

other hand to occupy Extremadura, which it was thought was left exposed by the retreat of the English ; but Alburquerque, disobeying the express commands of the government, had garrisoned Badajoz, Romana had repaired in time to that fortress, and the designs and expectations of the enemy in that important quarter were effectually baffled.

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This was not their only disappointment. The possession of the country, and all the open towns, was of little importance when compared with that of Cadiz. If it were possible that the fate of Spain could depend upon any single event, that event would have been the capture of Cadiz at this time ; and the French therefore pushed on for it with even more than their accustomed rapidity. The city was utterly unprepared for an attack : there were not a thousand troops in the Isle of Leon, and not volunteers enough to man the works ; the battery of St. Fernando, one of its main bulwarks of defence, was unfinished. While the scene of action was at a distance, the people of Cadiz thought the danger was remote also ; and but for the genius and decision of a single man, Buonaparte might have executed his threat of taking vengeance there for the loss of his squadron.

*The French  
push for  
Cadiz.*

At four on the morning of the 24th Alburquerque received that dispatch from the Central Junta, which, countermanding his march to Seville, ordered him to make for Cordoba. A counter-order of some kind he seems to have expected ; for, in acknowledging this dispatch, he expressed his satisfaction that he had not commenced his movements according to the instructions received the preceding night, in which case he must have had the inconvenience of a counter-march ; at the same time he said, that the troops which he had directed to garrison Badajoz, and which he was now ordered to recall, could not join him without great danger, and without leaving that place defenceless, . . . a point of such importance, that though these orders

*Albur-  
querque's  
movements.*

CHAP. were positive, he would not obey them unless they were repeated.  
 XXVIII. At this time he was at Pedroso de la Sierra, whither he had ad-  
 1810. vanced from Guadalcanal, pursuant to the first instructions, re-  
January. quiring him to move upon Cordoba. There was the Guadal-  
 quivir to cross, and Alburquerque, not being certain that his  
 artillery could pass the bridge of Triana, determined to have it  
 ferried over at Cantillana. He was near that ferry when the  
 last dispatches reached him, written on the 23d, and repeating  
 the order to march towards Cordoba: but Alburquerque at this  
 time knew that the Junta were flying from Seville, though they  
 had given him no intimation of their design, and knew also that  
 Cordoba must then be in the enemy's possession. He did not  
 therefore hesitate for a moment to disobey orders, which must  
 have led to the destruction of his army, . . an army, in the fate  
 of which, inconsiderable as it was, the fate of Spain was more  
 essentially involved, than in that of any which she had yet sent  
 into the field. Having crossed at Cantillana, he made the main  
 body proceed to Carmona, while he himself, with part of his  
 little cavalry, advanced towards Ecija, where the French had  
 already arrived, to ascertain their movements, and if possible  
 alarm them by his own, and make them suppose that his army  
 covered Seville: but the French general, as well as Alburquerque,  
 was aware that Seville was a point of far inferior importance to  
 that upon which the invaders had fixed their attention; and the  
 enemy were now pushing on the chief part of their force by El  
 Arahal and Moron to Utrera, in order to cut off the Duke from  
 Cadiz. The least delay or indecision, from the moment he  
 began his march, would have proved fatal. Instantly perceiving  
 their object, he ordered his troops to make for Utrera, where his  
 artillery and cavalry arrived almost at the same time with the  
 French; from thence he marched with the infantry by Las Ca-  
 bezas to Lebrija, across the marsh, at a season when it was

deemed impracticable ; thus enabling it to reach Xerez in time, while the cavalry accompanied the artillery along the high road, skirmishing as it retreated, delaying the pursuers, and sacrificing itself for the preservation of the rest of the army and of Cadiz. On the night of the 30th he performed this march from Utrera to Lebrija ; and on the same night the people of Cadiz were relieved by an express from him, saying, that he was between them and the French, and should reach the city in time to save it. The following morning he arrived at Xerez, having gained a day's march upon the enemy : they found themselves outstript in rapidity, and outmanœuvred ; and on the morning of the 2d of February, Alburquerque, with his 8000 men, entered the Isle of Leon, having accomplished a march of sixty-five leagues, 260 English miles. Thus Cadiz was saved.

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*Cadiz saved  
by Albur-  
querque.*

Yet the means of defence had been so scandalously neglected, that the Isle of Leon must have been lost if the French had ventured to make a spirited attack upon it ; and Cadiz would then speedily have shared the same fate. In general, the French calculate with sufficient confidence upon the errors of their enemies, . . . a confidence which has rarely deceived them in the field, and has almost invariably succeeded in negotiation. Here, however, they did not think it possible that works so essential to the salvation of the government should have been left unfinished ; and, knowing that the troops were under a man whom they trusted and loved, they knew that, naked, and exhausted, and half-starved as those troops were, behind walls and ramparts they would prove desperate opponents. Having saved this all-important place by his presence, the Duke lost no time in securing it ; he exerted himself night and day : the people, he says, when they are guided by their first feelings, usually see things as they are ; they blessed him as their preserver, and he was appointed governor by acclamation.

*He is ap-  
pointed go-  
vernor of  
Cadiz by  
the people.*

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*January.**A Junta  
elected at  
Cadiz.*

While Alburquerque was on his march, a change in the government had been effected. Venegas had been appointed governor of Cadiz by the Central Junta, apparently in reward for that blind obedience to their instructions, which, more than any other circumstance, frustrated Sir Arthur Wellesley's victory. Both Mr. Frere and the British general distrusted his military talents. The people of Cadiz, with less justice, suspected his fidelity, and he was not without fear that he might become the victim of suspicion in some fit of popular fury. His danger became greater as soon as it was known that the Central Junta had been deposed at Seville, and were flying in various directions; but Venegas, with prudent foresight, went to the Cabildo, and, saying that the government from which he had received his appointment existed no longer, resigned his command into their hands, and offered to perform any duty to which they should appoint him. This well-timed submission had all the effect which he could wish; the Cabildo were flattered by it, the more, because such deference of the military to the civil authority was altogether unprecedented in that country; and they requested him to continue in his post, and act as their president, till a Junta could be elected for the government of the town. Measures were immediately taken for choosing this Junta, and the election was made in the fairest manner. A balloting-box was carried from house to house; the head of every family voted for an electoral body; and this body, consisting of about threescore persons, then elected the Junta, who were eighteen in number. A mode of election so perfectly free and unobjectionable gave to the Junta of Cadiz a proportionate influence over the people; but they themselves, proud of being, as they imagined, the only legally-constituted body in Spain, became immediately jealous of their power, and hostile to the establishment of any other.

It was, however, essential to the salvation of the country that some government should be established, which would be recognized by the whole of Spain. The members of the Central Junta, who had arrived in the Isle of Leon, would fain have continued their functions; they found it vain to attempt this, and then, yielding to necessity, they suffered themselves to be guided by Jovellanos, who represented to them the necessity of appointing a regency, not including any individual of their own body. Mr. Frere, acting as British minister till Marquis Wellesley's successor should arrive, exerted that influence which he so deservedly possessed, first to enforce the advice of Jovellanos upon his colleagues, and afterwards to make the Junta of Cadiz assent to the only measure which could preserve their country from anarchy; but so little were they disposed to acknowledge any authority except their own, that, unless the whole influence of the British minister had been zealously exerted, their acquiescence would not have been obtained. The Archbishop of Laodicea, who was president of the Central Junta, the Conde de Altamira, Valdes, and Ovalle, had been seized at Xerez, and were in imminent danger from the blind fury of the populace, if some resolute men had not come forward and saved them, by persuading the mob to put them under custody in the Carthusian convent, as prisoners of state. They were indebted for their liberation to Castaños, who in this time of danger had hastened to the Isle of Leon, and took measures for having them safely conducted thither. Their arrival made the number of members three-and-twenty; and on the 29th of January this government issued its last decree. Voluntarily they cannot be said to have laid down their power, but the same presiding mind which pervaded their former writings made them resign it with dignity. "Having," they said, "re-assembled in the Isle of Leon, pursuant to their decree of the 13th, the dangers of the state were

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January.*Resignation  
of the Cen-  
tral Junta.*

CHAP. greatly augmented, although less by the progress of the enemy  
 XXVIII. than by internal convulsions. The change of government which  
 1810. they themselves had announced, but had reserved for the Cortes  
January. to effect, could no longer be deferred without mortal danger to  
 the country. But that change must not be the act of a single  
 body, a single place, or a single individual; for in such case,  
 that which ought to be the work of prudence and of the law,  
 would be the work of agitation and tumult; and a faction would  
 do that, which ought only to be done by the whole nation, or by  
 a body lawfully representing it. The fatal consequences which  
 must result from such disorder were apparent; there was no  
 wise citizen who did not perceive, no Frenchman who did not  
 wish for them. If the urgency of present calamities, and the  
 public opinion which was governed by them, required the imme-  
 diate establishment of a Council of Regency, the appointment of  
 that council belonged to none but the supreme authority, esta-  
 blished by the national will, obeyed by it, and acknowledged by  
 the provinces, the armies, the allies, and the colonies of Spain;  
 . . the sole legitimate authority, which represented the unity of  
 the power of the monarchy."

*A regency  
 appointed.*

After this preamble they nominated as regents Don Pedro de Quevedo y Quintana, Bishop of Orense; D. Francisco de Saavedra, late president of the Junta of Seville; General Castaños; Don Antonio de Escaño, minister of marine; and D. Esteban Fernandez de Leon, a member of the council of the Indies, as representative of the colonies. To these persons the Junta transferred its authority; providing, however, that they should only retain it till the Cortes were assembled, who were then to determine what form of government should be adopted; and that the means which were thus provided for the ultimate welfare of the nation might not be defeated, they required that the regents, when they took their oath to the Junta, should swear also that they would

verify the meeting of the Cortes at the time which had been appointed. The new government was to be installed on the third day after this decree. The Junta accompanied it with a farewell address to the people, condemning the tumult at Seville, and justifying themselves, like men who felt that they had been unjustly accused, because they had been unfortunate. Neither their incessant application to the public weal, they said, had been sufficient to accomplish what they desired, nor the disinterestedness with which they had served their country, nor their loyalty to their beloved but unhappy king, nor their hatred to the tyrant and to every kind of tyranny. Ambition, and intrigue, and ignorance had been too powerful. "Ought we," they said, "to have let the public revenues be plundered, which base interest and selfishness were seeking to drain off by a thousand ways? Could we satisfy the ambition of those who did not think themselves sufficiently rewarded with three or four steps of promotion in as many months? or, could we, notwithstanding the moderation which has been the character of our government, forbear to correct with the authority of the law, the faults occasioned by that spirit of faction, which was audaciously proceeding to destroy order, introduce anarchy, and miserably overthrow the state?"

Then drawing a rapid sketch of the exertions which they had made since they were driven from Aranjuez, . . . "Events," they said, "have been unsuccessful, . . . but was the fate of battles in our hands? And when these reverses are remembered, why should it be forgotten that we have maintained our intimate relations with the friendly powers; that we have drawn closer the bonds of fraternity with our Americas; and that we have resisted with dignity the perfidious overtures of the usurper? But nothing could restrain the hatred which, from the hour of its installation, was sworn against the Junta. Its orders were always ill inter-

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*Last address  
of the Cen-  
tral Junta.*

CHAP. XXVIII. 1810. January. preted, and never well obeyed." Then, touching upon the insults and dangers to which they had been exposed in the insurrection at Seville, . . . "Spaniards," they continued, "thus it is that those men have been persecuted and defamed, whom you chose for your representatives; they who without guards, without troops, without punishments, confiding themselves to the public faith, exercised tranquilly, under its protection, those august functions with which you had invested them! And who are they, mighty God! who persecute them? the same who, from its installation, have laboured to destroy the Junta from its foundations; the same who have introduced disorder into the cities, division into the armies, insubordination into the constituted authorities. The individuals of the government are neither perfect nor impeccable; they are men, and as such liable to human weakness and error. But as public administrators, as your representatives, they will reply to the imputations of these agitators, and show them where good faith and patriotism have been found, and where ambitious passions, which incessantly have destroyed the bowels of the country. Reduced from henceforward by our own choice to the rank of simple citizens, without any other reward than the remembrance of the zeal and of the labours which we have employed in the public service, we are ready, or, more truly, we are anxious, to reply to our calumniators before the Cortes, or the tribunal which it shall appoint. Let them fear, not us; let them fear, who have seduced the simple, corrupted the vile, and agitated the furious; let them fear, who, in the moment of the greatest danger, when the edifice of the state could scarce resist the shock from without, have applied to it the torch of dissension, to reduce it to ashes. Remember, Spaniards, the fate of Porto! an internal tumult, excited by the French themselves, opened its gates to Soult, who did not advance to occupy it till a popular tumult had rendered



its defence impossible. The Junta warned you against a similar fate after the battle of Medellin, when symptoms appeared of that discord which has now with such hazard declared itself. Recover yourselves, and do not accomplish these mournful sentiments!

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“ Strong, however, as we are in the testimony of our own consciences, and secure in that we have done for the good of the state as much as circumstances placed within our power, the country and our own honour demand from us the last proof of our zeal, and require us to lay down an authority, the continuance of which might draw on new disturbances and dissensions. Yes, Spaniards, your government, which, from the hour of its installation, has omitted nothing which it believed could accomplish the public wish; which, as a faithful steward, has given to all the resources that have reached its hands no other destination than the sacred wants of the country; which has frankly published its proceedings; and which has evinced the greatest proof of its desire for your welfare, by convoking a Cortes more numerous and free than any which the monarchy has ever yet witnessed, resigns willingly the power and authority which you have confided to it, and transfers them to the Council of Regency, which it has established by the decree of this day. May your new governors be more fortunate in their proceedings! and the individuals of the supreme Junta will envy them nothing but the glory of having saved their country, and delivered their King.”

Thus terminated the unfortunate but ever-memorable administration of the Central Junta, a body which had become as odious before its dissolution, as it was popular when it was first installed. If in their conduct there had been much to condemn and much to regret, it may be admitted, upon a calm retrospect, that there was hardly less to be applauded and admired. Spain

CHAP. will hereafter render justice to their intentions, and remember  
XXVIII. with gratitude that this was the first government which addressed  
1810. the Spaniards as a free people, the first to sanction those constitutional principles of liberty which had for so many generations been suppressed. It was to be expected, when such tremendous events were passing, and such momentous interests at stake, that their errors would be judged of by their consequences without reference to their causes. An unsuccessful administration is always unpopular; and in perilous and suspicious times, when the affairs of state go ill, what is the effect of misjudgement, or weakness, or inevitable circumstances, is too commonly and too readily imputed to deliberate treason. Such an opinion had very generally prevailed against the Central Junta; but when this power was at an end, and nothing would have gratified the people more than the exposure and punishment of the guilty, not even the shadow of proof could be found against them. They were inexperienced in business, they had been trained up in prejudice, they partook, as was to be expected, of the defects of the national character; but they partook, and some of them in the highest degree, of its virtues also: and their generous feeling, their high-mindedness, and unshaken fortitude, may command an Englishman's respect, if it be contrasted not merely with the conduct of the continental courts, but with the recorded sentiments of that party in our own state, who, during this arduous contest, represented the struggle as hopeless, and whose language, though it failed either to dispirit or to disgust the Spaniards, served most certainly to encourage the enemy. England has had abundant cause to be grateful to Providence, but never, in these latter times, has it had greater than for escaping, more than once, the imminent danger of having this party for its rulers. They would have deserted the last, the truest, of our allies; they would have betrayed the last, the only hope of Europe and of