

CHAP.
XXXIII.

1810.

become a lawless nation; the great trampled upon the laws, and by the people murder was scarcely regarded as a crime; in their vindictive feelings they were unrestrained by any religious awe, or any apprehension of earthly punishment. A squadron of the La Manchan Crusaders entered this very city of Almagro; they sacked the house of the traitor who collected the revenues for the Intruder; and because his wife in her rage reviled them, professed her attachment to King Joseph, and threatened them with vengeance in his name, they killed her; and Ureña, a priest, who commanded the party, related the circumstance with perfect complacency in his official dispatch. The heart of the nation was already hard, and the little which might have been done by the legitimate Government for correcting the national inhumanity, and inducing, or at least endeavouring to induce, a more christian, a more civilized, a more human spirit, was neglected.

*New
Castille.**D. Ventura
Ximenez.*

New Castille swarmed with guerrillas, among whom were some of the most distinguished chiefs. D. Ventura Ximenez made himself formidable in the parts about Toledo, till one day in action his horse carried him into the enemy's ranks; his people rescued him, but not till he had received two sabre wounds and a pistol-shot. They carried him to Navalucillos, where he died. A price had been set upon his head; his body therefore was disinterred by the French, and the head carried to Toledo, that the dragoon who had shot him might receive the reward. In this province there were some of the vilest depredators who under the name of guerrillas infested Spain. For as in times of pestilence or earthquake, wretches are found obdurate enough in wickedness to make the visitation a cover for their guilt, and enrich themselves by plunder, so now, in the anarchy of Spain, they whose evil disposition had been restrained, if not by efficient laws, yet in some degree by the influence of settled society,

*Guerrilla
banditti.*

abandoned themselves, when that control was withdrawn, to the impulses of their own evil hearts. These banditti plundered and murdered indiscriminately all who fell into their hands. The guerrilla chief, D. Juan Abril, caught a band of seven, who made Castille the scene of their depredations; and he found in their possession gold and silver bars, and other property, to the amount of half a million reales. A ruffian belonging to one of these bands was taken by the French, and in order to save his life, offered to show them the place where his comrades had secreted their booty; accordingly a commissioner from the criminal junta of Madrid, with two alguazils, and an escort of forty horse, was appointed to go with him. The deposit was in the wood of Villa Viciosa, eight leagues from the capital, and there they found effects to the value of more than 700,000 reales. But D. Juan Palarea, the Medico, from whose party the bandit had originally deserted, had obtained intelligence of their movements, and intercepted them on their return; five only of the escort escaped, six were made prisoners, the rest were killed; and the commissioner was put to death, as one whose office precluded him from mercy, and even from commiseration.

Of the wretches whom this dissolution of government let loose upon mankind, the banditti were the boldest, but not the worst. A more extraordinary and flagitious course was chosen by José Pedrazuela, who had been an actor at Madrid. He assumed the character of a commissioner under the legitimate Government, and being acknowledged as such in the little town of Ladrada in Extremadura, condemned and executed, under a charge of treason, any persons whom for any motive he chose to destroy: the victims were carried at night to a wood, where their graves had been made ready, and there their throats were cut, or they were shot, or beaten to death. The people supposing him to be actually invested with the authority which he assumed,

CHAP.
XXXIII.
1810.

*Crimes of
José Pedra-
zuela and
his wife.*

CHAP.
XXXIII.

1810.

submitted to him in terror, as the French had done to Collot d'Herbois and the other monsters whom this Pedrazuela was imitating. His wife, Maria Josefa Garcia della Valle, was privy to the imposture, and if possible exceeded him in cruelty. Before they could withdraw, as they probably designed to do when they had sufficiently enriched themselves, Castaños heard of their proceedings, and instantly took measures for arresting them in their career of blood. They were brought to trial at Valencia de Alcantara; thirteen of these midnight murders were proved against them: it was said that in the course of three months they had committed more than threescore. The man was hanged and quartered, the woman strangled by the *garrote*. The Spaniards had not brought upon themselves the guilt of revolution, but they were visited by all its horrors!

The better guerrilla chiefs maintained order where they could, and whenever any of the banditti fell into their hands, ordered them to summary execution. There was another class of criminals whom they took every opportunity of bringing under the laws of their outraged country, . . . those Spaniards who took an active part in the Intruder's service. The *alcalde* of Brihuega was notorious for his exertions against those who were suspected of corresponding with the national Government, or in any way aiding it; his wife was passionately attached to the same cause, and the Empecinado one day intercepted a dispatch from her to the nearest French commander: he entered the town, and made her and her husband prisoners. The dispatch had provoked a barbarous spirit in the men, for they cut off the woman's hair, shaved her eyebrows, tarred and feathered her, and in that condition paraded her through the streets; after which they delivered them both to the Junta of the province for judgement. The Empecinado seems to have had an especial pleasure in pursuing traitors of this description. He had set intelligencers upon one

*The alcalde
of Bri-
huega.*

Rigo, who, having affected great zeal in the national cause, fled afterwards to the capital, obtained a considerable appointment there, and became a persecutor of all who carried on any communication with the Government or the armed Spaniards. This man was keeping his marriage-day at a house a little way from Madrid, when, during the wedding-feast, the Empecinado entered the court-yard at the head of a sufficient band, and demanded that Rigo should be delivered up, saying no injury should be offered to any other of the party. Flight or resistance were alike impossible; the miserable traitor was surrendered into his hands, and sent immediately under a trusty escort to Cadiz; the officer into whose charge he was given being enjoined not to depart from that city till he should have seen him put to death in the great square. Joseph himself narrowly escaped a similar fate from the same daring adventurer. He was dining at La Alameda, six miles from Madrid, on the road to Guadalaxara, with Gen. Belliard, and a festive party, when their entertainment was interrupted by an alarm that the Empecinado was approaching, and they fled hastily towards the capital, for not a moment was to be lost. The Intruder had a second escape on the road from Guadalaxara: the Empecinado knew his movements, and six days after the French had boasted of having totally defeated him, and dispersed his band of brigands, he took post at Cogoludo, and pursued Joseph so closely that more than forty of his rear-guard were cut off at Torrejon and El Molar, before they could come within protection of the garrison of Madrid. So little indeed had that garrison the command of the surrounding country, that a whole party which had been sent out from thence were one day taken and hung by the way side, within a short distance from the walls.

In this dreadful warfare blood called for blood; cruelty produced retaliation, and retaliation was retaliated by fresh cruelties.

CHAP.
XXXIII.
1810.

Rigo.

Joseph's
escape from
the Em-
pecinado.

CHAP.
XXXIII.

1810.

*Desertion
of the Jura-
mentados.*

Eight of the Empecinado's men were taken in the Guadarrama mountains, and nailed to the trees there, for the purpose of intimidating their fellows: such a spectacle had the sure effect of exasperating them, and the same number of Frenchmen were soon nailed to the same trees, in the same spirit of inhuman vengeance. A lieutenant of his party, Mesa by name, went over to the French, and engaged to bring them the head of this dreaded partizan; his interest was so good, and his proposals so plausible, that they gave him the rank of captain in one of the Spanish regiments which the Intruder was raising, and sent him with a company of 200 Spanish cavalry to perform his promise; when they came near Guadalaxara, the men put him to death, and joined their countrymen in arms. Such an example might have taught Joseph and his ministers how little they could depend upon the Spaniards, who by misery, or severe usage, were forced into his service. Half naked and ill fed, kept in miserable prisons, or at the hardest work, upon the canals, where such work was at hand, winter and summer, sometimes up to the middle in water, they enlisted with the determination of making their escape. In the course of five months not less than 12,000 entered with this purpose; and on the first opportunity that offered, whole companies, including the officers, deserted, with arms and baggage. The celebrity of the Empecinado encouraged them to these attempts, and his movements in the vicinity of Madrid facilitated their escape. Like the other distinguished guerrilla leaders, he soon obtained rank from the national Government, but he looked to it neither for pay nor supplies. The Junta of Guadalaxara used the utmost exertions to assist him; the members of this Junta performed their duty with perfect fidelity in a situation where they were continually in extreme danger, from the vicinity of a strong enemy's force. They were as often in the woods and wilds as in human habita-

*Junta of
Guada-
laxara.*

tions, and yet they collected stores, clothing, and money for the armies, while in this state of outlawry under the intrusive Government; and they circulated a newspaper which they printed in the mountains near the sources of the Tagus.

CHAP.
XXXIII.
1810.

The Empecinado was supposed to have 500 horse under his command, and 2,200 foot; but this force was perpetually varying in number, according to the chance of war; and the guerrillas generally acted with better success in small parties. The Medico's party was estimated at 300 horse. This leader, joining with the band of D. Casimero Moraleja, fell in with 140 of the enemy's troops, escorting a convoy from Madrid, about four leagues from Toledo, near Yuncles. Some twenty *Juramentados*, as the Spanish recruits were called because of the oath which was administered to them when they entered the Intruder's service, immediately laid down their arms; the others, of whom fourscore were French grenadiers under the *Chef-d'escadron* Labarthe, took possession of an Ermida, and refused to surrender when they were summoned, little apprehending the horrible alternative. The Spaniards set fire to the building on all sides; no mercy was shown to those who endeavoured to escape from the flames; eight persons only were happy enough to be made prisoners in time; the bodies* of all the rest were left in the smoking ruins.

The Medico.

Fourscore
French
burnt in a
chapel.

Naylies,
275.

These details were published in the Regency's Gazette; there was nothing revolting to the public mind in such horrors, because the Spaniards had been accustomed to cruelties, by the history of their American conquests (wherein the enormities of the conquerors have not been concealed), and by the Inquisition: and if

Cruelties
and retalia-
tions.

* Lord Blayney saw them there; victims of retaliation he calls them, and says that the French General and his officers, who were conducting him prisoner to Madrid, could not help expressing their detestation of the barbarous manner in which the war was carried on.

CHAP. the heart of the nation had not thus previously been hardened,
 XXXIII. the nature of this war must have hardened it. The decree of the
 1810. intrusiv Government for putting to death every Spaniard who
 should be taken in arms had not indeed been carried into effect;
 too many had been taken to render this possible in a christian
 country; ministers and generals, who might have braved the
 guilt, shrunk from the odium of enforcing such a measure; and
 it may be deemed certain, that if the French troops had been
 commanded to enforce it, they would not have obeyed. But
 toward the guerrillas the soldiers could entertain no feeling either
 of honour or humanity: they put to death all who were taken
 in arms and not in uniform; not regarding, or probably not con-
 sidering, that a great proportion of the regular troops were in
 that condition! It was not to be expected that they should ask
 themselves on which side the provocation was given, and with
 whom the cruelty began. And yet, barbarous as Buonaparte's
 predatory system of war necessarily made them, and with all
 the irritation which the guerrillas occasioned, they were less
 barbarous than those who were in authority over them: pri-
 soners whom they spared in the field were, in obedience to rigid
 orders, shot if they lagged upon their march into captivity; and
 even after they had entered France, numbers were thus put to
 death in cold blood. All who were regarded as brigands, who
 acted in the provincial Juntas, or against whom any proof ap-
 peared of acting under the Juntas, or giving intelligence or
 assistance to the guerrillas, were executed by the summary
 sentence of some arbitrary tribunal. Heads were exposed on
 poles, bodies left hanging upon the gallows, or the trees; and
 in the market-place of large towns, the wall against which the
 victims were shot was pierced with bullets, and the ground
 blackened with blood! Nowhere was this system of terror pur-
 sued more unrelentingly than in Old Castille, and yet nowhere

Naylies,
274.

Lord
Blayney,
i. 487.

Old
Castille.

were the guerrillas more active or more formidable. In ten parties, under known leaders, their numbers were estimated at 1,300 horse, and 2,500 foot. D. Geronimo Merino, the priest of Villabrau, known by the name of *El Cura*, was the most remarkable of them for the ferocity with which he acted against enemies who were made ferocious by the dreadful circumstances in which they were placed. It was not to be expected that the Spaniards should make this allowance for their invaders; but they did not claim it for themselves; they proclaimed for admiration and example actions at which humanity should shudder: it became a matter of praise among them, as in the days of Pizarro and Garcia de Paredes, to possess the qualities of a ruffian; and if the appearance* corresponded to the manners and character, the popular hero was perfect in his vocation. Yet mercy appears to have been more frequently shown by the guerrillas than extended to them. They obtained consideration with their own Government, and with the English, by bringing in prisoners, and were encouraged so to do; whereas the French soldiers knew that if an armed Spaniard were taken he would be put to death, and might consider it merciful at once to slay a fallen enemy, rather than deliver him over to execution. The guerrillas also, by conveying their prisoners to one of the Spanish fortresses, or to a part of the country where the allies were in force, obtained a respite, for the time, from that life of incessant vigilance and

CHAP.
XXXIII.
1810.
The Cura.

* Thus this Merino is described as *el terror de la comarca; y su caracter feroz está indicado en lo fiero de su semblante, y en lo membrudo y velloso de su cuerpo. Este es el Cura decantado.* But it should be added, that the man who is thus described spared his prisoners, and conducted them to Alicant. The general appearance of the guerrillas is described by a British officer as "horribly grotesque; any thing of a jacket, any thing of a cap, any thing of a sword, pistol, or carbine, and any thing of a horse."

CHAP. insecurity, exertion and exposure, which, without some such
 XXXIII. occasional relief, no bodily strength could have long supported.

1810. It was by the peasantry that the greatest cruelties were com-
 mitted upon such miserable Frenchmen as fell into their hands,
 and by the women, who are said to have sometimes vied with the
 worst American savages in their unutterable barbarities.

Rocca, 145.

Aragon.

There were fewer of the roving guerrillas in Aragon, because something with the name of an army was kept on foot there, and in such a state that the regular service differed little from the course of life to which the adventurers were reduced. In no other part of Spain was the intrusive Government administered with greater ability and vigilance, nor more in the spirit of remorseless oppression and rapacity. The whole yearly revenue which had been raised in that province, before the invasion, amounted to from ten to twelve millions of *reales*: the French exacted twelve per month as the ordinary contribution; they called for extraordinary payments when they pleased; and after these official exactions, the Aragonese were not exempted from the common lot of their countrymen in being at the mercy of every plunderer. What guerrilla parties there were in this part of the country were less heard of, because on all sides there were chiefs whose reputation, founded upon repeated successes, drew to their parties the men who would otherwise have been dispersed in smaller bands. Anicio Algere, the Potter, whose scene of action was about Jaca, was the only one who obtained any degree of celebrity here. But along the great line of communication for the French armies, and especially the high road from the Bidassoa to Madrid, where it was of most importance for the enemy to secure the ways, and where most precautions were taken for securing them, there the guerrillas were most active and most daring. At the entrance of the villages houses were fortified with ditches, parapets, embrasures for field-pieces,

*The Cantie-
 rero.*