

one of their pistols taken from them, till by some good service they should regain the honour which they had lost.

It was reported that the Central Junta upon the first intelligence of the defeat had fled from Seville. The danger was considered so imminent, that they had deliberated concerning their removal; and the Junta of Seville, who had been consulted, proposed that if such a measure were adopted, absolute power should be left in their hands. But the government did nothing precipitately, and on no occasion throughout the war did it display more magnanimity or so much energy as at this time of trial. The same day brought them tidings of the defeat at Ciudad Real and of that at Medellin; the same gazette communicated both to the people. There was nothing to qualify the disgrace and loss which Cartaojal had sustained; he was therefore quietly removed from the command. Whatever errors the Central Junta may have committed, no other government ever exercised its power with such humanity in such times, no other government ever made such just and humane allowances for inexperience and weakness, nor dealt so generously with the unfortunate. They decreed pensions to the widows and orphans of all who had fallen at Medellin, in proportion to their rank and circumstances, and a badge of distinction to those corps which the General should commend; and they promoted all the officers who had distinguished themselves. They pronounced that the General and the body of the army had deserved well of their country. Knowing that Cuesta had been lamed by his fall, they required him in all his dispatches to report the state of his own health; and though they appointed D. Francisco de Venegas to succeed Cartaojal, they placed both armies under Cuesta's orders, giving him the rank of Captain-general. In the preamble to this decree they said that all the details of the battle tended to console them for its loss, and that the spirit of

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*The Junta  
act wisely  
and gene-  
rously upon  
these de-  
feats.*

CHAP. Hernan Cortes might have beheld with joy the courage which  
 XX. his countrymen had manifested upon the scene of his childhood.

1809. The example of that day, they said, might make them hope that  
 April. with perseverance they might form an infantry capable of de-  
 fending the national independence; an infantry that should be  
 the worthy rival and successor of those famous *Tercios* which  
 under the best captains in the world had supported the glory of  
 Spain in Flanders and in Italy and in Germany.

*Their ap-  
 peal to the  
 people.*

The Junta felt it necessary to defend themselves at this time  
 against the base enemies who charged the late calamities upon  
 their misconduct, and who were agitating the people of Seville  
 by false alarms, reporting that the French were within five  
 leagues of that city, and that the nation was betrayed and sold  
 by its Government. In reply to these senseless accusations the  
 Junta appealed to the fact, that in the course of two months it  
 had set on foot two armies for the defence of the Andalusias,  
 consisting of 50,000 men and nearly 12,000 horse. This they  
 had done beside the assistance which they had afforded to other  
 provinces; and when was it known that the injuries which  
 the ship sustains in a storm had been imputed to the pilot?  
 The Junta had issued an abominable edict, whereby, after de-  
 nouncing the punishment of death against all persons who should  
 endeavour to raise distrust of the existing Government, or to  
 overturn it by exciting popular commotions, they invited in-  
 formers to denounce such persons to the Tribunal of Public  
 Safety which they had instituted, holding out the promise of  
 secrecy and reward. When this decree appeared Mr. Frere saw  
 to what an atrocious system of tyranny it might lead. Judging  
 of the Junta by their individual characters, he felt assured that  
 they would each have shrunk from carrying such measures into  
 effect; but he was well aware how little the personal characters  
 of any men placed in such circumstances are to be relied on,

*Tribunal  
 of public  
 safety.*

and apprehended that after some natural hesitation the majority might either yield to the guidance of one or two members, more violent and less scrupulous, or abandon themselves to the direction of this Tribunal of Public Safety; the very name of which, he said, must remind us of the worst revolutionary horrors. But though the State Papers of the Junta were on most occasions wiser than their actions, in this instance their conduct was better than their language; and it now appeared, most honourably for the national character, that, notwithstanding this public encouragement to the nefarious practice of delation, not a single secret information had been laid. If any person, said the Junta, had complaint to make, or suspicion to allege against any of the public functionaries, let him lay his proofs before this Tribunal. But this has not been done, and all the processes which that Tribunal has instituted have been public prosecutions, not one upon the accusation of an individual.

The Intruder and his partizans hoped at this time that the defeat and dispersion of two armies on two succeeding days would break the spirit of the Government, if not of the nation, and that the Junta might be induced to secure themselves and their own possessions by submission. Accordingly a Spanish traitor, by name Joaquim Maria Sotelo, addressed a letter from Merida to the vice-president, saying, that the greater number of the provinces of Spain had sufficiently suffered from the effects of war and conquest, and now the rest were threatened with the same calamities. Filled with consternation, he said, at the defeats of Cartaojal and Cuesta, the honourable Spaniards at the court of Madrid, who could not contemplate without the most poignant grief the desolation of their country, had implored the King to alleviate the distresses of such provinces as were occupied by the French troops, and to prevent them in those which were not yet in their possession. To these prayers

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*Correspondence on the Intruder's part with the Junta.*

*April 12.*

CHAP. the King had attended, had ordered him to announce his com-  
 XX. pliance to the Junta, and authorized him to confer with such  
 1809. deputies as the Junta might appoint, on the best means of ful-  
 April. filling his wishes. He could not suppose that they would refuse  
 to take steps on which the salvation of Andalusia and the hap-  
 piness of the whole kingdom depended. And, as the business  
 was most important and most urgent, Sotelo represented, that it  
 would be improper to conduct it in writing, but that all the dis-  
 putes and irregularities and doubts which it would otherwise  
 cause might be obviated by a personal conference. On this  
 ground, he hoped that deputies would be named to confer with  
 him.

The Junta replied, not to this traitor himself, but to Cuesta.  
 “They had not forgotten,” they said, “the character with which  
 they were invested, and the oath which they had taken, in unison  
 with the wishes of the nation. If Sotelo were the bearer of  
 powers sufficiently extensive to treat for the restitution of their  
 King, and for the immediate evacuation of the Spanish territory  
 by the French troops, let him publish them in the usual form,  
 and they would be announced to the allies of Spain. The Junta  
 had no authority to listen to any treaty, or terminate any trans-  
 action, which was not founded on the basis of eternal justice.  
 Any other principle of negotiation, without benefiting the em-  
 pire, would only tend to degrade the Junta, which had enter-  
 ed into the most awful engagements to bury itself beneath  
 the ruins of the monarchy, rather than sanction any proposition  
 which should diminish the honour and independence of the  
 Spanish people.” This answer they desired Cuesta to transmit to  
 the Intruder’s agent, and they published the proposal and the  
 reply. Perceiving, however, of what importance the safety of  
 the government was to the national cause, and the danger there-  
 fore of associating it in the minds of the people with any parti-

cular place of residence, in times when no place was secure, they published a decree upon this subject. It began by an avowal, that in their anxiety to provide immediate remedy for the calamities which had befallen the armies of La Mancha and Extremadura, they had imprudently hazarded their own safety by remaining at Seville. But having provided for the reinforcement and equipment of the troops, and furnished all the supplies which were requisite for the defence of Andalusia, they had in cool consideration reflected, that their security was inseparable from that of the state; that the preserval of the deposit of the sovereignty entrusted into their hands was the first of their obligations; and that they could not again expose it to the danger of being destroyed, without doing wrong to the nation which had confided it to them. The speed with which the tyrant of Europe advanced against Madrid in November, and sent troops towards Aranjuez, made it apparent that a principal object of his policy was to strike a blow at the government, and, seizing the body which administered it, cut all the bonds of political association, and thus throw the nation into confusion. These were still his objects: trusting more to his cunning than his force, he still pursued the government, hoping to get its members in his power, and then renew the infamous scenes of Bayonne, by compelling them to authorize his usurpation, or sacrificing them to his rage if they resisted his seductions and his menaces. Thus to degrade the Government in the eyes of the nation itself would, he thought, be the best means of degrading the nation also, and reducing it to that servitude, which, in the insolence of his fortune, this tyrant designed to inflict upon Spain. To frustrate these aims, they decreed, that, whenever the place of their residence might be threatened, or when any other reason should convince them of the utility of so doing, they would transfer the seat of government elsewhere, where they might preserve the august deposit of

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CHAP. the sovereignty, and watch over the defence, the well-being, and  
 XX. the prosperity of the nation. And they declared, that, whatever  
 1809. the accidents of the war might be, the Junta would never abandon  
 April. the continent of Spain, while a single spot could be found  
 in it where they could establish themselves for defending the  
 country against the force and fraud of its perfidious enemy, as  
 they had solemnly sworn to do.

*Measures  
 for securing  
 Badajoz.*

When the news of Cuesta's defeat at Medellin reached Paris, it was affirmed in the *Moniteur*, that by this battle Seville was laid open to the French armies, and that probably by that time Lisbon also was once more in their possession, . . . so confident was the French government of speedy and complete success. In the same confidence, and with the hope of subduing the spirit of the Aragonese, the French Governor of Zaragoza ordered mass to be celebrated in the Church of the Pillar, for the capture of Lisbon and Seville, as events which had taken place. Soult would undoubtedly have advanced upon the Portuguese capital, if he could have relied upon Victor's movements; but that General found that the battle of Medellin had rather raised the hopes of the Spaniards than depressed them. His views were upon Badajoz. Aware of this, the Government, with that promptitude which characterised all their measures at this crisis, supplied the place with money and arms, and addressed public letters to the Junta of that city and the Governor, reminding them that Zaragoza had held out two months not against the enemy alone, but against hunger and pestilence; and that her defenders would be held in grateful and everlasting remembrance, while the names of those who had so basely delivered up Coruña would be handed down for lasting infamy from generation to generation. To the General, D. Antonio Arce, they said, that true glory was to be gained by overcoming great dangers, and an opportunity for such glory was now afforded

him. The Extremadurans were not less brave than the Aragonese, and Badajoz possessed a defence in her fortifications which had not existed at Zaragoza. The soldier fought with best hope, and sacrificed himself with most alacrity, when he saw his commander set the example; and such an example would not be wanting in one whose ancestors filled a distinguished place in the annals of their country. At all times Extremadura had produced heroes. There had the Pizarros, and there had Cortes been born, to be examples now for their countrymen.

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Marshal Victor sent to summon Badajoz, though he was not prepared to lay siege to it; but the pitiable state of the country rendered it always possible that a governor might be found weak enough in principle or in mind to betray his trust. A spirit however such as the time required prevailed there, and the parties which he sent out in that direction were attacked at advantage and driven back with loss. The Junta informed the Government, that, in consideration of the sacrileges which the enemy committed wherever they went, they were enlisting the peasantry under the banner of the Crusade with which the misbelievers in old times had been pursued and conquered. The Government approved this measure, saying that if their forefathers had proclaimed crusades for the recovery of the Holy Land, with much more reason now might they have recourse to the same means for defending their religion in the bosom of their own country against profanations more impious than had been heard of in the darkest ages or among the most barbarous people. And they directed that the persons who should be embodied in these new corps should be distinguished by wearing a red cross on the breast. The Central Junta entertained a thought that this might be extended with good effect; but it did not spread; the feeling and the enthusiasm denoted by such a badge would not have been partaken by the officers, and it might have raised a

*A crusade  
proclaimed  
there against  
the invaders.*

CHAP. temper in the men unfavourable to any expected co-operation  
XX. with their British allies.

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*Regulations  
concerning  
the ejected  
Religioners.*

Another measure which the Government adopted at this time was intended to lessen the ill effect that the dispersion of so many monks and friars was likely to produce. The same calamities which had set them loose in every part of the country which the enemy had overrun, deprived them also of their accustomed means of subsistence; and it was but too probable that among those who took arms, as was very generally done by those who were able to bear them, the license of a military life might lead to scandals which on every account it was desirable to prevent. A Junta therefore was formed of persons holding high stations in the different Religious Orders, the Prior of Zamora, who was one of the members of the Government, being appointed President. The business of this Junta was to dispose of those Religioners who, having been driven from their cloisters (the edict said), were crying night and day before the throne of a terrible God to revenge the blood of their innocent brethren, which had so wantonly been shed. They were to be distributed in towns, hospitals, and armies, as they might be deemed most qualified; and the Generals were instructed not to receive any persons of their profession unless they produced credentials or commissions from this board.

*Plans of the  
Intrusive  
Government  
April 9.*

Six thousand men had been detached from La Mancha to reinforce Victor after the battle of Medellin. His instructions were to remain between Merida and Badajoz till he should receive advices of Soult's movements, and till Lapisse should join him. The Intrusive Government persuaded themselves that the struggle would soon be over, and Joseph waited only to hear from Marshal Ney of the total destruction of Romana's army, to give orders for marching against Valencia. But the tide had now turned in Galicia; there came no intelligence from Ney



but what was disastrous ; and Soult could neither communicate with Victor nor with Lapisse, neither could they at this time communicate with each other. Soult's communication was cut off by Silveira on the Tamega, by Trant on the Vouga, . . and Sir Robert Wilson, by his position at Ciudad Rodrigo, cut off Lapisse equally from co-operating with his countrymen in Portugal or in Extremadura.

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Of how great importance that position was likely to become Mr. Frere had perceived as soon as Sir John Moore's army began their dolorous retreat ; and he had obtained from the Spanish Government such reinforcement for the garrison as could be spared at a time when demands for aid came upon them from all quarters. The command which they conferred upon Sir Robert Wilson, disposed as the Spaniards were to act heartily with him, was of more consequence than any succour which they could then afford. He meantime had spared no exertions for increasing his little force, and continuing to impose upon the enemy that useful opinion of its strength which they were known to entertain ; for it was seen by their intercepted letters that they had applied for reinforcements under the fear of being attacked by him in Salamanca, where, they said, the inhabitants were as much to be dreaded as the enemy. Sir Robert circulated addresses inviting the Germans and Poles and Swiss in the French service to abandon an iniquitous cause into which they had been forced, and in which they had no concern. There was no press in the city, but the parochial clergy throughout the line of country which he occupied multiplied copies by transcription : many men were brought over by these means, and the enemy suffered not only from this continual drain, but from the suspicion and inquietude which was thus produced. Some stragglers from Sir John Moore's army, and some prisoners from it who had effected

*Sir Robert  
Wilson's  
conduct at  
Ciudad  
Rodrigo.*