

CHAP. the purpose of destroying the nobility and the monarchy, and
 XLV. erecting a republic; that he could not but grievously feel the
 1813. destruction of a neighbouring state, connected by so many
 November. maritime and commercial interests with his own; that he
 desired to remove every pretext for English interference, and
 to re-establish those ties of friendship and good neighbourhood
 by which Spain and France had been so long connected; and
 therefore he had sent the Comte de Laforest under a feigned
 name, to whom his Royal Highness might give entire credit in
 all that he should propose.

*Conference
 between
 Comte de
 Laforest
 and Fer-
 dinand.*

The Count accordingly presented himself under the name of M. Dubois, in order that the negotiation might be kept secret, because, if the English were to discover, they would use every means for frustrating it. The Emperor, he represented, had done all he could in Bayonne to accommodate the differences which then existed between father and son; but the English had marred every thing; they had introduced Jacobinism into Spain, where the land was laid waste, religion destroyed, the clergy ruined, the nobility crushed, the marine existing only in name, the colonies dismembered and in insurrection, and, in fine, every thing overthrown. Those islanders desired nothing but to change the monarchy into a republic; and yet, to deceive the people, they put the name of his Royal Highness at the head of all their public acts. Moved by these calamities, and by the lamentations of all good Spaniards, the Emperor had chosen him for this important mission, because of his long experience, for he had been more than forty years in the diplomatic career, and had resided in every court; but, as there were so many persons who knew him, he requested that the Spanish Princes on their part would contribute to keep the affair secret. Ferdinand had at this time none with whom to consult, except his brother and his uncle, who were both as inexperienced in

business as himself. He replied, that so unexpected a proposition required much reflection ; he must have time for considering it, and would let him know the result. Laforest, without waiting for this, obtained an audience on the following day, and then said that, if his Majesty accepted the kingdom of Spain, which the Emperor wished to restore to him, they must concert means for getting the English out of that country. To this Ferdinand replied, that he could make no treaty, considering the circumstances in which he was placed at Valençay, and indeed could take no measures without the consent of the nation, as represented by the Regency. The old diplomatist made answer, it certainly was not the intention of the Emperor that his Majesty should do the slightest thing which might be contrary to the wish of Spain ; but in this case it would be necessary that he should find means of ascertaining it. Ferdinand then said that, during five years and a half, for so long he had been absent from his own country, he had known nothing more of the state of affairs than what he read in the French newspapers. Those papers, Laforest affirmed, exhibited the true state of things ; and he made a speech of some length to prove what Ferdinand was not so devoid of penetration as to believe. He concluded in words to this effect : “ He who is born to a kingdom has no will of his own ; he must be a King, and is not like a private individual, free to choose for himself that way of life which he may think most agreeable. And where is he who, when a kingdom is offered him, would not instantly accept it ? Yet, withal, if he who should be a King were to say, ‘ I renounce all dignity from this time, and, far from seeking honours, desire only to lead a private life,’ in that case the affair becomes of a different kind. If, therefore, your Royal Highness is in this predicament, the Emperor must have recourse to other means ; but if, as I cannot but believe, your Royal Highness thinks of receiving the sceptre, the

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 XLV of the negotiation upon which afterwards to treat, and for this
 1813. purpose to appoint a Spaniard, one of those who are at this
 November. time in France." Ferdinand calmly replied that this required
 consideration. Upon this Laforest observed, that when a king-
 dom was to be received, there was not much to consider, reasons
 of state being the sole rule of conduct. But Ferdinand made
 answer, that he was far from agreeing with him in that maxim ;
 it was his belief that nothing required greater consideration,
 and he would take time to deliberate upon it.

Ferdinand could not have acted with better judgement at this time, if he had had the ablest statesmen to advise him. In fact, the straight course was the sure one ; for, though he had been kept in complete ignorance of all recent events, the very circumstance of this proposal was proof sufficient that Buonaparte's fortune had failed, and that his motive for giving up his pretensions to Spain was that he was no longer able to support them. On the morrow, he said to the ambassador that, having maturely reflected upon what had been proposed, he must repeat that he could do nothing, and treat of nothing, in his present situation, without consulting with the nation, and of course with the Regency. "The Emperor," said he, "has placed me here ; and if he chooses that I should return to Spain, he it is who must consult and treat with the Regency, because he has means of doing this, and I have not ; or he must afford me means, and consent that a deputation from the Regency should come hither, and inform me concerning the state of Spain, and propose to me measures for rendering it happy : any thing which I may then conclude here with his Imperial Majesty will be valid. And it is the more necessary that such a deputation should come, because there is no person in France whom I could fitly employ in this affair." Laforest replied at some length, endea-

vouring to persuade him that the English and Portuguese governed Spain, and that their intention was to place the house of Braganza upon the Spanish throne, beginning with his sister, the Princess of Brazil. He also pressed Ferdinand to declare whether, when he returned to Spain, he meant to be the friend or the enemy of the Emperor? This was presuming upon the weakness of the person whom he addressed; but Ferdinand was not wanting in presence of mind on this occasion. "I esteem the Emperor highly," he replied, "but I never will do any thing that may be injurious to my people and their welfare; and upon this point I now finally declare that nothing shall make me alter my determination. If the Emperor chooses that I should return to Spain, let him treat with the Regency, and when that is done, and I am assured of it, I will sign the treaty; but for this it will be necessary that a deputation should come here and inform me of every thing. Report this to the Emperor, and tell him, also, that this is what my conscience dictates to me."

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Ferdinand expressed himself to the same effect in a letter, which on the morrow he delivered into Laforest's hands. "I am still under the protection of your Imperial Majesty," he added, "and still profess the same love and respect of which you have had so many proofs. If your Majesty's system of policy, and the actual circumstances of your empire, will not allow of your conforming to this course, I shall then remain quietly and willingly at Valençay, where I have now passed five years and a half, and where I shall remain for the rest of my life, if God has so appointed it. It is painful to me, Sire, to speak in this manner to your Majesty, but conscience compels me to it. I have as much interest for the English as for the French, but, nevertheless, I must prefer the interest and happiness of my own nation to every thing. Your Imperial and Royal

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 XLV. of my ingenuous sincerity, and of the affection which I bear
 1813. toward you. If I should promise any thing to your Majesty,
 November. and afterwards be obliged to act in opposition to it, what
 would you think of me? you would say that I am inconstant,
 and you would despise me, and dishonour me with all Europe."

When Laforest received this letter from Ferdinand, he observed, that his Royal Highness desired nothing but what was very just; but he asked whether he designed to treat with the Emperor before he had consulted with the Regency, or after? if after, it would occasion much delay; if before, when the business was once concluded with the Emperor, the Regency would instantly do whatever he thought fit. But if his intention in returning to Spain was to continue the war with France, the Emperor would choose rather to keep him in his power, and carry on the war upon its present footing. Ferdinand replied, that surely either the ambassador had not understood him, or he himself must have failed in expressing himself with sufficient clearness. "My declarations," he pursued, "amount to this, that I marry myself to neither power. If the interest of Spain requires that I should be the friend of the French, I will be so; but if it requires that I should be the friend of the English, their friend I shall be; and, finally, if this should not suit the Emperor, the Infantes and I will remain well pleased where we are at Valençay. In acting thus I do no otherwise than the Emperor himself would do were he in my place*." From this resolution Ferdinand was not to be dissuaded, and Laforest accordingly returned with this reply.

*Escoiquiz,
 Idea Sin-
 cilla, &c.,
 pp. 83, 100.*

* The particulars of this negotiation are stated by Escoiquiz upon Ferdinand's authority, and from that king's own papers.

Upon his return, Buonaparte dispatched the Duque de S. Carlos to Valençay to negotiate, on Ferdinand's part, with Laforest; and a treaty was easily concluded to this effect, that the Emperor of the French recognized Ferdinand and his successors as Kings of Spain and of the Indies, according to the order established by the fundamental laws of Spain; and that he recognized the integrity of the Spanish territory as it existed before the war, and would deliver up to the Spaniards such provinces and fortified places as the French still occupied in Spain: Ferdinand obliging himself, on his part, to maintain the same integrity, and that also of the adjacent isles and fortified places, and especially Minorca and Ceuta; and to make the English evacuate those provinces and places, the evacuation by the French and English being to be made simultaneously. The two contracting powers bound themselves to maintain the independence of their maritime rights, as had been stipulated in the treaty of Utrecht, and observed till the year 1792. All Spaniards who had adhered to King Joseph were to re-enter upon the honours, rights, and privileges which they had enjoyed, and all the property of which they might have been deprived should be restored to them; and to such as might choose to live out of Spain, ten years should be allowed for disposing of their possessions. Prisoners on both sides were to be sent home, and also the garrison of Pamplona, and the prisoners at Cadiz, Coruña, the Mediterranean islands, or any other depôt which might have been delivered to the English, . . . whether they were in Spain, or had been sent to America or to England. Ferdinand bound himself to pay an annual sum of thirty millions of reales to Charles IV., his father, and, in case of his death, an annuity of two millions to the Queen, his widow. Finally, a treaty of commerce was to be formed between the two nations,

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*December.**Treaty concluded at Valençay. Dec. 11.*

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sent to the
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and till this could be done, their commercial relations were to be placed upon the same footing as before the war of 1792.

The next step was to notify this treaty to the actual government of Spain. Accordingly Ferdinand addressed a letter to the Regency, being the first communication which he had been permitted to hold with his own country since his entrapment. "Divine Providence," he said, "which in its inscrutable wisdom had permitted him to pass from the palace of Madrid to that of Valençay, had granted to him the blessings of health and strength, and the consolation of never having been for a moment separated from his beloved brother and uncle, the Infantes, Don Carlos and Don Antonio. They had experienced in that palace a noble hospitality; their way of life had been as agreeable as it could be under such circumstances; and he had employed his time in the manner most suitable to his new condition. The only intelligence which he had heard of his beloved Spain was what the French gazettes supplied; these had given him some knowledge of the sacrifices which the nation had made for him; of the magnanimous and unalterable constancy manifested by his faithful vassals, of the persevering assistance of England, the admirable conduct of its general-in-chief, Lord Wellington, and of the Spanish and allied generals who had distinguished themselves. The English ministry had publicly declared their readiness to admit propositions of peace, founded upon his restitution; nevertheless, the miseries of his kingdom still continued. He was in this state of passive but vigilant observation, when the Emperor of the French spontaneously made proposals to him, founded upon his restitution, and the integrity and independence of his dominions, without any clause which would not be compatible with the honour and glory and interest of the Spanish nation. Being persuaded

that Spain could not, after the most successful and protracted war, conclude a more advantageous peace, he had authorized the Duque de S. Carlos to negotiate in his name with the Comte de Laforest, whom the Emperor Napoleon had nominated as plenipotentiary on the part of France ; and he had now appointed the Duque to carry this treaty to the Regency, in proof of the confidence which he reposed in them, that they might ratify it in their usual manner, and send it back to him after this necessary form without loss of time. How satisfactory," he concluded, "is it for me to stop the effusion of blood, and to see the end of so many evils ! and how do I long to return and live among a people, who have given the universe an example of the purest loyalty, and of the noblest and most generous character !"

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This letter seemed to leave the Regency no power of deliberation, but simply to require that they should ratify the treaty. But in fact, Ferdinand, if he had any such wish, had no such expectation ; and he had penetration enough to see that the course of events which had compelled Buonaparte to treat with him upon such terms, must in their consequences restore him to his kingdom ; even though the Regency should, as he supposed, refuse to ratify it, because of their engagement with the allied powers. He gave the Duque, therefore, secret verbal instructions to inquire into the spirit of the Regency and the Cortes ; and if he should find them loyal and well affected to his royal person, . . . not, as he suspected, tainted with infidelity and Jacobinism, . . . he was then to let the Regency know, but in the greatest confidence, his royal intention that the treaty should be ratified, if it could be done without injury to the good faith which Spain owed to the allied powers, or to the public weal ; but that he was far from requiring this if it were otherwise. Should the Regency be of

*Secret instructions
from Ferdinand.*

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opinion, that without compromising these points, the treaty might be ratified, upon an understanding with England temporarily, and until his return to Spain should in consequence be effected, upon the supposition that he, without whose free approbation it could not be complete, would not ratify it when at liberty, but would declare it to have been constrained and null, and moreover as being injurious to the nation; in that case he wished them so to ratify it, because the French could not reasonably reproach him, if, having acquired information concerning the state of Spain, which had been withheld from him in his captivity, he should refuse to confirm it. But if the Duque should discover that the spirit of Jacobinism prevailed in the Regency and the Cortes, he was then simply to require that the treaty should be ratified; for this would not prevent the King from continuing the war after his return, if the interest and good faith of the nation should so require. This intention, however, was to be kept profoundly secret, lest, through any treachery, it should be made known to the French government.

*Escoiquiz,
108-10.*

*Macanaz
sent to Va-
lençay.*

With these instructions the Duque departed, travelling under the assumed name of Ducós, that his mission might not be suspected. Laforest remained at Valençay, still under a false name, and keeping out of sight, in the same part of the castle which Ferdinand and the Infantes inhabited; and before the Duque's departure, Don Pedro de Macanaz was sent thither by Buonaparte to continue the conferences with this diplomatist. However much the Regency, or rather the Cortes (for the Regency was now the mere organ of its pleasure) might be surprized when the treaty was communicated to them, they were not unprovided for such an event. The Regency accordingly expressed in reply their joy upon seeing the King's signature, and being assured of his good health and of that of the

Jan. 8.