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THE WAR IN THE PENINSULA, 1808-14.

VALUABLE NOTES FROM RECENTLY DISCOVERED DIARIES OF THE
WAR, NOW BEING PUBLISHED IN "EL IMPARCIAL," OF
MADRID.

Précis by Major-General J. C. DALTON, R.A.

Continued from September JOURNAL, p. 1208, and concluded.

VI.

SEVILLE DURING THE BATTLE—AN ANONYMOUS PATRIOT—THE
SACRIFICES OF SACKED CORDOVA—POPULAR ANXIETY—
LETTER FROM A FIELD OFFICER—GIRON UNDERTAKES THE
OFFICIAL PART—MODESTY OF CASTAÑOS.

It is not proposed to weary readers of these articles with a fresh description of the battle of Bailen, which is already well known in detail,¹ nor is there in the manuscripts under review, practically, anything referring to the actual battle. Giron had not the luck to take part in it, and the truthful narrator respects "the interiority (sic) of a feat of arms which can only be worthily depicted by the pen of the man who thereat wielded the sword."

It will be interesting now to revert to the President of the Junta, Saavedra, who was anxiously awaiting in Seville for news of the battle. The usual crop of unreliable rumours was coming in, which only served to excite and exasperate the popular mind.

A patriot, whose name and abode are not given, wrote to the President on 16th June, 1808, an account of his journey from Madrid with Vedel, "because his loyalty to his country forbids him to be silent regarding certain interesting information," then refers to the numbers of the enemy, to supposed dissensions between Vedel and Dupont, as well as to the circum-spect nature of the former; *e.g.*, "if he (Vedel) should be threatened in his rear he will not advance, and as he will thus delay more and more the junction (with Dupont), it will be possible to beat the French columns separately." This news, notwithstanding its vagueness, was sent post haste to Castaños.

¹ There are excellent official maps published in Spain to illustrate this battle, with positions of the troops at various periods. Oman, in his "Peninsular War," has also got good maps showing the progress of the fighting.—J.C.D.

On the 17th July, news, mostly untrue, began to filter in from the villages in the theatre of operations, and kept the people agog. Saavedra, writing at this time, says: "He who is an observer of the human species will note in this general uneasiness that kind of agitation which involuntarily gives rise in people's minds to an expectation of decisive events."

The population could not get themselves to think of any business; the war absorbed them, and it was the universal topic of conversation. On the morning of the 18th, news arrived that Castaños had taken the fortified position of Los Visos, but not the high road where the enemy was established in force; it described the intolerable heat and thirst which had accounted for many lives, soldiers having thrown themselves in despair into the river which the French were defending with the utmost vigour.

In the evening news came of Reding's great success at Menjíbar; the battle had been "obstinate and glorious." The enemy, whose best troops were there, had lost General Gobert, guns and colours. "Amongst other feats of gallantry Reding's and Ordene's regiments, and the Spanish and Walloon Guards, had formed a famous square, which repulsed repeated attacks by 800 French Cuirassiers, supported by clouds of skirmishers and by a regiment of *Chasseurs à cheval*, in all 1,400 horsemen, who were all but annihilated."

"This news, spread by the people, caused extraordinary excitement, and everyone was now sure of victory; but those who knew the real state of affairs, though they heard of these fine beginnings, were cautious as regarded their expectations of ultimate success. Vigilance was redoubled in all exposed parts, but the public rejoicing degenerated into disorder. All day and part of the night the streets were thronged with people cheering and singing, but it was from pure joy. Patriotic songs multiplied, and were the favourite airs of the day. The names of the members of the Junta, of Castaños, Reding and Ferdinand VII. resounded on all sides."

Letters kept arriving which repeated the advantages gained by the Spaniards with natural exaggeration. The letter which made most impression on the Junta was one from the Governor of Cordova, Field-Marshal D. Antonio Gregorio, stating that when the Commissary of the Army made known the need of funds, all unanimously responded, and notwithstanding the ruin and pillage which they had endured, they made up a sum of a million reals (£10,000) for—as they put it—"the relief of the heroes who were going to save their country."

That evening, the 18th, the President had a letter from Castaños saying that the plan of campaign made at Utrera was about to be realised, that Dupont was surrounded, and that Vedel, who had arrived at Bailen the day before, had been forced to retire, being threatened in rear by Mourgeon and Valdecanas. He added that Dupont might attempt to escape by

the Sierra, that he had just intercepted a letter from that General to Beliard relating the straits in which he found himself, but that he was resolved to defend the bridge of Andujar "to the last."

"Under these circumstances," said Castaños, "I expect to-morrow to make a decisive attack in conjunction with Reding and the other troops of the vanguard, trusting in the help of the God of Armies and the intercession of the protecting saints of the Spanish Army, Santiago and San Fernando."

The 20th July was an anxious one for the Junta and for the people. "At half-past five in the afternoon," writes Castaños, "a *Parlementaire* arrived asking for suspension of hostilities to enable General Dupont to confer with General Reding. I have refused it. A few minutes since I received a letter from General Pena stating that the French wanted to surrender; I would concede nothing less than that they should be prisoners of war, promising the General and his officers to retain their swords and one portmanteau of clothes, bearing in mind the pillage they had carried out in our cities; assuring them, however, that they would be treated with the consideration which the French squadron received in Cadiz in accordance with Spanish generosity. Whilst I am preparing details, Your Highness will know that we have taken guns, made prisoners, and in a word that General Dupont is surrounded. Army Headquarters, Andujar, 19th July, 6 p.m."

The messenger was sent off to rest, and told to keep the news private.

The President summoned the Junta, and though it was recognised that the surrender of the French was not as yet a *fait accompli*, it was decided to print and circulate the General's letter. By 6 a.m. on the 21st all knew the contents. "Though there were no salutes, the joy was so boisterous and expressive that no one could doubt that a great triumph was already assured."

To avoid misapprehension and undeceive the people, who imagined that the French were in the inferiority as regards numbers, the President made known the contents of Dupont's letter to Beliard, which he had kept to himself up to that time, proving that as the French had 24,000 men, including 3,500 cavalry, the army had fought with equal numbers, though the French had the superiority in cavalry, and twenty years of war behind them.

The people meanwhile awaited details of the capitulation with intense eagerness.

At 10 p.m. a cavalry soldier who had been present at the battle arrived bringing letters from some officers, more particularly one written by a field officer, and which the recipient hastened to communicate to the Junta.

This related that "Reding, having again joined hands with the vanguard under Venegas and the division of Coupigné had left Bailen at 2 a.m. in order to arrive at the point of attack at the hour agreed on. When it was barely possible to distinguish

objects they ran straight ~~up to~~ the advanced troops of Dupont. Our troops knew the ground well; they recognised that they were advantageously placed, halted, deployed for action, placed their batteries quickly in position and took up firm ground. Dupont attacked in three columns, but was vigorously repulsed; he repeated five attacks of the same kind, but with no better luck. At last he himself with his generals led a last and desperate attempt in four columns. Our troops remained immovable, reserving their fire, and awaited the attack in silence and serenity almost at pistol shot. Then our artillery and battalions opened on the enemy a *feu d'enfer* which dismounted their guns, covered the field with dead, and forced the French to beat a hasty retreat. It was 10 a.m., and we began to hear distant firing. This was the division of General Peña which was arriving and was falling on the enemy's rear. The confusion and disorder of the French cannot be described. Dupont, defeated in front, attacked in rear, unable either to advance, retire, or escape, without food and almost without water, asked for a suspension of hostilities, and capitulated—forced to submit to such conditions as might be imposed on him."

The Members of the Junta were now set at ease in their minds, and "retired to rest under the laurels which their General and his army had secured."

The laborious capitulation having been arranged and terminated, Giron, commissioned by Castaños and Tilly, to carry the news to Seville, started on the 21st July.

"I left Andujar post haste at 11.30 a.m. I entered Seville at 4.30 p.m. on the 22nd. What happiness amongst the inhabitants! What craziness of joy! I was given the rank of Brigadier with letters of service; I renounced the £240 to which I was entitled by the latter. They wanted in the first moments of their joy to make me a Field-Marshal. I thought it my duty to decline that."

The General, says Saavedra, after explaining everything in his despatch in the most modest manner, attributing his success to the assistance and dispositions of the Junta, begged that a solemn festival of thanksgiving to Saint Ferdinand might be arranged in accordance with his promise before going into action.

The Junta ordered three nights of illuminations. On the morning of the 23rd the Members repaired, preceded by a guard of honour and accompanied by all the Corps in Seville, to a solemn *Te Deum*, which was chanted in procession through the naves of the Cathedral, concluding with prayers in the Chapel Royal, where the body of the sanctified monarch was exhibited.

This was a fitting culmination of the happy intoxication wherein the joy of the shipwrecked on touching *terra firmâ* is mingled with pride at an almost incredible triumph!

To the courageous generation which traced with its blood in the history of the world the glowing name of BAILEN may with justice be ascribed the honour and prestige which have

been the safeguard of Spain against serious invasion for well nigh a century.

VII.

AFTER THE BATTLE—OFFENSIVE INSINUATIONS—THE SURRENDER —PLANS AND DELAYS—THE ACTION BY THE JUNTA—FINAL SUMMARY.

The details of the capitulation of Dupont's Army are public property. It would be hard to find a precedent for a surrender such as this, an entire division (Vedel's) giving up its arms without any fight. There is nothing essential that is not known of the affair. The negotiators of the terms added greatly to the advantages obtained by the victors, though certain ignorant and untruthful historians have not hesitated to attribute the fruits of clever diplomacy to sinister threats of cruelty. In an interpellation addressed by Brigadier Macdonal (sic) to Brigadier Giron, there occurs this question:—

"By what means did Castaños produce such fear, that Vedel, being still very far away, had to surrender?"

To this insinuated suspicion of cruel and intimidating threats Giron replied with dignity:—

"General Castaños did nothing to produce fear. The rout suffered by Dupont, and the desperate situation in which he found himself after the battle, was bound by itself to produce fear, and did produce it, and the desire to ameliorate the conditions of the capitulation for his troops caused him, without doubt, to include the troops of General Vedel with his own, in which matter General Castaños negotiated with great cleverness. The situation of Vedel was, moreover, very critical. Being 50 leagues removed from any hope of succour, in the midst of a hostile and determined people, and with a victorious enemy in superior numbers in front of him, capable of pursuing and overtaking him without difficulty, he could not flatter himself into the smallest hopes. General Castaños understood how to profit by all these circumstances, and by the passions of those with whom he was treating, and he completed by good diplomacy in the terms of surrender what he had gained by arms on the battlefield."

A proof that the aim of the French was to extend the concessions of the capitulation to the greatest possible number of their troops is to be found in the fact "that General Marescot begged as a favour that the Commander-in-Chief should include on the same footing as the troops of Vedel, the garrison of Manzanares, which came from the centre of La Mancha, no great distance from Madrid, to lay down its arms in Andalusia, so great was the influence of the decisive victory in their minds."

On 24th July, Castaños informed the Junta that Dupont with his division, had filed past through the midst of the Spanish Army, formed up on the battlefield, handing over eagles, standards, artillery, arms, ammunition wagons, and baggage,

"the grandest and most flattering spectacle which could offer itself to the eyes of Spaniards."

Giron, in his description, says:—"Eight thousand, two hundred and forty-two splendid French troops, marching with the martial step peculiar to that army and with the pride of its past triumphs, came to lay down its arms at the feet of a Spanish Army formed in 20 days."

"Our soldiers did not belie their characters under these circumstances; satisfied, but not overcome, with their triumph, they knew how to preserve the dignity of the national character and to respect in their enemy, who had already surrendered, the valour and misfortunes of the conquerors of Europe."

So complete had the victory been that it was necessary to authorise the aide-de-camp, Villoutrey, to bear to Madrid the news of what had occurred, "such an event being unknown to Europe since the celebrated victory of Bitonto."¹

Some disorder occurred in the distribution of the spoil owing to the presence of a large number of inhabitants, some from a long distance, "who appropriated a good deal of it, a proceeding which was tolerated by the very troops who themselves had principally suffered; but great success and overflowing hearts made them generous."

The feeding of 24,000 prisoners² was a serious matter: some were sent to work in the fields with the inhabitants, others were put on to public works; they were registered without any force, "leaving them such property as appeared to be their own or belonging to their corps; but all works of art and valuables, especially sacred vessels, which were found in their possession, were returned to the churches or other owners to whom they belonged."

Saavedra relates how a disturbance occurred in the Port of Santa Maria, because when Dupont was embarking "the trunk belonging to one of his officers broke open and a chalice fell out of it." The popular indignation at the sight of this was only appeased by the firmness of the Governor and by the exertions of the regiment of Ecija.

On 1st August Castaños entered Seville amidst the greatest enthusiasm. His first act was to go to the cathedral to thank the Almighty and his protector, San Fernando, and to deposit in the chapel dedicated to the latter the trophies captured from the enemy. He then visited the Junta, which acclaimed him Captain-General of the Army and one of the Junta's most worthy members."

¹ At the battle of Bitonto, which is near the Gulf of Bari, in Italy, the Imperialists were signally defeated by the Spanish under the Duke of Montemar, General to Don Carlos, on 27th May, 1734. Don Carlos was crowned King of Naples, the German Viceroy was expelled, and the Duke of Montemar created Duke of Bitonto. This affair led to the subjugation of Sicily, which soon followed.—J.C.D.

² Included in this number are those who surrendered with the French squadron in Cadiz.

And now we have to note the serious inconvenience which must inevitably result from the Constitution of the Juntas, especially as regards the course of future operations.

Castañes was obliged, in order to reap the fruits of the battle, to march rapidly on Madrid.

Some thought that there being a French army in Portugal and 24,000 prisoners in Andalusia, the former could not desert the latter, and it was considered advisable that Castañes, having effected a junction with the force in Extremadura, which amounted, it was said, to 20,000 men, together with 10,000 Portuguese, should fall on Lisbon, and, after securing the surrender of Junot, should march to the French frontier to cut off the retreat of the enemy. However, news arrived that England had taken on herself the task of driving Junot from Portugal, and it was then decided that the army should march direct on Madrid.

The Spanish force was unprovided with the indispensable means for operating at such a distance, and thereby difficulty was experienced in supplying it and getting it started.

On 15th August the General-in-Chief left for Madrid, accompanied by the representative of the Junta, D. Andres Miñano, and arrived in Madrid on the 24th.

The Central Junta having been established in Aranjuez on 24th September, the Junta of Seville then became reduced to a dependent and subordinate body.

The worthy President of the Junta of Seville thus alludes to the subject:—

“The Junta of Seville did what it could during its period of power to carry out the great object which it had at heart; but it had the defects inseparable from a numerous body especially under such difficult circumstances. Twenty-four persons of different and even of opposite characters, each of whom believes himself to be invested with supreme authority, and who sees the population submitting to his orders, are not easily reduced to that unity which is the first requisite for a well-regulated government.

“There were in the Junta strong and bitter discords; there was also the spirit of vanity, which poisons the most well-deserving bodies. This was especially noticeable after the battle of Bailen. Many individuals, who had shown great austerity in troublous times, had not sufficient strength of character to resist the seduction of prosperity. They wanted superior treatment, greater lustre, and higher honours than they were entitled to.

“Notwithstanding these minor defects, the Junta did good service. The hands of the members never touched a farthing of public money. The total amount disbursed during those memorable four months barely amounted to £210,000. With this the Junta created, maintained, and sent into action a fine army of about 30,000 men; it maintained 20,000 prisoners for two months, and religiously fulfilled all the obligations of the State.

"There were no extraordinary imposts levied, and no debt incurred beyond a loan in Gibraltar amounting to under £20,000, and punctually paid, really before it was due."

The whole course of action was dictated by sagacity and prudence, and by consideration for the Commander-in-Chief, whom they left untrammelled and free to act as he thought best.

The regular forces gained much glory in this successful campaign, and the revolution increased rather than diminished their discipline and patriotism.

The measures adopted by Castaños to keep in hand the heterogeneous team entrusted to him were wise and clever. He guided his recruits gently at first and introduced them to the seriousness of war by gradual steps; from manœuvres to engagements at long ranges, thence to the skirmishes of Los Visos and the harder fighting at Menjibar and Villanueva. This explains the admirable firmness they displayed at the supreme moment, which caused Thiers to allude to them as "walls of bronze."

The striking figure of Castaños emerged from this battle still grander and more noble; careful and prudent in his undertakings, conciliatory in council, clever and foreseeing in initiative, modest in victory, persuasive and affable in negotiations, he possessed the hand of iron in a velvet glove, and knew how to guide multitudes with a subtle and imperceptible power of command.

He was fortunate; that portion, by no means small, which in war is due to chance, was decided in his favour; but no one could deny that all which in war rests on calculation was in his case attended to with certainty and notable resolution.

But the real hero of that epoch is the population of Seville. On assuming the mantle of authority, which dropped at the time of the revolution, it hastened to place it on the shoulders of those who so completely justified their selection. The patriotism of the people was admirable.

The Sevillanos showed that when souls are exalted to a dangerous height the people are invincible, if enthusiasm, instead of overflowing into garrulousness, or ferocious revenge, will but subside into voluntary obedience, by which a vociferating mob is transformed into a conquering host.

Giron thus deals with the subject of the fruits of this decisive battle. "He who may desire to ascribe to the battle its full value, and to judge how far the victory of Bailen influenced the fate of Spain and of Europe, should for a moment imagine it to have been lost, the French victorious on the shores of the Guadalquivir, spreading all over Andalusia, breaking up the Government in Seville, and assaulting the walls of Cadiz, which city later on became the refuge of the entire nation; the usurping King meanwhile remaining tranquilly in the capital of the kingdom; his party freed from vicissitudes and risks being daily augmented by timid and lukewarm Spaniards; the

prestige which preceded and invested the French eagles, fortified by a new victory actually seen, not merely reported; the first attempt of a people which dared to resist the yoke which others had submitted to in a miserable and torturing silence. . . . Such and still worse would have been the consequences of a disaster at that juncture had the state of affairs been as above described; imagination can, with difficulty, conceive it all; the country, now free, shudders at the bare idea of it."

"And what were the results of this victory? What carried the French, the undisturbed occupants of the capital of the Spanish Empire, beyond the Ebro? What gave the Spaniards breathing time? What enabled them to form a central government, and start the pernicious, though at that moment indispensable, federation of the Provinces? What induced the partisans of King Joseph to hesitate, and brought over to our side all those who did not fear the vengeance of the indignant people? What led to the French Army being isolated in Portugal, and to the subsequent victory of Vimiero and Convention of Cintra, which freed that kingdom and gave it the necessary time to organise its ulterior defence? What exalted the soul of the English nation and made our cause popular in that powerful State? What gave to the rest of the world the example of a great triumph gained by raw troops over the conquerors of Prussia, Austria and Russia? What made them conceive the possibilities of the future Leipsic and Waterloo, where was completed so gloriously that which was commenced at Bailen?

"If Europe some day were to erect a monument to bring to the mind of generations to come its glorious emancipation from the colossal Power which, arising out of an unheard-of revolution dominated her for a considerable time, Spaniards would read with pride on the base of this monument the memorable name of BAILEN, and history, uninfluenced by passion, would inscribe in letters of gold the pages wherein they present to future generations that portentous battle which led to those immortal victories on the fields of Saxony and Flanders, and restored to disturbed Europe its independence and repose!"