

Such is the portraiture drawn by Mr. Blaquiere of the wretched and miserable condition of the Spanish nation and government during the unchecked sway of Ferdinand and his corrupt counsellors. That every intermediate rank of the community, from the highest grandee to the most abject peasant, felt the oppressive hand of despotism, there can be no reason to doubt; but among the reflecting part of the people, and especially among that portion who had cherished from principle, and supported with ardour, the liberties of the country, the heavy yoke of tyranny was peculiarly galling. It has before been noticed, that Mina, with several other distinguished chiefs in the late war, offered to support the cortes in resisting the first aggressions of the king against the constitutional code. In this list were the illustrious names of Ballasteros, Villa Campa, and Porlier; and although the motives which induced the cortes to decline the proffered aid are worthy of respect, yet it is a subject of regret, that their scrupulousness should have led them to a decision which threw into the hands of an unworthy prince the unrestrained power of cruelty and oppression. Had these popular leaders been encouraged in their patriotic efforts, there is no likelihood that the reign of terror would have been so easily established, or so long protracted.

Though no immediate indication of popular resistance manifested itself for some considerable period after the bold enterprise of Mina had failed, discontent was rapidly spreading throughout the Spanish population, which was accelerated by the increasing severity of the Serviles. Menaced with death, exile, or imprisonment, the patriotic party was secretly meditating measures of retaliation, and a plan of organization was gradually forming, with a view of extirpating a monstrous tyranny, which was overwhelming the country with its destructive proceedings. The voice of

by his followers might be regarded as a conquered territory. To prove that neglect and indifference on the part of the government was alone the cause of their success, the special commission had not been appointed more than a few months, when it succeeded in dispersing the freebooters; of whom not less than seventy, with Melchor at their head, were executed."

complaint was heard, in sullen murmurs, in the capital and the provinces, while the known temper of the king's government operated as an effectual check against direct and general remonstrance. There is one instance of patriotic virtue and courage, however, which is worthy of record, and will be adverted to by future generations with sentiments of the profoundest veneration and applause. I allude to an energetic appeal made to the sovereign, in the midst of his career of madness, by Don Juan Martin, better known by the appellation of *El Empecinado*, a soldier of distinguished bravery, a patriot of the first order. During the brighter days of the Spanish monarchy, an invaluable custom had obtained, that all persons having complaints to make, of oppression or irregularity in the system of administration, should have free access to the sovereign, to lay them before him. Considering the general public character of Ferdinand, it is somewhat extraordinary that he piqued himself upon preserving to his subjects this privilege; though scarcely an instance occurred of its exercise, that was not visited with marks of royal or ministerial persecution. *El Empecinado*, who had raised himself from an humble rank of life, beheld and lamented the degraded state of his country, and, braving the resentments of the court, availed himself of the privilege of presenting to the king a strong representation of the iniquitous conduct of the government. This production is a model of simplicity and natural eloquence, embracing, in a short compass, a luminous view of existing evils, and pointing out, with admirable acuteness, the true interests of the monarch. Whether viewed as an able exposition, or a valuable historical document, it possesses claims to especial regard; and I shall therefore transcribe an epitome of its contents, as contained in a work of great merit.

The old soldier begins by telling Ferdinand, that it is not a difficult task to flatter kings, though extremely hazardous to tell them the truth without incurring their displeasure. His next care is, to compliment those princes, who, animated by a desire of rendering their subjects happy, have listened with a favourable ear to representations tending to expose the turpitude of their ministers, or to suggestions

for the removal of public abuses. Taking it for granted that his royal master is amongst this number, and presuming, with good reason, on his own approved fidelity, the writer proceeds to contrast the joyful hopes of the nation on Ferdinand's return, with the character of those who had obtained his exclusive confidence and friendship: "Men," says he, "who had formerly sought the favour of Godoy, that rendered no service whatever during the war, but remained passive spectators, shut up in Cadiz or Ceuta, while thousands of their countrymen fell daily in the generous struggle for independence. Yet were these individuals *grandees*, and, for the most part, bred to a military life; consequently, well able to serve, both with their persons and immense wealth." A decided enemy to party distinctions, El Empecinado treats the *Liberales* and *Serviles* with equal indifference: his principal object is to impress the necessity of forgiveness and oblivion on the mind of his sovereign; particularly where a diversity of political opinion had been the inevitable result of recent circumstances. An address, full of good sense and moderation, is then put into the mouth of Ferdinand, which his majesty would have done wisely to adopt. The writer next asks, what those who give the king different advice, had obtained? The loss of South America; whose population—already exasperated by the cruelties exercised on them at home, and the imprisonment of their representatives in the cortes, as also the ruin of innumerable families in both hemispheres—were now driven to the last extremity of despair. Such was the effect of the policy pursued by his majesty's advisers, that some lamented the loss of parents, others their wives, husbands, or dearest relatives and friends; while all had to deplore victims, sacrificed in a ruinous and unnatural contest, or thrown into dungeons, which had been so filled that it became necessary to convert the asylums of religion into public prisons.—Alluding to another subject, the memorialist exclaims: "Let your majesty but deign to cast your eyes for a moment on the finances! What a chaos do they not present! They were but too justly compared to a labyrinth, more complicated than that of Crete: those who enter are irrecoverably lost; for it is in vain to attempt extricating

themselves. Such is the complication, such the obscurity, of this department, that, were an angel from heaven to descend and take charge of it, he must begin by totally destroying the misshapen edifice; otherwise he would experience the fate of all the others who have so vainly attempted its management." After calling upon the king to convoke the cortes, according to his solemn promise, as the sole means of restoring confidence and credit, a pointed allusion is made to the ingratitude shewn by the clergy, after the restitution of church property and exemption from the payment of taxes, while the people were borne down by their weight. Here the writer proves, that, instead of coming forward to remedy the evils created in a great measure by themselves, many individuals, entirely unconnected with government, had been found to make more advantageous offers, and greater personal sacrifices, than the whole hierarchy put together. With respect to the administration of justice, it is truly observed, that the provinces were a prey to lawsuits and litigation, mostly springing from the rapacity of the legal profession, and intestine division excited by faction. "Justice," says the writer, "no longer exists for Spain; arbitrary forms, and relentless persecution, having usurped its place. The laws are trampled on: calumny and espionage alone obtain patronage and encouragement. Hence it is, that whoever wishes to consummate the ruin of a relative, neighbour, or friend, has only to present himself before a judge, and charge the object of his hatred or jealousy with an imaginary crime: the accused is thrown into prison, cut off from all communication with his family; and when, after many months of suffering, his innocence is proved, the informer remains unpunished, and not unfrequently reaps the fruit of his iniquity in a lucrative place under government."

Such is the substance of this admirable document, which would have done honour to the most virtuous patriot that ever ornamented human society: and when it is considered, that it exposed truths which reflected immediate disgrace upon the sovereign and his associates in crime; that it called upon them for an abandonment of a line of policy which gratified their ambition and was congenial with their taste;

that it was presented at a time when those who adopted the sentiments it contained were exposed to the vengeance of malignity, and the scourge of despotic power—when all these considerations are taken into the account, it is impossible not to venerate the man who had the singular courage and honesty to place himself between his country's ruin and his own almost certain destruction. The friends of El Empecinado trembled for his fate, when they became acquainted with the memorial having been presented to the king; while the author, strongly intrenched in a consciousness that he had only spoken the truth, and in a conviction that his efforts were solely directed towards the good of his country, refused to quit the capital, until he received an assurance that his letter had been perused, not only by the king, but also by his ministers. To those who knew the baseness of the principles of the court, it seemed passing strange that the patriot was not immediately seized, and punished as a traitor; and their forbearance can only be ascribed to the terror created in them by the brilliancy of that virtue and integrity which shone in the conduct of this inflexible individual. Having made this last effort of loyalty and patriotism, El Empecinado sought a retreat in Leon, his native province, for about a year; when the Serviles found a pretext for his arrest, and he was sentenced to banishment.

It is not to be wondered at, that the unheard-of oppressions of the court should beget a soreness of feeling, and a strong sympathy, among the victims of royal vengeance. Patriotic societies were secretly formed, in various parts of the kingdom; which, notwithstanding the vigilance of the government, increased in number, and became formidable in their influence: and, considering the various means of corruption and venality resorted to by the ministers, a higher tribute to the national character could not possibly be paid, than the knowledge of this fact conveys, that there is no instance on record, to prove that any individual of these associations ever betrayed his coadjutors. National liberty was recognized as their bond of union. The circumstance of there being a constitution already in existence, for which the people had an enthusiastic regard, had a most salutary

effect in creating confidence, and their efforts were exclusively devoted to its restoration.* The city of Cadiz, as

* The formation of popular clubs naturally suggests itself in all national commotions, where the struggle for ascendancy lies between opposite parties. "When bad men combine, good men ought to associate," is a maxim as correct in policy, as its adoption is powerful in effect. In a period of Spanish affairs subsequent to that of which I am now speaking, great clamour was raised against a political club denominated the *Fontana de Oro*. By the ultra-royalists of England and France, this society was compared to the Jacobin club of Paris; and it was represented as most sanguinary in its objects, and dangerous in its tendency. This view, however, has certainly been incorrect: the subjoined account of one of the debates at this famous club, with its accompanying observations, may serve to correct such a representation; while it will afford the reader some amusement, if not add to his information. It is contained in the fifteenth letter of Count Pecchio, addressed to an English lady of rank, and bears the date of Madrid, August 22, 1821.— "I passed the whole of yesterday evening at the *Fontana de Oro*: do not be alarmed at the sound, amiable lady, nor believe that the above place of resort is a Pandemonium, such as that described by your Milton; neither the blood of kings nor ministers is drunk at this assemblage. I will endeavour to make you somewhat better acquainted with the said *Fontana de Oro*, and which so many represent as a monster more horrible than that of the Apocalypse. The place known by the name of *Fontana de Oro*, is nothing more than a large room on the ground-floor, capable of containing nearly a thousand persons. In the midst of this saloon are placed two pulpits, whence the tribunes address the sovereign people: this sovereign wears neither diadem nor mantle; he generally appears in a plain coat; instead of a sceptre he carries a stick, no less respectable, upon which he leans for support. The orators give their names in to the political chief, in the morning of the day in which they are to speak, thus securing their responsibility. The debates begin at nine o'clock; and in two hours after, a bell, which is heard through the hall, puts an end to the speaking, and dismisses the auditory. Last night's meeting was likely to be very stormy, as Morillo, who was falsely informed that the people intended to assail a military guard, mounted his horse, and, followed by an orderly, rushed into the crowd, which he treated with great violence, trampling those who came in his way under foot, and threatening others with his sabre. The sovereign people, who have also the same rights to inviolability as other sovereigns, demanded the punishment of this act of less majesty. The first orator who mounted the tribune, after having pathetically recapitulated what every one present already knew, decided that Morillo should be punished at once, by the hands of the people whom he had offended. This imprudent Demosthenes was a very young man, who did not evidently foresee what would be the probable effects of the instrument which he wished to see

on all occasions in which constitutional liberty was involved, was particularly prominent in rendering these societies prac-

used; yet several voices were instantly heard calling for the head of Morillo. But another speaker, Nunez, took possession of the rostrum, and exclaimed that crimes ought not to be expiated by crimes, that, in such an affair as this, they could not be at the same time prosecutor, judge, and jury. The sovereign people, who also occasionally fall into the error of not liking the truth, bellowed and roared with considerable violence, until at length the moderator was forced to quit the tribune before his speech had been half completed. A third orator next came forward, and, after ingeniously humouring the anger of the people, in exaggerating Morillo's crime, and representing it in the blackest colours, he suddenly recalled the general's bravery to the mind of his hearers. 'Let an over impetuous general be by all means stripped of the delicate situation of captain-general,' said he, 'but why not retain him as a warrior, worthy of again leading our battalions to victory? Morillo is a soldier of fortune: he has ennobled the rank from which he sprung, by his military exploits. Let us be generous towards a man whose elevation is due to his sword, and not to court favour.' At these words, the cries of rage were converted into murmurs of approbation; but while the auditors were balancing between the sentiment of vengeance and that of justice, a sonorous voice was suddenly heard to exclaim, '*Dios!*' at the sound of which the orator and audience immediately fell on their knees. It was the Viatica, which passed the door in the midst of torches: it was borne by a priest, dressed in superb canonicals, and seated in an elegant landau. Here it may be proper to inform you, that whenever Dios leaves a church, he has a right to enter the first carriage he meets, if it even happened to be that of the king; all occupation, even to an air of Catalani, must cease in the vicinity of his passage. After this interruption, which does not prove that the Liberals are atheists, murmurs recommenced: nevertheless, the orator continued his speech; but a beggar, who had contrived to slip into the crowd, occasioned considerable annoyance by his efforts to express some words which no person could understand; being repeatedly called to order without effect, an officer, who, from the broadness of his shoulders, and his attention to the proceedings, might be regarded as the lictor of the tribunes, seized the obstreperous mendicant by the collar, and, raising him above the heads of the assembly, thrust him out of the nearest window, with a degree of agility and ease which gave ample scope to the risible faculties of all present. When order was restored, the auditory betrayed signs of regret at having interrupted an orator who had always shewn himself so faithful to the interests of the people: Nunez was therefore unanimously called back to the tribune, which he ascended amidst the plaudits of the whole audience. He began by reproaching the assembly, as gently as if he had been speaking to his mistress, with the suspicion of infidelity which it had entertained of him; and then, continuing his task,

tically useful to the common cause. Among all classes of the community, the Freemasons, a fraternity which was scarcely known in Spain previous to the French revolution, excited the strongest suspicion in the government, and met with a proportionate share of persecution. With such extreme jealousy was this sect contemplated, that not only all the powers of the court and the Inquisition were directed against it, but the aid of the see of Rome was solicited and obtained, to effect its annihilation. Such a coadjuvancy was worthy of the Roman pontiff, the object of which was the suppression of civil and religious freedom. Under the sanction of his holiness the Pope, a fulminating decree on the subject of masonry was circulated by the inquisitor-general, and numbers were arrested on suspicion of belonging to that body.* It is as truly surprising as lamentable,

he proved that Morillo could only be punished by the laws. He ended, by triumphing over every prejudice; and thus prevented the law from being violated. The meeting was then adjourned, at its usual hour, amidst cries of 'Long live the Constitution!—I have thus sketched one of those tempests that sometimes break out at the celebrated Fontana de Oro; but be assured they never occur, except when provoked by an irresistible cause: at all other times, nothing can exceed the decorum and silence that pervades the whole auditory. Eight or nine hundred persons, of both sexes and all ages, attend every night to hear the constitutional catechism read: this ceremony generally continues two hours, during which the hearers remain standing, and pay the most marked attention to what is passing. The orators are never betrayed into frivolity, nor the audience into levity. If, as will sometimes occur, the speaker is embarrassed for a word, it is suggested by several voices in the most good-natured manner, after which the silence is uninterrupted. An orator having lately exclaimed, that he was ready to accuse any functionary whatever, even though 'as high as _____' 'as high as _____' but would most probably never have reached the point of comparison, if one of the spectators, who appeared to be placed near him, had not dryly observed, 'as Chimborazo.' 'Ay!' repeated the orator, 'as high as Chimborazo!' and tranquilly continued his harangue."

* The pontifical edict was affixed to the doors of all the churches of the Peninsula, and accompanied by the following notice, which I have translated from *El Procurador General*, of January the 12th, 1815, one of the papers paid by the ministry and its principal organ.—"We, Dr. Francis Xavier, Mier y Campillo, by the Grace of God, and the Holy Apostolical See, Bishop of Almeria, Grand Cross of the Royal Order of Charles the Third, Member of the Council, and Inquisitor-General in

that regal despots and their advisers should have their eyes closed to this fact, palpable to every plebeian of common understanding and information, that excess of oppression and injustice will ultimately produce a reaction, fatal to the authority of the individuals who inflict it.

the several Kingdoms and Lordships of his Majesty,—to all the inhabitants, of whatsoever condition, quality, order, or dignity, they may be, we hereby make known, that our most holy father, Pius the Seventh, animated by his ardent desire to preserve the purity of the faith and the prosperity and peace of the Christian republic, has addressed to our pious sovereign, Ferdinand the Seventh, an edict in the Italian language directed against Freemasons;—that his majesty, uniting his religious intentions to those of the common Father of all the faithful, has deigned to communicate this edict to us, in order that it may be published throughout the said kingdoms.”—Here follows the edict; after which, his eminence, the inquisitor-general, proceeds: “We know, that many Spaniards, ceding to the yoke of our oppressors, and dragged into foreign countries, have had the weakness to attach themselves to societies which lead to sedition and independence, as well as to every other error and crime: we hope, nevertheless, that these individuals, restored to their country and freedom, will recollect they are Spaniards; and that, following the example of their ancestors, they will submit with respect and docility to the voice of the supreme pastor, and of our legitimate sovereign. By the advice of the members of the royal council, and the holy Inquisition, we henceforth offer to receive, with open arms, and all that tenderness which is suited to our ministry and character, those who, within the space of fifteen days from the date of this decree, shall spontaneously and voluntarily denounce themselves to us; but if any person (which God forbid!) persists in following the road to perdition, we shall employ, to our great regret, rigour and severity, causing the pains and penalties of the civil and canonical laws to be inflicted on the offenders. We hereby ordain, that the present edict be published in all the metropolitan churches, cathedrals, and colleges, of the kingdom, and that it shall be affixed to the doors of the said churches, &c. whence it shall not be taken, without our permission, under pain of excommunication and a fine of two hundred ducats.—FRANCIS XAVIER, *Inquisitor-General.*”

CHAPTER V.

Assemblage of the Army for South America—Unsuccessful Attempt to gain over Morillo to the Popular Cause—Plans of the Patriots suspended—Insurrection of the Garrison of Corunna and Ferrol, headed by General Porlier—Proclamation, Manifesto, and Correspondence, of that lamented Chief—He marches towards Santiago—Conduct of the Priesthood there—Arrival of the patriot Column at Ordenes—Defection of the Sergeants—Arrest of the General and Officers—How this Event was celebrated at Santiago—Trial of Porlier—Its Injustice and Irregularity—Sentence, Execution, and Biography of the fallen Hero.

WHILE persecution, distraction, and misery of every kind, were desolating Spain, the South American colonies were pursuing effectual measures for rendering themselves independent of the mother country. Early in the year 1815, an armament of 10,000 men were collected at Pont St. Marigo, intended as a reinforcement to the Spanish troops in Venezuela. General Morillo had the chief command of this force; and, as it was believed he was favourably disposed to the patriot cause, overtures were made to him to employ his army in restoring liberty to his country; and some liberal capitalists offered him pecuniary assistance in furtherance of so desirable an object. He is said at one time to have yielded to these solicitations; but, whether influenced by a sense of the danger of the enterprise, or tempted by the rich harvest of plunder which the new world presented, he shrunk from his engagement, confessed to government his half-formed intention of joining the patriots, and atoned for the offence by carrying a wax taper in a religious procession. By the embarkation of Morillo and his troops for South America, the hopes of the liberal party from this source were entirely extinguished.

To the province of Galicia, which had pre-eminently distinguished itself for its ardent attachment to constitutional liberty, the hopes of the patriots were now principally directed. General Lacy, the renowned hero of Catalonia, filled the office of captain-general there at the time of Ferdinand's return, and had essentially contributed

to raise and keep alive the flame of independence throughout the province; and it is probable, from the impatience of the inhabitants to shake off the galling fetters of tyranny, as well as from the advantages of resistance afforded by the mountainous nature of the country, they would have risen in a mass, had it not been for the sudden removal of Lacy, and the hopes they had been taught to entertain of Morillo's disaffection to the royal cause. At this period, too, information was received in Spain of Napoleon's successful invasion of France, which for the present suspended any popular movement, under an impression, that if he should ultimately prove victorious, a better chance would be given to the efforts of the people in re-conquering their freedom.

One of the most interesting occurrences connected with the Spanish struggle, was the generous and noble, though unsuccessful, attempt made by the gallant Porlier to rescue his country. This effort, with all its accompanying circumstances, claim a circumstantial narrative, which can be furnished in no better manner than in the statement already given by the historian I have so frequently adverted to.

“Juan Diez Porlier, whose name will be remembered, whose fate must be deplored, as long as patriotism and public virtue shall find admirers, had been included in the proscription which commenced after the king's return, and condemned to four years' imprisonment at the castle of San Anton,* where he was conveyed on the 10th of August 1814. Porlier had not been many months in his new abode, before all eyes were naturally directed to a man whose exploits and gallantry during the war, no less than his well-known ardour in the cause of freedom, had made him a just object of admiration and hope with the army. Although there can be no doubt of his anxious desire to co-operate in any plan that was likely to restore liberty, or that he received frequent invitations from his friends at Corunna to come forward, while shut up in San Anton, it is a matter

* San Anton is within a few hundred yards of Corunna, and forms one of the principal defences to the entrance of the harbour. It has long been appropriated to the reception of state-prisoners.

of doubt how far his approbation of their plans extended, before he obtained permission from Ferdinand to visit a small watering-place called Arteyo, within a few miles of Corunna, for the benefit of his health, which had suffered very much from his exertions in the field and subsequent confinement.

Having been removed towards the latter end of August 1815, escorted by an officer and twelve men, Porlier was lodged in a farm-house close to the sea, and had even commenced a course of medical regimen, when the most pressing entreaties came from the garrisons of Corunna and Ferrol, that he should place himself at their head, as they could no longer bear up against the harshness of their treatment, left as they were without the means of existence, while their oppressors lived in luxury upon the very funds destined by government for their support. The unanimity which prevailed may be inferred from Castanera the officer, and the escort, serving as the medium of communication. Fully aware of the accumulated sufferings to which his former companions were exposed, it would have been extremely difficult for a patriot of much less sensibility than Porlier to resist such an appeal; and though labouring under the debilitating effects of a protracted indisposition, which would have fully justified his declining the proposed honour, he seems to have thought no consideration of personal inconvenience should be put in competition with the hope, however doubtful, of saving his country.

When every thing was ready for executing the plan agreed on, the general left his retreat, accompanied by Castanera and his escort as a guard of honour, and entered Corunna about midnight, on the 18th of September. The garrison did not exceed 2000 men. Porlier's chief dependence for striking the first blow was on Colonel Cabrera, commanding the regiment at Lugo, eight hundred strong. Some of his friends having welcomed their leader at the town-gate, they conducted him to the barracks, where the troops were in readiness, and all the officers assembled. The sword once drawn, Porlier entered into his task with the fearless zeal of a man who felt the justice of his cause, and the important interests which depended on the issue.

His first care was to address the officers and soldiers separately. He began by declaring that no injury was intended towards the person of their sovereign: as to the motives which had induced him to come forward, they were too well known to require any explanation. When it was considered that the royal orders, enjoining the authorities to distribute the means placed at their disposal for supplying the army, were disregarded, and those means appropriated to other purposes, while the soldiers continued in the utmost wretchedness; he could not but applaud the spirit which prompted them to throw off their fetters, and was therefore ready to lead wherever the interests of their common country required his services. The general next enjoined moderation, and a regard to the strictest discipline; concluding his harangue by informing them, that the plan was not an isolated one, but embraced all the provinces; that the names of Ballasteros, Custanos, Lacy, and many others of equal rank, were amongst the leaders, whose only object was to establish a political system more conducive to the interests of the nation. The spirit and energy with which this short address was delivered, produced a talismanic effect on all present; and though interdicted from giving way to their feelings in *viva's*, nothing could exceed the eagerness shewn by each to follow their adopted chief; who immediately issued orders for the regiment to be divided into small detachments, and directed a few rounds of ball-cartridges to be distributed amongst them. While the officers were occupied in drawing up their respective parties, Porlier selected some of the most steady, to secure the person of the captain-general, his secretary, the members of the military commission, and a few others, known to be inimical to freedom.* This was effected without opposition, early on the morning of the 19th. While the prisoners were on their way to San Anton and Ferrol, all persons accused of political offences were set at liberty.

* Porlier directed that the authorities should be treated with the utmost respect; and that every possible attention might be paid to their wants while in confinement. His solicitude on this point was frequently expressed in letters to the officer charged with their safe-custody.