

*Journal, from the 19th of May to the 2d of June, of the taking Possession of the Piedmontese Fortrefs Ceva by the Imperial Royal Troops; of their Preparations of Defence; of the Circumstances attending the Blockade and Bombardment of the Fortrefs, and its Deliverance.*

On the 19th of May, Orders were issued by the Major-General, Baron Sekendorf, to the Regiment Esterhazi, to send a Division of Two Hundred and Fifty Men by forced Marches, with the necessary Ammunition, a Corporal of the Artillery, Eight Gunners, and Fourteen Assistants, to Ceva, to gar- rison this Fortrefs.

At Ten o'Clock in the Morning on the same Day, Captain Schmelzer set off with the Division to which he was appointed, and marched over Tresonaro, Rivolta, to Acqui; the Imperial Royal Troops, however, were not permitted to pass here, because they were mistaken by the People for French dressed in Imperial Uniform.

Although Captain Schmelzer adduced every possible Testimony of Veracity, yet he could not succeed in removing this Error from the Minds of the People. He therefore took a Position upon an Eminence before the Town, placed his Picquets, sent out Patroles from the Peasantry in the adjacent Country, and, on account of the Proximity of the Enemy, ordered his Troops to be partly under Arms. He himself went to Acqui; and, by the active Mediation of the Archbishop of that Town, he succeeded in obtaining the Passage for the following Day.

On the 20th he continued his March with all necessary Circumspection. But because the Report had spread itself over the whole Country to Ceva, that his Troops were French disguised, he always sent, half an Hour before him, several Peasants, who had been previously fully convinced that they were Imperial Soldiers, in order to pacify the armed Peasantry, who had threatened to assail them. This was the more necessary, as Captain Schmelzer received Information that the French Soldiers, of the Division of General Grouchy, who were plundering in the Mountains of Cassano, had been acquainted with his March, and collected themselves to pursue him.

In order that Captain Schmelzer might have timely Information of the Motions of the Enemy, he sent about Fifty Peasants to the Mountains, with Directions to impede their March as much as possible, and to inform him of their Approach by Signal Shots. In the meanwhile he proceeded with forced Marches along the Left Bank of the Bormida, after he had sent before him some Peasants across the River to observe General Victor, who, with his Division, was posted between Acqui and Spigna.

In this Manner he fortunately passed with his Detachment through Two Columns of the Enemy to the Environs of Monastero and Cesule, where he rested his Troops till the repeated Fire from the Peasants in the Mountains gave the Signal to break up. He now went forward to Corte Miglia, where he again halted. But an Hour after some Peasants arrived with the Intelligence that the Enemy were approaching; he therefore during the Night passed the Mountains to Cara Vanzana, where his Troops rested till the Break of Day.

On the 21st of May he passed over Niela and Belbo and arrived at Ceva, where they made some

Scruples of receiving him, occasioned by the above-mentioned Report. He therefore went into the Fortrefs, and convinced the Commandant Francolino, and several other Chiefs of the armed Peasantry, of their Mistake, that his Detachment was sent to them from the Commander in Chief of the Austrian Army in Italy. He then, conformable to his Orders, entered the Fortrefs, Drums beating, &c.

Captain Schmelzer observing great Disorder in the Fortrefs reproached the Commandant Francolino, who apologised by saying, that he was unable to keep the People in Order and Subordination; and that a serious Exertion to restrain them had frequently endangered his Life.

In order to make every necessary Arrangement for Defence with the greatest Energy, Captain Schmelzer took on himself the Command of the Fortrefs, but retained the late Commandant to avail himself of his local Knowledge. This Officer, who, as Chief of the Peasants, by taking the Fortrefs, shewed his Attachment to the good Cause, fulfilled every Expectation of the Captain Schmelzer by his Willingness to undertake every Service during the Blockade.

On the 22d of May he made Application to the Magistrates of the Town to supply the Fortrefs with Provisions, having found there only Sufficiency for Three Days. The Magistrates complied very willingly, and requested a Memorial of the Necessaries, which he sent.

Then he went to the Magazines of Ammunition; where he found much Neglect, the Floor being covered with Powder. Although the Peasants had taken a vast Quantity of Ammunition, and more than Two Hundred and Fifty Thousand Cartridges, yet there still remained a copious Supply. To establish Order in the Magazines, he permitted no Ammunition to be taken without his Knowledge; for which Purpose he placed Sentinels before them. He ordered the scattered Powder to be collected, and the Magazines to be cleaned. This was performed by the Corporal Stowasser and Eight Gunners in the most expeditious Manner.

In the Fortification he every where found Traces of the Destruction committed by the Peasants; Palisades, great and small Gates of the Out-Works, were burnt, the Iron-Works demolished, even the Fascines torn up in such a Manner, that whole Traverses had fallen.

To remedy this, in some Degree, he sent for Three Cartwrights, One Joiner, Two Smiths, Two Locksmiths, and One Gunsmith of the Town, whom he kept in the Fortrefs. He succeeded in replacing the Palisades and the most essential Gates, being supplied with every Thing he wanted by the Town.

The greatest Part of the Gun Carriages upon the Ramparts and in the Magazines being unserviceable, the Captain Schmelzer placed them on those Places where an Attack was least probable, and disposed the Rest in the most eligible Manner.

Whitehall, July 26, 1799.

*Whereas it has been humbly represented to the King, that several Accidents have lately happened to some of the Powder Works belonging to Mr. John Butts on Hounslow Heath, and that there is great Reason to believe that the Whole or Part of the same was wilfully*