

to be mere spectators, who were totally unconcerned in the events which were in agitation. There was no very general alarm felt in the capital. The Puerta del Sol was filled with groups of people, who were anxiously inquiring from each other the rumours of the day. January.

At seven o'clock, the infantry militia were posted in several parts of the capital to preserve tranquillity, and the cavalry marched out to keep up a species of patrol without the gates, to the distance of a league and a half from Madrid, on all the great roads.

At night, a dead calm prevailed in every part of the capital. Here and there a militiaman was seen repairing to his post, and the tramping of cavalry was heard echoing through the silent streets. A few groups of inhabitants were seen assembled at their doors, speculating on the state of affairs. Some said that the work of treason was going on, that they could not trust each other, and that a number of "factious" was in the very heart of the capital.

On the 25th, Bessieres advanced on Guadalajara, of which town he took possession. His troops conducted themselves with good discipline, and the inhabitants willingly supplied them with provisions. In the meantime General O'Daly was superseded in the command of the Constitutional troops by Count Abisbal (O'Donnel), who took measures on the 26th for approaching Guadalajara, that he might cause Bessieres to hasten his evacuation of the town. In effect Bessieres did evacuate Guadalajara on hearing of the approach of Abisbal; but from the circumstance of his troops taking different directions on quitting the town, it was suspected that he had a design of outflanking the Constitutionalists, and of penetrating to the capital, without encountering them. To prevent this, Abisbal fell back on Alcala, where he remained on the 27th. 25th.

The three days occupied by these different movements of 26th.

January. the contending forces were days of considerable agitation in Madrid. A double guard was placed on the palace, as it was well understood to be the principal object of the royalists to get the king into their power. The 26th (Sunday) was one of the usual days for the bull-fights, but, although it was a remarkably fine day, the amphitheatre was shut. The gate of Alcala was strongly guarded, and no one was allowed to pass through it without special passports.

During the greater part of the day a vast crowd of the lower order of the people was assembled at this gate, and all seemed to be waiting anxiously for tidings from the army. Every horseman or pedestrian who came in from the adjacent country was stopped and closely questioned about the news. The answers they received were generally very short and unsatisfactory. I walked about in this crowd, accompanied by a friend, to see if we could discover what was the general state of feeling in this important crisis, but we could perceive none of that enthusiastic patriotism so conspicuous a few days ago, when the foreign notes were published. We could observe nothing in their countenances and conversation but an intense curiosity to hear the news, and an indifference as to its character when it was unfavourable.

Towards night, it was pretty generally understood that a courier had arrived at the hotel of Count La Garde, with the answer of the French government to the reply which the Spanish cabinet gave to M. de Villele's note; and that in this paper M. la Garde was ordered to demand his passports, and leave Madrid as soon as possible, if the Spanish government seemed resolved to pay no attention to the new propositions which he was authorised to make.

These new propositions were contained in a second despatch, which Count la Garde was desired to read to the king. It stated that the Duke of Angouleme was upon the point of placing himself at the head of 100,000 men upon

the frontier: that if the King of Spain, released from his present thralldom, and placed at the head of his army, should be allowed to advance to the banks of the Bidassoa, in order to treat with him, a firm and durable peace might be established between the two countries, the ancient and intimate connexion between France and Spain be restored, and the fleets, armies, and resources of France be placed, from that moment, entirely at the disposal of his Catholic Majesty. France, it was added, did not pretend to dictate to Spain the precise modifications she ought to adopt in her constitution; but, in order not to expose herself to the charge of having intentionally left her wishes unexplained, she declared that she would not renew her relations of amity with that country, until a system was established, with the consent of, and in concert with, the king, assuring, alike the liberties of the nation and the just privileges of the monarch; and, until a general act of amnesty was passed in favour of every individual persecuted for political offences, from the promulgation of the Constitution in 1812 down to the present period*.

On the 27th, the contents of this despatch were communicated by M. la Garde to M. San Miguel, who answered it with an indignant negative, and immediately transmitted to the minister the necessary passports.

27th.

In the course of the afternoon I walked down to the Cortes, under the expectation that some important discussion might arise; but I found the members engaged on the regulations for the militia. Not more than fifty members were present, and the galleries and tribunes were almost deserted. One member was speaking, but all the rest, except the President and Secretaries, were formed into groups of three and four on the benches, apparently consulting with each other,

* Sir William A'Court's despatch, January 27.

January. and engaged in earnest conversation, no attention whatever being paid to the deputy on his legs nor to the question under deliberation.

On returning home from the Cortes I found guards stationed in several of the streets, who were dispersing groups of people wherever they found them to exceed the number of three or four. A man having the appearance of a labourer started out from one of these groups, and dancing about, attempted to turn the guards into ridicule. A soldier immediately drew his sword, struck him with it, and in addition, took the man into custody. He was, however, better off than another man of a similar description, who got upon a heap of loose large stones, in the Plaza de la Constitution, and cried out in the presence of a large collection of people,—" *Muera la Constitucion*"—" *Viva el Rey absoluto*."—"Down with the Constitution—the absolute king for ever." Two or three soldiers set upon him instantly with drawn swords, and one of the weapons penetrated through his body. The unfortunate man, who seemed a little intoxicated, was carried away to the hospital, where he soon afterwards died.

During the day, several of the trades-people, and other classes of the inhabitants, enrolled themselves and obtained arms, chiefly with the view of maintaining tranquillity. Ballasteros was appointed Commandant-General of the military of Madrid, the Cortes having suspended the law which would have prevented that officer, as a counsellor of state, from being employed by government.

28th.

There was much less bustle about the streets of Madrid on the 28th than on the two preceding days. The government issued an order dividing the capital into fifteen sections, with a view to its defence in case of attack. Officers were appointed to the command of these different sections; and, in case of alarm, all the generals in Madrid, not excepting Murrillo, who had been hitherto under *surveillance*, were ordered

to assemble at the custom-house in the street of Alcala, where also the battalions of militia were to form *en masse*. January.

In the meantime these precautions were rendered unnecessary for the present, by the retreat of Bessieres towards Sacedon. If he had hoped to obtain assistance from the capital, or to create a rising in it by his approach, he was completely disappointed. There was a decided determination, on the part of the militia, to resist any attempts he might make, even if he had defeated Abisbal.

Whatever may be the political or personal character of Bessieres, all the military men allowed him great credit for the brilliant march which he made almost to the gates of Madrid, and next, for the retreat which he accomplished. He levied contributions in money, provisions, linen, and cloth upon Guadalajara and Brihuega, and had with him two pieces of cannon, which he took from the Constitutional troops. It was said to be his intention to get into the mountains of Cuenca, unless Abisbal forced him to take a general action. This sudden appearance of Bessieres so near the capital, with so considerable a force, was altogether very mysterious. If the ministers knew of it before-hand, why were they not prepared for it? If they did not know of it before-hand, what was to be said of the constitutional devotion of the people through whose provinces he marched? Why did they not send information to the government of his movements?

Viewing this event in every way, it was impossible to avoid concluding that it was very prejudicial to the Constitutional cause. The militia were beaten, their cannon taken from them, and contributions were levied by the royalists within ten leagues of the capital. What would be the moral effect of these things throughout the country? The comuneros made as much of them as they could, in order to criminate the ministry. A great, indeed a violent, clamour

January. was raised against them, and it was generally supposed they should resign, for the constitutional doctrine required that the ministers must quit the cabinet whenever they lose their moral influence.

It is strange enough, that in all the changes of men who have grasped the helm of the state, or have taken part in public affairs during this revolution, not one individual of splendid talents has appeared. Mina is a veteran and a mere Guerilla chief: Riego is admitted on all hands to be a good, docile, sort of man, fortunate by chance in the Isla, but endowed with no talents, distinguished by no acquirements. Quiroga was almost fallen back to his original obscurity. Ballasteros was never considered a man of ability, either in the council or the field, though the Comuneros held him up as the most virtuous, as well as the most clever man in the Peninsula. Count Abisbal is unquestionably a brave and enterprising officer, but he laboured under the disadvantage of enjoying the confidence of no party. He was at this time indeed high in favour with the masons, but nobody could say how long he might remain so. There is a certain brusquerie about him which indicates talent, but betrays also that want of foresight and calculation, which, by enabling a man of ability to see and take advantage of auspicious circumstances, lift him above the rivalry of his contemporaries.

In a French suppressed pamphlet called "*De la Guerre avec l'Espagne*," I have read an anecdote about this general, which is rather curious, and, I believe, not very widely known.—When the army, to the number of twenty-two thousand men, which was destined for the expedition to Buenos Ayres, was assembled in Andalusia, it was persuaded by the agents of liberty to resolve on declaring the Constitution. O'Donnel, who commanded them, was chosen to lead the enterprise. Naturally vain and am-

bitious, he thought the moment had arrived for the accomplishment of his designs. He listened to the overtures which were made to him; he entered into the views of those who marked him out for their chief; he traced the plan they were to follow, and fixed the day of its execution. Already in his delirium he believed himself on the way to the throne of Spain. One day he assembled at his table the most distinguished officers of the conspiracy; in the heat of conversation, and in the midst of that enthusiasm which the project in hand had inspired, he asked them "if they did not think that a crown would fit his head admirably?" An immediate silence, more expressive than words could be, was the only answer he received. The direction of his ideas changed after this, and with it his resolution to serve the Constitutional cause. Thus far the pamphlet; since these events, he had joined the party of the masons, and, though his vacillations were now and then talked of, his military enterprise and activity were acknowledged by all parties.

But there is, I am told, a man of the name of Sarsfield, who, though yet in the shade, promises to carry every thing before him if the revolution go on, and if fortune should so far favour him as to throw him into a situation where his talents may become known. He is said to be a person of extraordinary genius, though one would imagine that such praise ought not to be hazarded until the object of it has shown that it is not undeserved.

Whilst the capital was in a state of alarm, the Political Chief declined to vider any passports, in order that what was passing in Madrid should not be immediately known beyond it. In consequence of this, the French minister was detained two or three days beyond the time he had fixed for his departure. At length he was resolved to be trifled with no longer. He went to the office of the minister for foreign

January. affairs; when he arrived there, he found that San Miguel had been gone some time; but he did not hesitate in telling the clerks, who were still writing there, that the object of his visit was to inquire whether or not he was to consider himself a prisoner. He had had his passports for some days; but why was it that the Political Chief, up to that hour, had refused to viser them? He complained strongly of the manner in which he had been treated. Soon after he left the office, word was sent to him that his passports would be vised if he would transmit them to the Political Chief. They were accordingly signed in the regular manner, and

30th. Count la Garde quitted Madrid with the whole of the French legation.

The Pope's Nuncio had been already sent away from this Court, in consequence of the refusal, on the part of his Holiness, to receive Villaneuva, the new Spanish minister who was accredited to Rome. The only ministers remaining, therefore, were those of England, Portugal, the United States, the Low Countries, Saxony, and Denmark.

CHAPTER XIII.

NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUED.—CONDUCT OF THE SPANISH
MINISTERS AND DEPUTIES.—THE LANDABURIAN SOCIETY.
—SPEECH OF THE KING OF FRANCE.—PREPARATIONS FOR
WAR.—CONDUCT OF THE KING OF SPAIN.—EFFECTS OF
THE CONSTITUTION.—PUBLIC JOURNALS.

IN the mean time Lord Fitzroy Somerset, accompanied by January.
his friend Lord Francis Levison Gower, had arrived in Ma-
drid *. His lordship lost no time in communicating with his
old acquaintances, several of whom he found, neither in the
Cortes, nor in any situation of responsibility, but very ready
to enter into conversation with him on the difficulties by which
Spain was surrounded, and on the necessity of some modifica-
tion being made in the Constitution. Some, indeed, were cla-
morous for such an amendment, and for the interference of
Great Britain; but when asked how the first could be
effected, or the latter made available to the exigencies of
the moment, they were unable to furnish any satisfactory
reply.

His lordship opened in a particular manner to General
Alava the nature of the commission with which he was en-
trusted; and after impressing upon him that England de-
manded nothing of Spain, and that he suggested nothing
officially, his lordship read the Duke of Wellington's me-
morandum. General Alava was a good deal startled at this
communication, for which he professed himself wholly un-
prepared; and he at once declared his conviction, that he

* January 20th.

January. could not be instrumental in the attainment of the objects which that memorandum contemplated. He gave the British government full credit for the conduct they had pursued at the Congress of Verona. He was deeply sensible of the value of the Duke of Wellington's exertions on that occasion, and of his constant solicitude to promote the happiness and secure the independence of Spain; but in the present situation of the country he could not conceal the difficulty of prevailing upon any party to act upon the suggestions which were thrown out. He, however, acknowledged the defects of the Constitution, and admitted the propriety of taking into consideration the expediency of modifying it hereafter, when such a proceeding should not be illegal. He felt the imminence of the danger to which the country was exposed, and that war was the inevitable consequence of a refusal to modify the Constitution. Such a measure being out of the question, the Spanish government had, in his opinion, nothing to do, but to await the evil which it could not avert. His lordship, however, prevailed on the general, as an act of personal kindness to himself, and of duty to the country, to mention to some of the deputies of Cortes the nature of the commission with which he was charged*.

Whilst these things were going on at Madrid, the French government were doing all in their power to persuade the British ambassador at Paris, and through him the British government, that notwithstanding all the preparations that had been made for war, they were still anxious to avoid that extreme if possible. M. de Chateaubriand told Sir Charles Stuart, that the king was compelled to assume a decisive tone in his discourse to the legislature; and that in announcing the cessation of the diplomatic relations between the two governments, it was necessary to show that they

* Lord Fitzroy Somerset's despatch, January 25th.

could not be re-established until the origin of the mischief, January. with which the Spanish revolution menaced neighbouring countries, had been removed. This could only be done by Spain assimilating her institutions to those of other limited monarchies, under an act on the part of the King of Spain declaring the Constitution to emanate from the crown*. M. de Chateaubriand expressed his hope that these sentiments would be conveyed through Sir William A'Court to the ministers of Spain, and that he would impress upon them the expediency of not refusing to admit the only measure of which it was possible, in the present situation of things, to take advantage.

On the same day † that M. de Chateaubriand made use of this language, it was repeated in the speech of the King of France on the opening of the Chambers. His majesty said, that he had ordered the recal of his minister from Madrid, and that one hundred thousand French would enter Spain to enable Ferdinand VII. to give his people institutions "which they cannot hold but from him." Notwithstanding this decided declaration in one part of the discourse, there was in another part of it an insinuation that war was not inevitable, an insinuation so evidently at variance with the announcements previously made, that it would seem to have been thrown in for the purpose of inducing the British goverment to believe that the efforts in which they were engaged for the maintenance of peace might not be fruitless. M. de Villele, indeed, endeavoured to convince Sir Charles Stuart that the violent alternative to which the king referred, was mentioned in a "conditional sense;" and notwithstanding the strong evidence of preparations for hostilities, both this minister and his colleague, M. de Chateaubriand, answered the representations of the ambassador

* Sir Charles Stuart's despatch, January 28.

† January 28.

January. by assurances that they yet continued to entertain hopes of peace.

I confess I am at a loss to reconcile these assurances of the French ministers, not only with the king's discourse, but with the tenour of that despatch which they had already transmitted to Count La Garde, for the purpose of being read by him in the first instance to his Catholic majesty, and then communicated to M. San Miguel *. In that despatch propositions were made, though in a vague manner, which M. de Chateaubriand well knew never would be accepted by the Spanish government; and yet as the alternative of their non-acceptance, it was declared that the Duke of Angouleme was about to march into Spain at the front of a hundred thousand men. No,—the French government had no hope, and indeed I may add, no wish, that the efforts of England should succeed. It was their object from the beginning to dissolve the Spanish Constitution, to obtain for the king more power, that he might use it hereafter in such a manner as to give France a permanent interest in Spain, and promote their joint views upon the South American states. Hence the offer on the part of France of placing her “fleets, armies, and resources at the disposal of his Catholic Majesty.”

February. Mr. Canning was not deceived by these assurances on the part of France. He received the construction put upon the king's speech with a hesitation, which shows he did not believe it to be true; but, at the same time, he was bound in courtesy to hear it, and he was resolved not to shut the door of conciliation, which the French minister said was still open. But as for the principle, that the Spaniards could hold their institutions only from their sovereign, Mr. Canning at once declared that the Spanish nation could not be

* See pages 184, 185.

expected to subscribe to it, nor could any British statesman February. uphold or defend it *. An explanation was demanded on this point before Mr. Canning would proceed further; and M. de Chateaubriand gave a softened version to the words, which they were hardly originally intended to convey, viz. "that in order to give stability to any modification of the present system in Spain, and to afford sufficient assurances to France to justify her discontinuing her warlike preparations, the King of Spain must be a party, and consent to such modification †."

This explanation, however, was not given until after the opening of parliament, when an unequivocal disclosure was made of the unanimity prevailing between all the members of his majesty's government and the whole people of England, upon the injustice of the war which France was about to commence. That disclosure of opinion evidently produced a strong impression on the French government, for they soon after stated with clearness the abated expectations with which they would be satisfied. They said, that if through the intervention of Great Britain an offer were made from Spain for the establishment of a Second Chamber, they would consider it as affording reasonable grounds for suspending their armaments, and replacing the relations between the two countries upon the footing usual in time of peace. By the establishment of a Second Chamber, was meant the erection of the Council of State into a deliberative body, upon the principle of the American Senate; the nomination of the counsellors being vested in the king, as already provided by the Constitution, on the presentation of the Cortes ‡.

Had the Spanish ministry adopted the Duke of Welling-

* Mr. Canning's despatch to Sir Charles Stuart, February 3.

† Sir Charles Stuart's despatch, February 10.

‡ Ibid.

February. ton's advice, there was therefore every reason to hope that they would have saved their country from a disastrous war, and have secured to it a free and practicable Constitution. But they had been hitherto, in most cases, actuated in their negotiations with England by principles of reserve and cunning, keeping themselves undecided, waiting to see what events might turn up, and to take advantage of them, in order to retrace any steps which they might have dubiously taken. The misfortune for their views was, that there was scarcely any thing within the sphere of probability, which could turn out to their advantage to such an extent as would render them complete masters of the field. Thus, however, they went on day after day, deceiving themselves and every body besides, resorting to all sorts of exaggerations to keep up the show of a great and heroic nation, and instead of improving the condition of their country, preparing only the certainty of its ruin.

It was understood that there were many of the deputies who were disposed to agree to some alteration, but there was a difference amongst them as to the extent, and none of them were willing to risk their lives in bringing forward a proposition in open Cortes with the view of placing this question before the nation. Fears were entertained of the secret dagger of the Comuneros on one hand, and of the exalted members in the Cortes on the other. All parties were distrustful of each other, and the probability was, that all would remain inactive upon this subject until the time for making terms should have passed away. The fear of secret daggers was little less than imaginary. The only thing which the moderate deputies wanted in such a crisis was a little civil courage. If they had once come forward, they would have probably found numerous supporters, not only in the country, the Cortes, and the Council of State, but even in quarters where they least expected to meet them. There was not a sensible man in Madrid who heard of the suggestions

of Great Britain—if they were indeed entitled to that appellation—who did not privately confess his wishes that they were adopted. But still so unnecessarily apprehensive were they of “the nation,” that in public they either maintained a dark silence on the subject, or, forgetting the perils to which the Constitution was exposed in their irresistible passion of national boasting, they gave it a direct negative. Was this not a pitiable situation for a fine country to be placed in? Imaginary difficulties surmounted the sense of real and palpable dangers. An empty and transitory pride bade them shut their eyes upon the opportunity which now lay before them, of placing their liberties and their national prosperity upon a solid basis: and closed those eyes were likely to remain, until they opened upon the wreck of their Constitution.

It was almost ludicrous to hear the way in which the Spaniards treated their situation at this time. We shall not agree, they pretended to say, to any alteration of our Constitution.—Very well, it was replied to them, but the French troops will come to Madrid, and establish the French Charter.—It remains to be seen whether the French will come to Madrid. What is to prevent them?—We will resist them. Where are your armies?—They are forming every day; there are conscriptions going on all over the country. But how will you arm, and clothe, and support these men; where is your money?—It is of no consequence whether we have money or not, our soldiers can live upon garlick; as for clothing, they can fight without uniforms; and with respect to arms, there is a great number in the country since the last war. Well, but how can you expect that these recruits fresh from the mattock, the plough, and the office of muleteer, will be able to stand against a regular army?—That is of no consequence, we will fight in guerilla

February. parties, and we depend on the obstinate and proud character of the people.

There was no arguing with these philosophers. If Spain was to carry on a war in such a manner as no one country ever yet sustained a war against another, it was all very well. It is right, however, to add that there were many persons of opinion that no resistance of any value would be made against the French, and that they would march with as much facility to Madrid as the Austrians did to Naples.

3d. The capital continued in a state of undisturbed peace. Although there was a desperate struggle going on between the Masons and the Communeros for the government, yet its effects were scarcely perceptible, nor perhaps of much interest, to the mass of the inhabitants. The tribune of the Landaburian Society was occupied, night after night, by crowds of new orators, whose discourses had for their object to call the attention of the people to the dangers which threatened the country. Some spoke of the French invasion as an event just at hand, and others insisted that the ministry had proved their inability to carry the country through its approaching difficulties by evincing that criminal negligence, or ignorance, in consequence of which the capital was placed in a state of alarm from the neighbourhood of an armed band of factious. Violent attacks were also made on those public prints which censured the speeches of the Landaburian orators. It was evident that the government was extremely sensible to the philippics which were directed against them. For some days the ministerial prints had been calling on the authorities to interfere, and put a stop to the nightly scenes of turbulence which the society exhibited.

The authorities at length resorted to a subterfuge in order to accomplish this object. They got an architect to report that the convent of St. Thomas, in which the Society