they would rid themselves of a plague of locusts; a work which was slow, but sure, and in its progress would bring the nation to the martial pitch of those times, when it was a pastime to go forth and seek the Hagarenes. They reminded them of the old Castilian names, for skirmishes †, ambushments, assaults, and stratagems, the neces-

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Irregular
war.

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* *Guerra de Moros contra estos infideles.*

† *Escaramuzas, celadas, rebatos, ardidés,—son nombres castellanos de la antigua milicia, la mas necesaria en la guerra domestica.*



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sary resources of domestic warfare, and told them that the nature of the country and of the inhabitants rendered Spain invincible.

This character on the part of the Spaniards the war had now assumed in all parts of Spain. The French were no sooner masters of the field, than they found themselves engaged in a wearing, wasting contest, wherein discipline was of no avail, and by which, in a country of such extent and natural strength, any military power, however great, must ultimately be consumed. In any other part of Europe, they would have considered the conquest complete after such victories as they had obtained; but in Spain, where army after army had been routed, and city after city taken, . . . when Joseph reigned at Madrid, and Soult commanded in Seville, . . . when Victor was in sight of Cadiz, and Massena almost in sight of Lisbon, . . . when Buonaparte had put all his other enemies under his feet, and in the height of his fortune, and plenitude of his power, had no other object than to effect the subjugation of the Peninsula, . . . the generals and the men whom he employed there were made to feel that the cause in which they were engaged was as hopeless as it was unjust. They were never safe except when in large bodies, or in some fortified place. Every day some of their posts were surprised, some escort or convoy cut off, some detachment put to death; dispatches were intercepted, plunder was recovered, . . . and, what excited the Spaniards more than any, or all other considerations, vengeance was taken by a most vindictive people for insupportable wrongs. In every part of Spain where the enemy called themselves masters, leaders started up, who collected about them the most determined spirits; followers enough were ready to join them; and both among chiefs and men, the best and the worst characters were to be found: some were mere ruffians, who if the country had been in peace would have lived in defiance of the laws, as they now defied the force of the intrusive Government;