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*Debates
concerning
Ferdinand.*

was said in the Cortes, till he was half rotten, waiting indefinitely for the decision of his case, which they who prosecuted him were never likely to think of more!

At the motion of Perez de Castro, the Cortes voted a monument as a mark of gratitude to George III. and the British nation. They declared, at the same time, that the Spaniards would never lay down their arms till they had secured their independence, with the absolute integrity of their monarchy in both worlds, and till they had recovered their king. But though the restoration of Ferdinand was thus spoken of in this decree, there were many who perceived the evils with which his return was likely to be attended. The most cautious reformers, however loyal, knew but too well that his presence might prove a serious impediment to any reformation; the more theoretical ones could hope to effect their schemes only in his absence; and at this time it seemed probable that he might soon return, under circumstances which all true Spaniards, however widely differing upon other points, regarded with equal apprehension. The accounts which had been officially published in France of Kolli's adventure represented Ferdinand as still soliciting to be adopted by marriage into the family of the tyrant who had betrayed him. The Spanish Government, with the timid impolicy which continued to characterize it in such things, had not permitted the statement to appear in the Spanish newspapers; the substance of it, nevertheless, was well known at Cadiz, and many things tended to accredit it. For it was well understood, that the Intruder was weary of his miserable position, that Buonaparte was not less weary of supporting him there, and that the French generals were disgusted with the odious service in which they were employed. They were said to have reported every where that Ferdinand, with Buonaparte's consent, had contracted the de-

sired marriage (according to one account, it was with an Austrian archduchess), and that Buonaparte in consequence would replace him on the throne. There was intelligence from Madrid that a Spanish army of 30,000 men was about to be raised for him. The scheme was politic enough in all its parts to be deemed probable: it would have the cordial approbation of the Intruder's adherents; and all who regarded only their own selfish views, all who desponded, all who were impatient under privations and sufferings, all who desired repose, might be expected to concur in it. The youth, the inexperience, the defective education, the alleged simplicity of Ferdinand's character, were to be borne in mind; as through these he had formerly been entrapped, so might he now be made the instrument of Buonaparte, who would thus seek to obtain by intrigue what he was unable to win by force. Against this it was necessary to be prepared. Long and animated discussions were held upon this matter. It was moved, that if Ferdinand should cede any portion of the Spanish dominions to France, all persons obeying his orders to that effect should be declared traitors: that any marriage which he might contract under these circumstances should be declared null, (a proposition against which some of the ecclesiastics in the Cortes exclaimed as contrary to the principles of sound theology:) that if he entered Spain as Buonaparte's ally, he must be rejected, and war carried on against him under the black flag. Now was the time to engrave with the point of the sword upon their hearts that holy Catholic religion in which they must establish their trust! To the petition in the Litany which prayed for deliverance from the deceits of the Devil, they should add from the deceits of the French also. Rather than be thus deceived and debased, it were better that whole Spain should be made what Numantia and Saguntum had been: then might the Spaniards look down from heaven,

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CHAP. and see whether these impious invaders would be bold enough
 XXXIV. to walk tranquilly through the silent abodes of their tremendous*
 1810. ghosts!

Decree con-
 cerning
 Ferdinand.

The Cortes faithfully represented the nation in their feelings on this subject; and accordingly they issued a decree, declaring null and of no effect all treaties or transactions of any kind which Ferdinand should authorise while he remained in duress, whether in the enemy's country or in Spain, so long as he was under the direct or indirect influence of the Usurper. The nation, it was proclaimed, would never consider him free, nor render him obedience, till they should see him in the midst of his true subjects, and in the bosom of the national congress: nor would they lay down their arms, nor listen to any proposal for an accommodation of any kind, till Spain had been completely evacuated by the troops which had so unjustly invaded it. At the time when this brave decree was passed, the condition of Spain appeared hopeless to those persons by whom moral causes are overlooked, and from whose philosophy all consideration of Providence is dismissed. Fortress after fortress had fallen; army after army had been destroyed, till the Spaniards had no longer any thing in the field which could even pretend to the name, except the force under Romana with Lord Wellington. The enemy surrounded the bay of Cadiz, and were masters of the adjacent country, wherever they could cover it with their troops, or scour it with their cavalry. Yet in the sight of these enemies, from the neck of land which they thus beleaguered, the Cortes legislated for Spain; and its proceed-

* *Sea la España toda otra Numancia o Sagunto; y veremos desde el empireo, si estos impios espiritos fuertes se atreven a pasearse tranquilos por la silenciosa morada da nuestros tremendos manes.*

ings, though the Intruder and his unhappy adherents affected to despise them, were regarded with the deepest anxiety throughout the Peninsula, and wherever the Spanish language extends. There is no other example in history of so singular a position. During the three years which had elapsed since the commencement of the struggle, Buonaparte had not only increased his power, but seemed also to have consolidated and established it; while Spain had endured all the evils of revolution without acquiring a revolutionary strength; and, what appeared more surprising, none of those commanding spirits which revolutions usually bring forth had arisen there. Enlightened Spaniards had with one consent called for the Cortes, as the surest remedy for their country; and in England they who were most friendly to the Spaniards, and they who were least so, had agreed in the propriety of convoking it. Long as the Cortes had been suspended, it was still a venerable name; and its restoration gladdened the hearts of the people. A fairer representation could not have been obtained if the whole kingdom had been free, nor a greater proportion of able men; the circumstances, also, in which they were placed, increased their claims to respect among a people by whom poverty has never been despised. Many of the members, having lost their whole property in the general wreck, were dependent upon friendship even for their food. For although a stipend was appointed, some of those provinces which were occupied by the enemy could find no means of paying it; and no provision for remedying this default had been yet devised. They who had professions could not support themselves by practising, because the business of the Cortes engrossed their whole attention. The self-denying ordinance, which they had passed, excluded them from offices of emolument; and there were deputies who sometimes had not wherewith to buy oil for a lamp to give them light. Under

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*Character
of the
Cortes.*

CHAP. these circumstances they respected themselves, and were re-
XXXIV. spected by the nation according to the true standard of their
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But as the Cortes faithfully represented the characteristic virtues of the nation, they represented with equal fidelity its defects. The majority were scarcely less bigoted than the most illiterate of their countrymen; and they prided themselves upon having made the assembly swear to preserve the Romish as the exclusive religion of Spain: this, they said, was one of the things which reflected most lustre upon the Cortes. Their opponents, who designated themselves as the Liberal party, assented to what they could neither with prudence nor safety have opposed; and they swore, accordingly, to maintain in its domination and intolerance a corrupt religion which they despised and hated. Disbelief is too weak a word for expressing the feelings of a generous Spaniard toward the superstition which has eaten like a cancer into the bosom of his country. And most unhappily for themselves and Spain, the men whose heart and understanding revolted against intolerance and imposture were themselves infected with the counterpoison of French philosophy, and their best purposes were too often sophisticated with the frothy notions of that superficial school. This party, though far inferior in numbers, took the lead, with the activity and zeal of men who had embraced new opinions, and were labouring to promote them. Though fatally erroneous in what is of most importance, they acted in many cases with a quick and ardent perception of what is just; and not unfrequently they were right in the general principle, even when they were wrong in its application. Through their exertions, measures were carried, as far as votes of the Cortes could effect them, which, if they had been effectual, would have conferred lasting benefit upon the people. But in many of these reforms

they proceeded rashly, neither sufficiently regarding the rights of individuals, nor the opinions and habits of the nation; and in what was most required at such a crisis both parties were alike deficient. Instead of infusing into the Government that energy which had been expected, the Cortes weakened and embarrassed the executive by perpetually intermeddling with it; so that, under their control, the Regency which they had appointed became more inefficient than the central Junta. And instead of making the deliverance of the country their paramount object, they busied themselves in framing a constitution; a work, which, if it had been more needful, might well have been deferred till a more convenient season. Great part of their sittings was consumed in metaphysical discussions, arising out of the scheme of the constitution; and the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people was asserted in a temper which plainly manifested how surely that sovereignty, if it were once erected, would become unendurably tyrannical. Day after day these abstractions were debated, while the enemy was besieging Cadiz. Meantime no measures were adopted for bringing the army into a better state; and the mournful truth became apparent even to those who most reluctantly acknowledged it. But if it be difficult to form an effective army where there are none who have studied the principles and profited by the practice of war, it is yet more difficult to make legislators of men whose minds are ill disciplined, even when well stored.

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CHAPTER XXXV.

AFFAIRS OF PORTUGAL. ROMANA'S DEATH. BADAJOZ TAKEN
BY THE FRENCH. MASSENA'S RETREAT.

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Expectations of the French.

EARLY in November, the besiegers before Cadiz fired a salute in honour of Massena's triumphant entrance into Lisbon. Such demonstrations could not deceive the inhabitants of the Isle of Leon; but might serve to depress the Spaniards, who had no such means of information; and also to encourage the French themselves, whose confidence in their fortune had by this time received some abatement, and whose hopes of bringing the contest to an end rested chiefly now upon the success of the campaign in Portugal. Massena had undertaken the conquest of that kingdom in full expectation of outnumbering* any disciplined force which could be opposed to him, and still more certainly of outmanœuvring it; for the French Government well knew with what misplaced parsimony the military plans of the English were calculated; and they had neither reckoned upon the skill of the British general, nor the resolution of the British ministry, nor the spirit and exertions of the Portuguese people. He had been confirmed in this expectance by the

* An intercepted despatch from Berthier to Massena had informed him, on the authority of the English newspapers, that the British army did not amount to more than 23,000 men; that a reinforcement of 3000 had reached Lisbon; and, therefore, he had little to apprehend from their resistance; the Portuguese were about as many, and his force was fully sufficient to ensure success.

cautious system which Lord Wellington had, through that parsimony, been compelled to observe, during the siege of Ciudad Rodrigo: and though it was by an accident of war that Almeida had fallen into his hands, the speedy reduction of a place so important at that juncture increased the habitual confidence of one who had been accustomed to hear himself called the Child of Victory. That presumption had received a lesson at Busaco, and a check for which he was equally unprepared at the lines of Torres Vedras. Could Lord Wellington have spared a sufficient force to have occupied Santarem, as well as Abrantes; or had the orders of the Portuguese Regency, for removing all provisions, been carried into full effect in that part of the country, he must soon have been compelled to retreat. The wonder, however, is that so much devoted obedience was found to a measure, as dreadful in its immediate consequences to the persons upon whom it fell, as it was indispensable for the deliverance of the country. But being allowed to take a position which was not to be forced without a greater expense of life than his antagonist could afford; having found the means of present subsistence, and possessing also that impassibility, . . . that utter recklessness of the sufferings which he inflicted, . . . that perfect destitution of humanity, . . . which one of his fellow marshals had said was necessary for a commander in this atrocious war, he was enabled to wait for assistance, and for the chance of events.

He had sent General Foy to give Buonaparte the fullest account of his situation; and to supply his wants till farther orders, or effectual reinforcements should be received, he ordered General Gardanne, who commanded on the Agueda, to escort a convoy of ammunition. Strong reconnoitring parties were sent out frequently, both on the Coimbra and Castello Branco roads, in the hope of meeting him; and one of these

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Gardanne
enters Por-
tugal, and
marches
back again.

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parties had at length the mortification to ascertain that he had been within three leagues of their advanced posts on the Zezere, and had then turned back, a peasant having deceived him, by declaring that the whole French army had withdrawn. Whether the man acted thus upon the impulse of the moment, or had been sent from Abrantes upon this hazardous service, he succeeded in alarming men who, from the want of other tidings, were prepared to believe the worst. Gardanne's corps consisted of 3000 men; but they were so dispirited in their retreat, that when Colonel Grant, with a handful of the Ordenanza, fired upon them at Cardigos, they abandoned their convoy: nor did this active officer desist from the pursuit, till they had lost all their baggage and several hundred men; thus reaching the frontier in a manner which had every appearance, and all the consequences, of a precipitate and forced retreat. The Comte d'Erlon, General Drouet, who commanded the 9th corps, had meantime arrived there; and he determined to enter Portugal, and open a communication with Massena. Advancing, therefore, with 10,000 men, he left some 8000 under General Claparedè, at Guarda, to drive away the Portugueze force in his rear.

*Drouet
enters with
10,000 men.*

Silveira commanded the force in that quarter: the other divisions, under Brigadier-General Miller, Colonels Wilson and Trant, shut in the line of the Mondego to the confluence of the Alva. Trant was in Coimbra, which he had recovered by a movement as important in its effects upon the campaign, as it was promptly conceived and ably executed. Wilson had occupied the road from Ponte de Murcella to Thomar, establishing himself at Cabaços; but when the French had occupied Thomar, they attacked him twice from thence, and at length compelled him to fall back upon Espinhal. This was precisely in the line of Drouet's march; and he was thus placed between two fires, the enemy who had driven him from Cabaços being now strongly