

CHAP. new government suspended the sale of certain church property,  
 IV. upon which the fallen minister had ventured in the plenitude of  
 1808. his power; and they issued an edict for destroying wolves, foxes,  
March. and other animals, which had been preserved about the royal  
 residences to gratify Charles's passion for the chase. These  
 measures were intended to court popular favour, and to cast  
 a reproach upon the late reign. Some vexatious imposts  
 were taken off; and a part of the police establishment of  
 Madrid, which had been peculiarly odious, was abolished. The  
 people regarded these acts as unequivocal proofs of the new  
 Monarch's excellent intentions; and the accession of Ferdinand  
 was considered by those who were ignorant of the difficulties by  
 which he was beset, and of the perilous circumstances of the  
 country, as the commencement of a Saturnian age, and as the  
 point of time from which the regeneration of Spain would be  
 dated.

*Murat en-  
 ters Spain.  
 Mar. 3.*

Meantime Joachim Murat, brother-in-law of Buonaparte  
 and Grand Duke of Berg and Cleves, had arrived in Spain to  
 take the command of all the French forces in that country. As  
 soon as his arrival was known, Charles and Godoy dispatched  
 an officer of artillery, by name Velarde, to congratulate him, on  
 the part of the King, and to take care that nothing was wanting  
 for the subsistence and accommodation of his troops. Murat  
 reached Aranda, on the Duero, on the 17th, the day when the  
 first disturbances broke out at Aranjuez; and there he desired  
 Velarde would write to the court and inform them that his in-  
 structions were to march rapidly towards Cadiz; but that he  
 should perhaps take it upon himself to stop some days at Madrid,  
 though he had no orders to that effect: he should not, however,  
 proceed farther than St. Augustine's without having determined  
 with the Spanish government the number of troops which were  
 to enter the capital, and the time, and the manner, so that they



might be no charge to the inhabitants. He added, that he was in momentary expectation of dispatches from his master; that he should very soon be able to inform the Spanish nation what were the Emperor's views; that he could now positively announce his intention of going to Madrid, and that probably in the course of eight days he would have crossed the Pyrenees. Velarde's letter, which communicated this intelligence, was addressed to the Prince of the Peace; but it was received by the new ministers, and it increased their perplexities and alarms.

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*March.*

They informed the people however by a proclamation, that their King had notified the happy event of his accession to the French Emperor, and assured him, that far from changing the political system of his father toward France, he would endeavour to draw closer the bonds of friendship and strict alliance, which so fortunately subsisted between the French Emperor and Spain. This communication, it was said, was made in order that the council of Madrid might act conformably to the King's sentiments, by taking measures for restoring tranquillity in the metropolis, as well as for receiving the French troops who were about to enter that city, and for administering to them every requisite assistance. They were to endeavour also to convince the people that these troops were coming as friends, and for purposes advantageous to the King and to the nation. The very fact that it was thought necessary to tell the people this, shows that they were not so besotted as to believe it. These were strange times, when a Spanish King informed the people of his measures, and, as it were, appealed to popular opinion; . . . but stranger events were at hand.

*The people of Madrid exhorted to receive the French as friends.*

All the foreign ministers congratulated Ferdinand upon his accession, except Beauharnois, from whom, after the part which he had taken concerning the expected marriage and throughout the affair of the Escorial, congratulation might first

*The French enter Madrid.*



CHAP. have been expected; he withheld this act of recognition, be-  
 IV. cause he had not been furnished with the necessary instructions.  
 1808. Murat was now advancing toward Madrid, and the general  
 March. anxiety was heightened by the more unexpected intelligence  
 that Buonaparte himself, he who made and unmade princes with  
 a breath, was on the way to Bayonne. He supposed that the  
 royal family were at this time on the coast and on the point of  
 embarkation, and that the people, in their fear of anarchy,  
 would receive the French commander with open arms as their  
 deliverer. The occurrences at Aranjuez were altogether unex-  
 pected; and as soon as he was informed of them, Murat acce-  
 lerated his march. The approach of such an army, the silence  
 of the French Ambassador, the mysteriousness of Buonaparte,  
 and his journey to Spain, perplexed and alarmed Ferdinand.  
 He had communicated his accession to this Emperor in the most  
 friendly and affectionate terms; . . . fear could suggest no other.  
 Lest this should be deemed insufficient, he appointed a deputation  
 of three grandees to proceed to Bayonne, and compliment  
 him in his name; and another grandee was sent, in like manner,  
 to compliment Murat, who had already reached the vicinity of  
 Madrid. This worthy agent was fully in his master's confidence;  
 he assured Ferdinand that Buonaparte might be every moment  
 expected; and he spoke publicly of his coming. Orders were  
 therefore given for preparing apartments in the palace suitable  
 for such a guest; and the King, whose fears made him restless,  
 wrote again to Buonaparte, saying how much he desired to  
 become personally acquainted with him, and to assure him,  
 with his own lips, of his ardent wishes to strengthen more  
 and more the alliance which subsisted between them. Murat,  
 evidently for the purpose of displaying his forces, reviewed them  
 before the walls; then made his entrance into Madrid, preceded  
 by the imperial horse-guards, and by his staff, and followed by all



the cavalry, and by the first division of foot under General Mounier; two other divisions were encamped without the city, and a detachment proceeded to take possession of Toledo. Ferdinand made his public entry on horseback the following day, amid the ringing of bells and the discharge of artillery, but with no other parade than that which, under happier circumstances, would have been the most grateful of all spectacles; . . . a concourse of all the people of the capital and its vicinity, rejoicing in his presence, and testifying, by their acclamations, that they expected from him the regeneration of their country. But never did poor prince succeed to such a crown of thorns.

The conduct of the French Ambassador had shown what was to be expected from the French General. Murat declared that until the Emperor Napoleon had acknowledged Ferdinand VII. it was impossible for him to take any step which might appear like such an acknowledgment: he therefore must be under the necessity of treating with the royal family. But Murat was better acquainted than Beauharnois with his master's designs; as if taking the deposed King and Queen under his protection, he sent a numerous body of troops to Aranjuez to guard them; and he caused it to be understood that the French would interpose in behalf of Godoy. Both these measures might have been taken with honourable designs; but when the French General, Grouchy, was made governor of Madrid, a sort of military government established there, and patroles instituted to preserve the peace, under the joint superintendence of a French officer and a Spaniard, sufficient indications were given of an intention to occupy the capital as the frontier fortresses had been occupied. A legitimate government which should have had no no other cause of disquietude, would have been perplexed at such a crisis; but the attention of Ferdinand and his ministers was distracted by personal considerations: instead of feeling like

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Mar. 24.

General  
Grouchy  
made Go-  
vernor of  
Madrid.



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*March.*

*Declaration  
concerning  
the affair of  
the Escu-  
rial, March  
31.*

the sovereign of a proud and ancient people, the new King was in the situation of one who had to defend a bad title, and that not by an appeal to arms, but tremblingly before a superior and a judge.

A declaration concerning the affair of the Escurial was made public on the last day of the month, for the purpose of proving that neither Escoiquiz, nor the Duque del Infantado, nor the other persons implicated in the charge of conspiracy, had been guilty of any misconduct. It was acknowledged that the Prince had in his own hand-writing commissioned Infantado to assume the command of the troops in New Castille, in case of his father's demise, and the alleged reason was a fear lest Godoy should continue at such a time to make an improper use of his influence and power. Such a pretext was too shallow to obtain belief in any calm or considerate mind: the King's age and state of health rendered it probable that he might live many years, and in the event of his death, no man doubted but that Godoy, who held his power only upon favouritism, must instantly become the wretch that this revolution made him. As for his aspiring to the throne himself, it is impossible that he should even for a moment have entertained so frantic a thought, and almost as impossible that they who made the charge against him should themselves have believed it.

*The abdi-  
cation re-  
presented as  
a voluntary  
act.*

In the deed of abdication Charles called it his own free and voluntary act, and especial care was taken by the new administration to represent it as such. He had certainly remembered the examples of Charles V. and Philip V. and a thought of imitating them had passed across his mind in moments when difficulties pressed upon him, and he was sick of the cares of government. This is certain: it is probable also that the Prince's party might not have formed the plan of sending him into retirement unless they had known that he himself had enter-



tained, however transiently, a wish of retiring. To talk even among themselves of deposing the King, would have had a startling sound; and have brought into the prospect scaffolds and executioners as well as places and power. But it was easy to persuade both themselves and Ferdinand that their object was so to act as to make his father carry into effect that wish and wise intention, which, without some such external motive, he would for ever want resolution to effect for himself. They may have reasoned thus, and have meant well, and have acted with a patriotic purpose; nevertheless the act itself bore marks of deposition\*, not less decided than the abdication of James in England.

These circumstances tallied well with Buonaparte's designs, and they were dexterously improved by Murat. Even before he entered Madrid, General Mouthion was dispatched to Aranjuez with a letter to the Queen of Etruria, which contained assurances to the deposed King of Buonaparte's support. A snare was laid for the imbecile Charles, and he rushed into it. However compulsory the act of abdication might have been, it was now as much his interest as that of his family, that he should

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*Charles complains to the French.*

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\* The authors of the official history, published at Madrid, insist that the abdication was a pure voluntary act; that Charles, who was altogether incapable of deceit, displayed the greatest affection towards his son after that event; and that none of the innumerable Spaniards, who with the heroism of martyrs performed their duty through all the horrors of the subsequent struggle, ever entertained the slightest scruple upon that point. They maintain that the letters of the royal parents, which Buonaparte published, are so interpolated by him that they cannot be trusted; and they endeavour to show, that even in those letters proofs may be discovered that no violence was complained of by the writers. Perhaps this is the only point upon which these Spanish authors are not entitled to full and entire credit, . . . for they wrote under the sanction and by the appointment of Ferdinand. In every other part, their history, as far as it has reached me, is written with sound judgement and admirable impartiality.





CHAP. acquiesce in it. But actuated by a sense of his wrongs, and still  
IV. more perhaps by the Queen, who, trembling for her paramour,  
1808. hated her son with all the virulence of an adulterous mother, he  
March. committed his last and consummating folly, by appealing to the  
very tyrant, whose open and undisguised aggressions had driven  
him, not a week before, to the resolution of abandoning his  
throne and seeking refuge in America. He assured Mouthion  
that the revolution had been preconcerted and brought about  
by money; that his son and Caballero were the chief agents;  
that he had signed the act of abdication only to save the Queen's  
life and his own, knowing that if he had refused they would both  
have been murdered in the course of the night. The conduct  
of the Prince of Asturias was more shocking, he added, inas-  
much as having perceived his desire to reign, and being himself  
near threescore years of age, he had agreed to surrender the  
crown to him on his marriage with a French princess, an event  
which he, the King, ardently desired. The Prince, he added,  
chose that he and the Queen should retire to Badajoz, though  
he had remonstrated against the climate as injurious to his health,  
and entreated permission to choose another place, his wish being  
to obtain leave of the Emperor to purchase an estate where he  
might end his days. The Queen said she had begged her son  
at least to postpone their departure for Badajoz, but even this  
was refused, and they were to set out on the following Monday.  
This fact alone would evince how little the inclinations of Charles  
were consulted throughout these transactions. The part of Spain  
where Badajoz stands is notoriously unhealthy during the summer  
months; and to have fixed upon that place for the residence of  
the deposed monarch, and persisted in the choice after he had  
objected to it on the score of his health, implied in the new  
government an equal want of feeling and of sense.

Having made these complaints, Charles delivered into Mou-



thion's hands a formal protest, declaring that the decree of abdication was compulsory, and therefore invalid. He charged him also with a letter for the Emperor. "Sir, my brother," he said, "you will not without some interest behold a King, who having been forced to resign his crown, throws himself into the arms of a great monarch his ally, placing every thing at the disposal of him who alone can make his happiness and that of all his family, and of his faithful and beloved subjects. I abdicated in favour of my son only under the pressure of circumstances, when the noise of arms and the clamours of a rebellious guard made me sufficiently understand that my choice was between life and death, and that my death would have been followed by the Queen's. I have been compelled to resign; but taking hope this day, and full of confidence in the magnanimity and genius of the great man who has already shown himself my friend, I have resolved to remit myself in every thing to him, that he may dispose as he thinks good both of us and our fate, that of the Queen and of the Prince of the Peace." Having consigned this letter to Mouthion, who may be suspected of having dictated the latter expressions, he renewed his complaints. His situation, he said, was one of the most deplorable. They had seized the Prince of the Peace and would put him to death, for no other crime than that of having been at all times attached to his sovereignty. There were no solicitations which he had not made to save the life of his unhappy friend, but he found every one deaf to his prayers and bent upon vengeance; and the death of Godoy would draw after it his own, for he should not survive him.

No King ever placed his favour more unworthily than Charles, but there was a sincerity in his friendship which almost amounts to virtue, and would have done honour to a better monarch. The Queen's attachment also, which is more easily explained, had a character of enduring passion and self-abandonment seldom to

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*He writes to Buona-  
parte, en-  
treating him  
to interfere.*

*Letters of  
the Queen  
to Murat.*



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*April.*

be found in one at once so vicious and so weak. From this time she wearied Murat with letters, written in the most barbarous French and most confused manner, wherein she expressed her fears and her resentments. Ferdinand, she said, was the enemy of the French, though he declared the contrary. Infantado was very wicked; the priest Escoiquiz one of the most wicked; and San Carlos, the most crafty of all, had received all that he had from the King at the solicitation of the poor Prince of the Peace, whom he called his relation. She had no other support than the Grand Duke and the Emperor, those two sacred and incomparable persons. . . . But the Prince of the Peace made the burthen of every letter. “ Nothing interests us,” she said, “ but the safe condition of our only and innocent friend the Prince of the Peace, the friend of the Grand Duke; even in his prison when he exclaimed on the horrid treatment they were giving him, he called always upon his friend the Grand Duke. Before this conspiracy he wished for his arrival, and that he would deign to accept of his house as a residence. . . . He had presents to make him. . . . We are in constant fear of their killing or poisoning him. Let the Grand Duke cause troops to go without telling why, and without giving a moment of time to fire a pistol at him separate the guard that is set over him, which has no other glory in view, no other desire but to kill him, . . . that innocent friend, so devoted to the French, to the Grand Duke and the Emperor, the poor Prince of the Peace. They heap crimes on this innocent Prince, our common and only friend, to inflame the public the more, and make them believe it is right to inflict on him all possible infamy. Afterwards they will come to me; . . . they will make his head be cut off in public, and afterwards mine, for they say so. . . . He suffers because he is a friend of the Grand Duke, of the Emperor, and of the French: the Grand Duke and the Emperor are they alone who can save him, and if he be not saved and given



to us, the King my husband and I will die." Every letter was filled with these anxious solicitations : of the throne there seemed to be neither care nor thought ; with the mob at Aranjuez before her eyes, and the recollection of Marie Antoinette in her heart, this wretched woman was sick of royalty ; she asked only an allowance for the King, herself, and Godoy, upon which they might live all three together, in a situation suiting their health ; . . a corner wherein they might quietly finish their days ; . . some place near France, to be within reach of help against the bloody hands of his enemies. Her feelings toward Ferdinand were not less strongly expressed than her attachment to Godoy. " My son," she says, " has a very bad heart : his character is bloody ; his counsellors are bloody ; they take pleasure only in making wretchedness, and his heart has no feeling for father or mother. He will make his enmity to the French appear when he thinks he can see occasion. . . I fear they will make some attempt against them ; . . the people are gained with money. When the Grand Duke shall have placed the poor Prince of the Peace in safety, let rather strong measures be taken, for otherwise intrigues will go on increasing, above all, against the poor friend of the Grand Duke and me ; and the King my husband is not secure."

Charles's protest and his appeal to Buonaparte were concealed from Ferdinand, and the correspondence with Murat was carried on by means of the Queen of Etruria, who having witnessed all which had passed at Aranjuez, and being therefore a competent judge how far the abdication of her father was voluntary, took part decidedly against her brother. Murat's intention was to frighten him into the toils ; an alarm that should have made him start, would have ruined the plot. The interest which this Grand Duke affected for Godoy, his refusal to acknowledge the new government, and the respect which he paid to Charles, all tended to this end. The rumour of Buonaparte's coming

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April.*The Infante  
D. Carlos  
sent to meet  
Buonaparte*